

WEST JOINT COMMITTEE

17 July 2008

Held at Village Hall, Great Alne

Meeting commenced : 6.00 pm Meeting ended: 8.35 pm

Present: Councillor Sir William Lawrence Bt (Chair) Councillors S Adams, P Barnes, P Beaman, L Bowring, T Dixon, V Hobbs, R Hobbs, J Horner, K James, S Juned, N Knapman, L Marshall, H McCarthy, E Payne, S Thirlwell, M Weddell and H Wright.

Apologies: Councillor G Atkinson, D Pemberton, B Slaughter and L Topham

Officers in

Attendance: **Representing Warwickshire County Council:**

Martin Gibbins (Stratford-on-Avon Area Manager)

Steve Smith (Head of Property)

Roy Shearing (Principal Officer Business Support Services)

Peter Samwell (County Highways Policy Manager)

Vicky Kersey (Area Manager for Early Years and Childcare)

Amanda Wilson Patterson (Localities & Communities Officer)

Representing Stratford-on-Avon District Council:

Trevor Askew (Strategic Director)

Nick Taylor (Customer Services Development Manager)

Chris Wood (Community Leadership Manager)

Alan Sheepy (Committee Administrator)

14. Disclosure of Interests

The following disclosures of interest were made under this heading:

- Councillor Adams – Personal Interest in Minute 23 as a member of Alcester Town Council;
- Councillor Barnes – Personal Interest in Minute 18 insofar as one of the phone boxes scheduled for closure was on land in the ownership of his sister;
- Councillors R and V Hobbs – Personal and Prejudicial Interest in Minute 20 insofar as the application by Stratford-on-Avon Gliding Club was on land in their ownership;
- Councillor Knapman – Personal Interest in Minute 23 insofar as she was a member of Vision for Alcester;
- Councillor McCarthy – Personal Interest in Minute 18 as her daughter worked for BT; and,
- Councillor Payne - Personal Interest in Minute 23 as a member of Alcester Town Council.

15. Minutes

Subject to Councillor Knapman's disclosures of interest being amended to reflect her interest in applications for grant aid from Art.com and Party in the Park, the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2008 were confirmed and signed.

16. Public Question Time

Under this heading, Roger Jackson, Secretary of Vision for Alcester Group, addressed the Committee in support of the funding requests contained in Minute 23 and answered members questions on the requests.

17. Post Office Closures

Nick Taylor (Customer Services Development Manager of the District Council) and Roy Shearing (Principal Business Support Officer with the County Council) attended the meeting for this item and answered Members questions raised on the content of the report.

In accordance with Governments 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 to the respective Cabinet/Executive when the individual responses from both Councils are determined.

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:
 - a. The difficulties that will be imposed on the elderly, vulnerable and those claiming benefits;
 - b. Inconvenience to all residents in accessing Post Office services,
 - c. The effect on rural businesses who rely on a local service; and
 - d. 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, Councillors Mander and Robertson of Wilmcote Parish Council addressed the Committee on the proposed closure of Wilmcote Post Office, during which the following issues were raised:

- it was accepted that if Wilmcote Post Office remained open another Post Office would need to close;
- the Post Office currently had a shop attached to it, the viability of which could be affected by any closure to the detriment of residents of Wilmcote and neighbouring villages;
- concern was raised over security aspects of the proposed mobile outreach facility proposed following the Post Office closure;
- in the absence of details of the proposed outreach facility it was difficult to assess public opinion other than to express the view that with the operation of the outreach facility during the mornings only residents of the village could be disadvantaged if they were unable to attend the facility during the morning;
- concern was also expressed over the future viability of an outreach facility with the closure of such facilities introduced following the closure of Post Offices in neighbouring villages, i.e. Bearley and Snitterfield;
- if Wilmcote Post Office closed, there would only be Claverdon Post Office left open in the immediate vicinity; and
- contrary to the description of Wilmcote Post Office contained in the closure notice, there was a ramp enabling access to disabled patrons.

Councillor Anslow of Aston Cantlow Parish Council addressed the Committee giving 100% support to Wilmcote and expressed his concern over mobility issues for elderly residents of the village if the Post Office closed.

Having considered the above, it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee note the objection raised by the Council to the proposed closure of Post Offices in South Warwickshire and support the grounds for objection indicated;
- (2) That, in submitting the formal response on behalf of the Councils, specific reference be made to the proposed closure of Wilmcote Post Office and the adverse affect the closure would have on the viability of the village shop.

18. Proposed Public Pay Phone Removals

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 Joint Committee were 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.

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 should include:

- 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 Committees area.

On the invitation of the Chair, the Committee was addressed by representatives of Great Alne Parish Council expressing objection to the removal of the Great Alne phone box for the following reasons:

- poor quality of mobile phone coverage in the area;
- not all local residents have access to a mobile phone;
- the number of ramblers travelling through the village who look to use local phone boxes on their travels; and
- coupled with the quality of mobile coverage and the potential risk of flooding in the village the phone box would provide a method of contact for residents.

In addition to Great Alne, support was also made for the retention of the other phone box in the area with over 200 calls being made in the past year at Salford Priors due to the large number of overseas students at its nearby caravan park with the phone box providing the only means of international contact with their relatives. The current phone box was also considered to form part of the character of the village.

Having regard to the above, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Committees comments be taken into account when finalising the District Council's response to the proposal by BT to remove pay phones across the district.

19. 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 together with a list of those schemes that were included in 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.

In receiving the report, the Committee noted that within Warwickshire public satisfaction levels and the road conditions indicators had shown an overall improvement since 2000. However, there was still much outstanding work to be undertaken as, county wide, over 13% of the network had defects and, compared to other Council Services, satisfaction levels were still relatively low.

In receiving the report, the following comments were made:

- a) the Members welcomed the emptying of gullies every year and would welcome a timetable for such work that they could share with their constituents;
- b) concern was expressed over work not undertaken within the agreed timetables and to agreed specifications. Changes to the specifications on temporary patching material had been made which would hopefully address the concerns;
- c) the Committee noted that closer working between both authorities was now taking place on drainage issues which could result in funding becoming available from the District Council for some schemes;
- d) concerns were expressed over highway encroachment during which it was reported that such issues should be drawn to the attention of the County Highways Area Manager at the earliest possible opportunity;
- e) disappointment was expressed over the standard of the A435 after its de-trunking during which assurances were given that funding would be sought for additional work required; and
- f) the highways budget should only be used for maintaining roads that were already in existence and was not for new road provision.

Having regard to the above, it was

RESOLVED:

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

20. Community Grants

Chris Wood (Community Leadership Manager with the District Council) attended the meeting for this item and answered members questions raised on the content of the report.

Under the provisions of Minute 14 above, Councillors R and V Hobbs had disclosed Personal and Prejudicial interests in the application by Stratford-on-

Avon Gliding Club and left the meeting prior to the consideration of the application.

Further to the decisions taken under Minute 10 of the last meeting, consideration was given to one revenue application that had been previously deferred. In addition, the Committee was presented with details of a capital application that had been previously submitted to the South Joint Committee but on closer inspection, the location of the organisation was within the West Joint Committee area.

On the invitation of the Chair, a representative of Stratford-on-Avon Gliding Club answered members questions raised in connection with the application for grant aid.

The options open to the Committee in respect of the applications were to either support the offer of a grant at a level to be determined by the Committee, defer, or to refuse the application.

Having considered the information available, it was

RESOLVED:

- 1) That, by 10 votes to 8, the application from Young Enterprise South Warwickshire (Ref 782) be deferred and the applicant be invited to address the Committee at its next meeting on the work of the organisation.
- 2) That the application by Stratford-on-Avon Gliding Club for grant aid towards the cost of renovating the clubhouse be refused on the ground that there was no community use of the facility.

21. Community Grants Criteria - Report from Working Group

Councillor Richard Hyde (Chair of Stratford-on-Avon South Joint Committee and the Chair of the Working Party) attended the meeting for this item.

The Joint 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 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 Joint Committee to support key projects to improve the quality of life of local residents.

However, the following issues were raised by the Committee:

- o the maximum figure to be awarded could need review in the light of experience to be gained;

- the appropriateness and composition of the way locations had been assessed for levels of deprivation should be reviewed;
- applications for retrospective funding should be re-visited;
- the definitions and application of the prohibition on funding for "Ongoing refurbishment, building or maintenance" required refinement;
- a report detailing grants awarded in the preceding 12 months would be welcomed;
- potential applicants should be made aware of the support available in helping them progress applications; and
- applicants should be formally informed of their right to speak at meetings in support of their application and made aware of the conditions that apply to such rights.

Having regard to the above and by 10 votes to 2 with 5 abstentions, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposals for operating a local grants scheme, as submitted, be endorsed; and
2. That the proposals be reviewed after 12 months operation and address the issues outlined in the preamble to this Minute.

22. Sufficiency of Childcare & Gap Analysis

Vicky Kersey (Area Manager for Early Years and Children) attended the meeting for this item and answered members questions raised on the report.

Consideration was given to a paper detailing the range and sufficiency of childcare in Stratford-on-Avon District and identified gaps in the provision that needed addressing.

During consideration of the report, the following comments were made:

- the Ward profiles included do not match with the deprivation location score profiles contained in the Community Grants Criteria considered under Minute 21 above;
- the Ward profiles do not take account of children attending schools outside of their home Ward. In response, it was reported that the statistical information had been obtained through consultation with the schools and also with parents; and,
- in response to a question as to why the costs were higher in Stratford-on-Avon District compared to other Districts, it was reported that this was due to higher accommodation costs within the District. In addition, 15% of parents in the Stratford-on-Avon District had identified costs as a concern.

Having regard to the above, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Sufficiency Assessment and the Gap Analysis, as presented, be noted subject to the comments summarised in the preamble to this Minute.

23. Market Town Visions

Chris Wood (Community Leadership Manager with the District Council) attended the meeting for this item and answered members questions raised on the content of the report

Consideration was given to a report outlining progress that had been made on Vision for Alcester projects and suggesting funding allocations, from the District Council's 2008/09 budget of £25,000, in support of the 2020 Vision Action Plan as follows:

- Application 813 – Heritage Trail and Riverside Walk - £5,000;
- Application 814 – Conway Fields Recreation - £5,000;
- Application 815 – South Alcester Outdoor Sports - £5,000;
- Application 816 – Roman Heritage - £5,000; and
- Application 817 – Long Term Parking - £5,000.

In considering the paper, the Committee acknowledged that

- a) the Vision, its derived Actions 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 Alcester and its surrounding hinterland.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agree in principle to the allocation of the funding requested for the projects listed in the preamble to this Minute.

24. Items for Future meetings

Under this heading the following items had been identified:

- Presentation from Young Enterprise South Warwickshire as requested under Minute 20 above;
- Speed Limit Review; and
- Flood Risk Management.

CHAIR