

SOUTH JOINT COMMITTEE

24 July 2008

*Held at Council Chamber, Elizabeth House, Stratford upon Avon
Meeting commenced: 6.00 pm Meeting ended: 9.45 pm*

Present: Councillor R Hyde (Chair) Councillors Rev N Beamer, M Beckett, S Beese, M Brain, R Cheney, R Cockings, J Fradgley, A Gardner, S Gray, T Honychurch, P Moorse, M Perry, G Roache, K Rolfe, C Saint, V Seaman, I Seccombe, P Seccombe and J Taylor

Apologies: Councillor J Dill-Russell

14. Disclosure of Interests

Councillor Fradgley disclosed a Prejudicial Interest in Minute 20 (Application 838).

Councillor Gray disclosed Personal Interests in Minute 20 (Application 782), Minute 23 and Minute 25, as a Governor of Shipston Primary School.

Councillor Saint disclosed a Personal Interest in Minute 20 (Application 782), as a Board Member of Warwickshire Education Business Partnership and Minute 23 as Chair of Stour Vision.

Councillor Beamer disclosed a Prejudicial Interest in Minute 20 (Application 832).

Councillor Roache disclosed a Personal Interest in Minute 20 (Application 849) as a Member of the Parish Plan Group who were affiliated with the Parish Council.

Councillor Taylor disclosed Prejudicial Interests in Minute 20 (Applications 828 and 804).

Councillor Cheney disclosed a Prejudicial Interest in Minute 20 (Application 824), as a Member of Brailes Parish Council and Minute 23.

Councillor Hyde disclosed a Prejudicial Interest in Minute 20 (Application 838) and a Personal Interest in Minute 23 as a Board Member of Advantage West Midlands.

Councillor P Seccombe disclosed Personal Interests in Minute 23 as a member of Stour Power and Minute 25 as a Governor of Brailes School.

15. Minutes

Subject to:

- a) the deletion of Councillor Brain's name from the attendance list; and,
- b) Councillor Saint's declaration of interest being amended to reflect:- as a Board Member of Warwickshire Education Business Partnership.

the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2008 were confirmed and signed.

16. Public Question Time

- 1) Notice of one question had been received Mr Howe (Chairman) of Whitchurch Parish Meeting

"At the Joint Committee held on 19th June there was a presentation on The State of the District. Some years ago when the 2001 census information became available I presented an analysis of the census information supplied by the county for the parish of Whitchurch to the Parish Meeting.

One thing that stood out was that very few people were employed in the parish and that was still very few even when an allowance could be made for working from home. The analysis also showed a high rate of turn of the population by looking through old Electoral Rolls. There is almost always at least one property for sale in the parish and therefore every opportunity to move in - if you have the money.

Whitchurch is a parish of about 3 square miles with at that time a population of 155. We have always been a what used to be a "Category Four" parish "all other hamlets or villages in the local plan area" in the Consultative Draft South Warwickshire Local Plan of September 1989 to paragraph 2.3.14 or section? of Stratford on Avon District Local Plan Review 1996-2011.

Since 1985, 18 residential properties have been added or have outline permission to add to the 51 properties then in existence. This represents an increase of 35.3% in residential properties in the period. Of the residential increase, 6 are occupied by agricultural/horticultural persons (or will be) and of the remainder of the increase only one has not changed hands since it was first occupied. Some of them several times. In fact only a handful of the remaining properties have not changed hands in the period.

What benefit (if any) can accrue to a Category 4 parish by increasing the housing stock without taking other factors into consideration?

How does the District or County benefit from such a situation?

How does this square with a policy of restraint on development in the countryside?"

The Chair responded to the question

I thank Mr Howe for his questions regarding development in the small Parish of Whitchurch since 1985. Whilst the percentage increase in the number of residential properties appears high, in numerical terms it is relatively low i.e. 18 properties over a 23 year period. Having looked at the completions since 1985 it is apparent that 15 properties have been created from the conversion of existing buildings, 2 of the properties were permitted as agricultural dwellings and one was permitted as a replacement dwelling. All of these permissions were granted in accordance with the planning policies operative at the time. 17 of the 18 completions took place between 1987 and 1996. One property was completed in 2000/2001 and one property is currently under construction.

Turning to the specific questions:

1. Allowing modest development in villages can bring benefits to the local economy and breathe new life into a community. Whilst Whitchurch Parish may have little or no facilities, new residents

could help support facilities in adjoining parishes. Clearly this has to be balanced against the negative impacts of development such as the need to travel to access jobs and services.

2. In terms of benefit to the District and County Councils, the dwellings permitted count towards meeting the strategic requirements for housing set initially in the County Structure Plan and latterly in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Obviously new residents pay Council tax to support the provision of local authority services.
 3. The evidence presented by Mr Howe would suggest that the policy of restraint on development in the countryside is working well particularly since the first District-wide Local Plan was adopted in 2000, with only one replacement dwelling having been completed and one property currently under construction during this time. Only two of the completions since 1985 relate to new-build dwellings, with the rest being conversions and the replacement of an existing dwelling.
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- 2) At the invitation of the Chair, Doctor Bearman and Mr Burgiss addressed the Committee on the Walkable Core project as contained in the World Class Stratford Urban Design Framework and outlined to Members the concept of a historic spine route. They suggested that the volume of vehicular traffic and the over-commercialisation of ground floor building design were factors working against the best appreciation of this collection of historic buildings, the presence of which is critical to the overall economic wellbeing of the town.
 - 3) At the invitation of the Chair, Mr R Maddern addressed the Committee on the decision taken not to proceed with a cycle/footbridge over the River Avon in Stratford upon Avon. Mr Maddern expressed his wish to see the refurbishment of the Lucy's Mill Bridge. The Committee was advised that a feasibility report on this potential project could be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

17. Stratford Transport Strategy Reference Group

Mr Heggie, Chairman of Stratford Transport Strategy Reference Group (STRG) attended the meeting for this item and answered Members questions raised on the content of the report.

Consideration was given to the work of the group and its role in acting as a 'sounding board' for the County Council in its consideration of traffic management issues in Stratford.

Mr Heggie updated the Committee on the progress of the Walkable Core project and highlighted the issues which if pursued would have a positive impact on its delivery. These included:

More effective publicity about the importance of the project to the town;

Getting a new parking strategy in place;

Implementing the recommendations from the Streetscape Study undertaken by Colin Davis Associates; and

Introducing restricted delivery and pick up times in the historic core.

In receiving the report, the following comments were made:

The work of the Joint Parking Strategy Group was cited as a significant source of learning material to feed into the Transport Strategy; and

Concern was expressed over the Clopton Bridge, Members emphasised a need to alleviate the density of traffic, particularly the amount of heavy vehicles that used it as a main thoroughfare.

A recommendation was submitted by the Chair and, following an amendment to this being put to the vote and being declared lost, it was by 12 votes to nil with 5 abstentions,

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the work of the Transport Strategy Reference Group in responding to the challenges outlined in the report, be supported;
- (2) That the Committee notes the importance of the Walkable Core project to the work of the reference group and hopes, subject to consultation, that work will start by 2010/2011;
- (3) That the Reference Group's membership (that currently includes two County Councillors, Dill-Russell and Hyde) also include two District Councillor Members from this Committee (one Conservative and one Liberal Democrat); and
- (4) That a follow-up report be submitted to this Committee by the Transport Strategy Reference Group in six months time.

18. Post Office Closures

In accordance with the Government's instruction to close 2,500 of its branches, Post Office Limited (POL) had consulted with both Councils on proposals to close 2 branches and to provide outreach services to 5 other sites in an effort to mitigate the impact on other closures.

The public consultation on the proposals had requested that comments be received by 4 August 2008. In order to meet this deadline, the Joint Committee was invited to make comments on the proposals as they affect its area and to submit such comments for inclusion when the individual response from both Councils was determined.

Mr Dave Nash (Strategic Director) answered Members questions raised on the content of the report.

In considering the matter, reference was made to the following decision taken by the District Council at its meeting held on 14 July:

- (1) That this Council objects to the proposed closures of Post Offices in South Warwickshire and requests our Officers to submit a response to the Consultation in support of this objection, to include:

The difficulties that will be imposed on the elderly, vulnerable and those claiming benefits;

Inconvenience to all residents in accessing Post Office services,

The effect on rural businesses who rely on a local service; and

The comments of the Joint Area Committees on the proposed closures where they support the Council's view; and,

- (2) That the Council further requests the Executive to work with the County Council and other local partners to consider whether any of their services could be ordered and/or paid for through local Post Offices, in order to help improve their financial viability.

On the invitation of the Chair, Mr Hutchinson, a representative from the local business community in Long Compton, addressed the Committee on the proposed closure of Long Compton Post Office, during which he raised the following issues:

There are about 20 small businesses in the village and between 30 and 40 within a slightly wider catchment area that rely upon the convenience of the local Post Office for postal services and banking;

Without the local Post Office, small businesses would be forced to either drive to a new service, with adverse effect on their carbon footprint, or relocate, producing an enormous detrimental impact on the local community and the viability of other local service providers; and

The proposed closures would result in business pressures on the remaining Shipston on Stour Post Office that might prove difficult to handle.

Councillor Treadwell of Long Compton Parish Council also addressed the Committee on this closure and expressed his concern over mobility issues for elderly residents of the village if the Post Office was closed. It was also raised that the figures contained in the branch access reviews that the closure proposals were based on were incorrect and that any closure could have significant knock on effects such as the possible loss of 'Local Centre Village' status under the Local Plan, and therefore reduced options to deal with local affordable housing issues.

The local District Ward and County Division Members of the Committee also voiced their support for the Long Compton, Preston-on-Stour, Brailes and Ilmington Post Offices and echoed the previous speakers' concern over the detrimental impact of losing the local service within each of these villages.

Members also emphasised that the figures used by Postwatch to make their judgements were incorrect and that this would require addressing within the responses.

The Committee also raised concern over the proposed closure of the Bridgetown Post Office, the impact that this would have on disadvantaged groups in the locality and the knock on effect on business capacity at the nearby Tiddington Post Office.

General concern was expressed over the viability of the proposed Out Reach services and the limited hours this would offer.

Having considered the above, it was

RESOLVED:

That in submitting their formal responses, the District and County Councils should prepare a comprehensive and strong objection to the proposal to close seven Post Offices in the South Warwickshire Area.

19. Proposed Public Pay Phone Removals

Colin Staves (Policy Heritage and Design Manager at the District Council) attended the meeting for this item and answered Members questions raised on the content of the report.

The District Council had been notified by BT of its intention to remove 51 public payphones across the district that had been described as being 'little used by consumers'.

The Committee was invited to express its views on the proposed removals which would be used to inform the District Council's final decision in response to the notification. The Committee was advised of the revised final response date of 24 September 2008.

In considering the notification, the options open to the Council were to either agree or object to the removal of each of the payphones, with the Council having the power of 'local veto' which would prevent BT from removing any payphone to which the Council had raised objection. The Council considerations included:

- the housing type in the area;
- the number of households in the area;
- public call revenue;
- emergency use; and,
- mobile phone coverage

Following receipt of the notification, the District Council undertook a public consultation exercise and an updated schedule was provided to the meeting detailing the responses received to the removal of phone boxes in the Joint Committee's area.

Members voiced concern at the proposed removal of several of the pay phones within the area and in particular they strongly supported those communities who had campaigned to keep them. Members emphasised that phone boxes provided essential security in emergency situations and that not all households had access to mobile phones, and in any event it would be unreasonable to rely upon mobile phones which were subject to signal deficiencies.

Concern was expressed over the removal of phone boxes in Conservation Areas and whether there was an option that the traditional style red boxes could

remain in situ, if the pay-phone service was removed. Members requested the following information: a map showing the location of the phones to be removed, information about the numbers of households with access to landlines, and confirmation as to whether the removal of phone boxes in Conservation Areas required planning consent.

Mr Staves undertook to address these issues and to provide further information to Members.

Having regard to the above, it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the comments of the Committee be taken into account in finalising the District Council's response to the proposal by BT to remove pay phones across the district.
- (2) That Members be given the opportunity to submit further responses following the circulation of the updated information sheet, detailed above.

Note:

In the interests of the efficient conduct of the business, items were considered in a different order from that set out in the agenda. These minutes represent the order in which they appeared in the agenda papers.

20. Grants

Revenue Grants

Councillor Beamer, in accordance with Minute 14 above, left the meeting during discussion on Application 832.

Councillor Taylor, in accordance with Minute 14 above, left the meeting during discussion on Applications 828 and 804.

The Committee considered applications for revenue grants in light of

- the District and County Councils' agreed Schemes;
- the priorities established by the District Council's Corporate Aims; and,
- available budgets.

The Committee had been addressed by:

Application 809 – Pillerton Priors Village Hall – John Ingall
Application 829 – Long Compton First Response – Diana Brown
Application 832 – Holy Trinity Church - Ursula Russell

The options available to the Committee with regard to the applications included offering a grant of the amount requested, offering a different amount or refusing the application.

Application 782 – Young Enterprise South Warwickshire – The Committee in determining its view on this application, had first discussed the matter after the

exclusion of the public, in order that exempt financial information could be considered.

The offer of grant authorised, together with reason for the decision, is set out below.

<p>Applicant: (809) Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested:</p> <p>Grant Approved: Reason For decision:</p>	<p>Pillerton Priors Village Hall Management Committee Purchase of lighter, easier to move tables and comfortable chairs. £2,856</p> <p>£712</p> <p>£428 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.</p>
<p>Applicant (808) Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested:</p> <p>Grant Approved: Reason for decision:</p>	<p>Stratford Wanderers FC under nines Purchase and hire of equipment and pitches to help with general running costs. £2,100</p> <p>£1,000</p> <p>£315 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.</p>
<p>Applicant: (829) Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested:</p> <p>Grant Approved: Reason for decision:</p>	<p>Long Compton First Response Purchase essential equipment to provide urgent medical assistance to victims of strokes, heart attacks and similar medical emergencies. Revised Project Cost £4,500 (previous figure £3,665)</p> <p>Revised figure of £2,685 (previous request £1,275)</p> <p>£1,575 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme, the District Council's Corporate Aims and for the criteria for a County Council grant</p>
<p>Applicant: (822) Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested:</p> <p>Grant Approved: Reason for decision:</p>	<p>Stratford on Avon Music Festival Contribution to overall costs in particular workshops and concerts for children and families and the launch of a new regular feature the Festival Chorus. £78,700</p> <p>£1,500 £1,500 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.</p>
<p>Applicant: (849) Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested:</p> <p>Grant Approved:</p>	<p>Tysoe Parish Council Production of Parish Plan £4,463</p> <p>£1,250</p> <p>£829</p>

Reason for decision:	The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims. The Committee in awarding this grant noted that a previous grant of £421 awarded by the District Council remained unclaimed and agreed that if available this outstanding grant should be allocated in support of the production of the Parish Plan.
Applicant: (832) Project: Total Cost: Grant Requested: Grant Approved: Reason for decision:	The Friends of the Music of Holy Trinity Church Purchase a 2 nd hand Grand piano to particularly encourage young musicians in the community. £9,000 £900 £900 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.
Applicant: (782) Project: Total Cost: Grant Requested: Decision	Young Enterprise South Warwickshire Provide educational programmes in primary and secondary schools to help young people understand and give them personal experience of how business works. £21,250 £1,440 That the application be deferred, in order that the Committee could be presented with more information concerning the financing of the project.
Applicant: (828) Project: Total Cost: Grant Requested: Grant Approved: Reason for decision:	Orchestra of the Swan Enable a series of workshops and performances in community venues. £23,760 £1,980 £1,980 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.

Capital Grants

Councillors Fradgley and Hyde, in accordance with Minute 14 above, left the meeting during discussion on Application 838. Councillor P Seccombe took the Chair for this application.

Councillor Cheney, in accordance with Minute 14 above, left the meeting during discussion on Application 824.

The Committee considered applications for capital grants in the light of

- the District and County Councils' agreed Schemes,
- the priorities established by the District Council's Corporate Aims, and
- available budgets.

The options available to the Committee with regard to the applications included offering a grant of the amount requested, offering a different amount or refusing the application.

The Committee had been addressed by:

- Application 838 – Stratford Sports Club – Joe Harvey
- Application 807 – Shakespeare’s Hospice – David Mutton/Pat Dunn
- Application 804 – Stratford Citizens Advice Bureau – Mrs Wood
- Application 824 – Brailes Parish Council - Chris Righton
- Application 834 – Barton on the Heath Village Hall – Maggie Pettifer

The offers of grant authorised, together with reason for the decisions, is set out below.

<p>Applicant (838): Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested: Grant Approved: Reason for decision:</p>	<p>Stratford Sports Club Improvements to buildings and facilities to improve flood defences. This includes raising a squash court, rendering shower block surfaces, removing plasterboard and raising electrics throughout the club.</p> <p>£396,700</p> <p>£30,000</p> <p>£30,000 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council’s Grants scheme and the District Council’s Corporate Aims.</p>
<p>Applicant (807): Project</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Requested Grant Approved: Reason for decision:</p>	<p>The Shakespeare Hospice Create a drop in centre (the Life Well centre) for patients, carers and family members affected by mental illness. It will provide a source of advice, information and support.</p> <p>£101,103</p> <p>£20,000</p> <p>£7,200 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council’s Grants scheme and the District Council’s Corporate Aims.</p> <p>The Committee in agreeing this grant, noted the district wide benefits and service the Hospice provided to the whole of the Stratford District (not just the South area) and therefore requested that the application be submitted to the East and West Joint Committees for their support.</p>
<p>Applicant (804): Project:</p> <p>Total Cost: Grant Approved: Grant Approved: Reason for decision:</p>	<p>Stratford & District Citizens Advice Bureau Move the entire CAB operation to different premises at which will provide easier access to clients and provide the opportunity to extend the range of services being offered.</p> <p>£41,397</p> <p>£7,500</p> <p>£2,700 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council’s Grants scheme and the District Council’s Corporate Aims.</p>

	The Committee in agreeing this grant, noted the district wide benefits and service the Bureau provided to the whole of the Stratford District (not just the South area) and therefore requested that the application be submitted to the East and West Joint Committees for their support.
Applicant (824): Project Total Cost: Grant Requested: Grant Approved: Reason for Decision	Brailes Parish Council Provide a skateboard facility to accommodate older children who are currently not provided for. £22,500 £10,000 £10,000 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.
Applicant (834): Project Total Cost: Grant Requested: Grant Approved: Reason for decision:	Barton on the Heath Village Hall Partial refurbishment of village hall and new equipment. £21,144 £7,400 £5,286 The scheme supports objectives in the District Council's Grants scheme and the District Council's Corporate Aims.

21. Community Grants Criteria - Report from Working Group

The Committee was asked to comment on the draft proposals for the operation of an integrated local grants scheme that had been prepared following a working party meeting of Members from each of the three Joint Committees.

In considering the proposals, the Committee acknowledged that they successfully address the issues of concern raised by all three Joint Committees and individual Councillors. In addition, the Chief Officer of the Council for Voluntary Service for Stratford-on-Avon District attended the Working Group and had supported the proposals.

The Committee agreed that the implementation of a grants scheme on the basis contained within the draft proposals would provide transparency and clarity in the decision making process, and would enable the Committees to support key projects to improve the quality of life of local residents.

Members requested some further clarification on the indices of multiple deprivation used in the evaluation criteria.

Having regard to the above, it was

RESOLVED:

That the proposals for operating a local grants scheme, as submitted, be supported and endorsed.

22. Duration of Meeting

The Chair reported that the Committee had been in session for 3 hours and under Standing Orders a decision was required as to whether the Committee would remain in session. Accordingly, by nine votes to three, it was

RESOLVED:

That the meeting continue beyond the three hours in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Note: the Chair then adjourned the meeting for a comfort break at 9.00pm and the meeting reconvened at 9.04pm. Councillors Beese, Brain, Cockings and Seaman were not in attendance.

23. Market Town Visions

Julia Aratoon (Stour Area Coordinator with the District Council) gave a brief presentation to the Committee on the progress and projects of the Vision for Stour project.

The following funding allocations were sought from the District Council's 2008/09 budget of £25,000, made available to support delivery of the 2020 Vision Action Plan.

- Application 845 – Interpretative signage and visitor information - £5,000;
- Application 846 – Bio Diversity Action Plan - £3,000;
- Application 847 – Community Play and Sports equipment - £2,500;
- Application 848 – Cycling - £5,500; and

In considering the paper, the Committee acknowledged that

- a) the Vision, its derived Action Plan and the project proposals had followed extensive community consultation over a period of two years; and
- b) the deliberations of the dedicated Action Plan delivery groups had resulted in projects being identified that were aimed at furthering the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of Shipston and its surrounding hinterland.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the allocation of the funding requested for the projects, as listed in the preamble to this Minute, be agreed in principle.
1. That the agreement of minor changes to the project spends proposed be delegated to the Chairman of the Committee in consultation with the Head of Community Services (SDC).

24. Highways Maintenance Plan 2008/09

Peter Samwell (County Highways Policy Manager) attended the meeting for this item and answered Members questions raised on the content of the report.

Details were reported on the highway maintenance work proposed in 2008/09 and on the five year list of maintenance schemes aimed at;

- keeping the network, carriageway and footways free from dangerous defects;
- maintaining and improving the condition (asset value) of the network; and,
- improving public satisfaction with the network.

The report also set out proposals for the spending of the Joint Committee's Drainage Revenue Allocation, which focused on unblocking gullies and repairing damaged pipes.

Members welcomed the promise that gullies would be emptied every year. It was emphasized that emptying gullies was a vital activity that needed to be maintained and Members were encouraged to contact the Area Team with any concerns within their wards.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Highway Maintenance Plan 2008/09 and the Five Year List of Maintenance Schemes be supported; and,
- 2) That the Committee approves the planned spending of its Drainage Revenue Allocation on unblocking gullies and repairing damaged pipes.

25. Sufficiency of Childcare & Gap Analysis

Vicky Kersey (Area Manager for Early Years and Children) attended the meeting for this item.

The Committee considered a report which detailed the range and sufficiency of childcare in the Stratford-on-Avon District and identified gaps in the provision that needed to be addressed.

During consideration of the report Members queried the accuracy of the statistics on which some judgements were made. It was considered that the report did not provide a complete gap analysis in order to address the area of need in Stratford District. Ms Kersey undertook to address this.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Gap Survey and Sufficiency Assessment be further developed to address the gaps in information identified by the Committee.

26. Items for Future meetings

The Chair indicated that he would hold an informal agenda planning meeting to include the Vice Chair and a Liberal Democrat representative early in September.

Items provisionally identified for future discussion included:

- Speed Limits
- Parking Strategy
- Flood Risk Management
- Lucy's Mill Bridge – feasibility study
- World Class Stratford
- Allocation of school places
- Consultation on customer access in Shipston on Stour

CHAIR