

The Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee met at Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon on the 22nd June, 2005.

Present:-

Councillors George Atkinson (Chair)
“ Richard Hyde (Deputy Chair)
“ John Appleton
“ Peter Barnes
“ David Booth
“ Jill Dill-Russell
“ Richard Hobbs
“ Nina Knapman
“ Helen McCarthy
“ Mike Perry
“ Chris Saint
“ Izzi Seccombe

Officers:-

Julie Crawshaw, Environmental Engineer, PTES.
Sarah Duxbury, Principal Solicitor.
Don Foster, Head of Community Services, PTES.
Martin Gibbins, Area Manager.
Mark Gore, Assistant Education Officer (Strategy).
Pete Keeley, Principal Committee Administrator.
Chris Larvin, Area Education Officer.
Patrick Lee, Community Safety Manager.
Helene Toogood, Community Partnership Officer.
William Brown, County Fire Officer.
Amanda Wilson Patterson – Area Administrative Officer.

Three members of the public attended.

1. General

(1) Apologies

were received from Councillors Anita Macaulay and Bob Stevens.

(2) Minutes of the meeting held on the 16th March 2005 and Matters Arising

(i) Minutes

In response to comments from Councillor Izzi Seccombe it was agreed that:-

- Councillor Seccombe's name should be shown in the attendance list for the last meeting.
- Minute 2 – Amendment to Indicated Admission Number – Stratford High School, the words “additional pupils” be added after “accommodate 240”.
- Minute 7 – Stratford Waterfront Masterplan, the fifth paragraph be amended by the replacement of the words “the views of several councillors” by “his personal views”.

It was then Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee's 16th March 2005 meeting be approved as amended and be signed by the Chair.

(ii) Matters Arising

(a) Minute 6 - Decriminalisation in Stratford-on-Avon District.

In response to comments from Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Don Foster of the Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy Department, indicated that the report relating to the review of the decriminalisation scheme, to be submitted to the Committee's July meeting, would take into account the Waterfront Masterplan proposals, but the details relating to waterside and southern lane will be finally resolved in the masterplan.

(b) Minute 10 - Provisional Items

In response to comments from Councillor Peter Barnes concerning affordable housing , Don Foster indicated that following the presentation made to members at the last meeting, it was intended that a report would be submitted relating to the County Council's involvement as a landowner. The Chair suggested that this matter, or an interim update, should be considered at the July meeting if possible.

(c) Minute 11 – Stratford Cricket Festival.

In response to comments from Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Don Foster reported that the costs of the Festival including the amount of any underwriting by the Council was being calculated for submission to the Cabinet.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 17th May, 2005 and Matters Arising

Following comments from the Chair relating to his name as recorded in the minutes, it was Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee's 17th May 2005 meeting be approved as amended and be signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

(4) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor David Booth declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4 – Area Community Learning Plan as a school governor and because his wife managed a voluntary youth group. He also declared a personal interest in a question to be raised by a member of the public relating to nursery care because a relative was involved in care.

Councillor Helen McCarthy declared a personal interest in Agenda item 4.

Councillors Richard Hobbs and Izzi Seccombe declared personal interests in any matter relating to the Police Authority, as members of the Authority.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe also declared a personal interest as a Governor of Kineton High School.

(5) Public Questions and Answers

(i) Question from Tony Rogers relating to Congestion in Stratford upon Avon.

Mr Rogers advised the Committee that he considered it was already obvious that at critical times the enlarged town of Stratford-upon-Avon suffers from severe traffic congestion especially on its north/south access. With further growth planned and moves towards becoming a world heritage site this would only intensify until the town becomes grid locked. Whereas the proposed park and ride initiative and possible link from the Alcester to Evesham roads are to be welcomed what was really needed was a more radical approach with a new bridge over the Avon to the east of the town to relieve the pressure on Clopton Bridge. Given the timescales involved what plans have so far been submitted to the Highways Agency/DOT for review aimed at providing a long term solution to the growth in both business and leisure traffic using the town?

Councillor Richard Hyde reminded members that the Council's earlier bids for a transportation package for the town had been

rejected by the government. He considered it appropriate for the bid to be reconsidered and submitted to the Government. Previously the Committee had brought in various sectors of the community as part of the consultation process. He suggested that the Chair and Deputy Chair should pursue matters.

Members agreed that the original bids should be revisited and that the Chair and Deputy Chair pursue matters.

Mr Rogers would be invited to attend any future consultation fora.

(ii) Question from Peter Gatenby of the Open Spaces Society relating to the Diversion of Footpath SD 313 at Hampton Lucy.

Mr Gatenby requested that the order for the diversion of the footpath, which was to be considered later in the meeting, should not be forwarded for confirmation for the following reasons.

The order would divert the path out of a small wood which was a very attractive feature of the path. There was no similar feature on any other path in the area and the loss would adversely affect public enjoyment of the path, contrary to the legislation under which the order was made.

The path had been illegally obstructed for a long time so that users could not follow the path through the wood and were led to follow official waymarks around it. Having been denied access they will have been unaware of the loss of amenity that the order implies and the desirability of objecting. The Council had a statutory duty to protect the rights of path users and forwarding the order for confirmation would condone the illegality and disregard the unfairness to users.

The legislation required that the order be made in the interests of the public or the owner. The order was made in the interests of the owner and it was claimed that the owner would benefit by increased privacy and greater safety for children but I can show that no significant benefit exists.

It might be argued that the public would benefit because there was a stile on the present route and there would be none on the proposed diversion, but there is nothing to stop the Council from substituting a gate for the stile in the interests of the public. There is an alternative route by a quiet road for anyone unable to manage the stile.

The Chair indicated that the Agenda item relating to the Diversion of Footpath SD313 would be considered after public question time.

(iii) Question from Mrs Maureen Beckett on Behalf of the Town Management Partnership relating to Decriminalisation.

Mrs Beckett informed the Committee that the Partnership welcomed support for its parking brochure and to some of its isolated concerns regarding business parking.

The Partnership was still concerned that attitudes to infringements by parking attendants were still over zealous. Recent examples included the Shakespeare Marathon and the Alcester street fair event. In contrast, areas such as Chestnut Walk were not being enforced properly for motorists who do not park within the clearly defined areas. There were some other inconsistencies and the Partnership would welcome a more consistent approach to enforcement.

The Partnership had fed back information from retailers and businesses regarding the impact of the parking on their trade and customer behaviour, to Jonathan Simkins for the Review. The Partnership would like the review to be made available as soon as possible and the action implemented immediately to ease the concerns of the traders. This would show that the Council had listened to the reasonable and factual information provided by retailers and businesses. In particular the concerns over 20 minutes only areas, simplifying the present arrangements and relaxing enforcement and charging on Sundays.

The Partnership welcome the commitment by the District Council to implement any changes to enforcement as soon as agreement had been reached by the County Council. This would be welcomed by the Partnership and show flexibility and understanding.

Don Foster indicated that all of the issues raised by the partnership had been included in the review. He added that there had been a considerable volume of representations all of which needed to be addressed and that it was not possible to submit a report to this meeting of the Committee.

In response to comments from members about the need to avoid any delay in considering the review Mr Foster indicated that a draft report would be ready shortly and that he would brief members as appropriate.

The Chair suggested that the views of a wider forum than the Committee should ideally be consulted on the draft report so that delay was avoided, particularly having regard to the time needed for the statutory processes that still needed to be followed.

(iv) Question from Mrs Taylor of Bishopton Community Nursery.

Mrs Taylor indicated that she would very much like to impress upon the Council the concerns of many of the parents whose children attend Bishopton Community Nursery.

Having been chosen so to speak as an ideal recipient/candidate of the EYDS scheme – as the nursery is situated in a disadvantaged area, parents all thought this would benefit their community. Instead it seems to have had the opposite affect as the whole plan seemed to have veered from the original understanding, resulting in the present lessees, being a charity, having to throw the towel in as it could not meet the new impositions. The nursery will be taken over by private tender which is worrying the parents of approximately 20 children some of whom either could not afford the new price structure even with the benefit of tax credits, or who do not want to have to pay for 51 weeks compulsory.

Mrs Taylor asked the Council how it planned to help alleviate the worries of these parents and what assurances the Council could give them that the EYDCP will work for them.

Following several questions from members relating to:-

- the costs of child care arrangements,
- child tax credits,
- the situation across the District,
- freedom of opportunity for non working parents,

it was agreed that arrangements would be made for a meeting between officers and councillors to discuss the situation.

2. Road Casualties in the Stratford-on-Avon

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy.

The report related to road casualties in the Stratford on Avon Area with particular reference to speeding and collisions on rural roads and in school zones.

Following introductory comments from Don Foster, members discussed various aspects of the report and the following points were made:-

- (1) There was a marked improvement in accident reduction.
- (2) The report leant towards enforcement as opposed to road safety education and engineering remedies.
- (3) Members acknowledged the work also undertaken by the Police and Fire & Rescue Service in reducing road casualties as this was a multi-agency task. There were lessons to be learned from recent accidents where multi-agency emergency responses were required.
- (4) A best value review of road safety had been completed following a comprehensive study and damage only accidents were highlighted as difficult to include in overall statistics.
- (5) More attention should be given to teaching people to drive correctly.
- (6) The new targets were challenging but the aim should be zero accidents not just the target set by the government.
- (7) With regard to progress on village speed limits Don Foster agreed to write to all members setting out the latest situation.
- (8) Some local authorities had introduced 20 mph speed limits near to schools and the possible introduction in the county would be examined as a priority matter.
- (9) With regard to capacity to meet the targets, activities would be met within existing budgets.
- (10) The category of fatal and serious injury was a national classification with resultant targets. It would be possible to examine whole routes as well as individual hot spot locations.
- (11) The threshold where speed cameras would be introduced on roads should be identified.

It was then Resolved:-

That the Committee endorses the report.

3. Crime and Disorder and Drugs Misuse Reduction Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive which provided members with information on the final

version of the Stratford-on-Avon Crime and Disorder Drugs Misuse Reduction Strategy 2005-2008.

The Committee received a presentation from Patrick Lee, Area Community Safety Manager. A copy of the presentation would be viewable on the Committee Administration System.

During the discussion the following points were raised.

- Difficulties in how the fear of crime was measured
- Public perception that sentences are too light
- With regard to the development of action plans, a corporate group communicated with all departments about necessary action by departments.
- Problems associated with lower class drugs were included in the Government's action plan.

It was then Resolved:-

That Area Committee notes the content of the final version of the strategy outlined in the presentation.

4. Area Community Learning Plan End of Year Progress Report 2004/05 and the Area Community Learning Plan 2005/08

The Committee considered the report of the County Education Officer which summarised progress made in the development and production of the Stratford Area Community Learning Plan for 2005/08 and reported on progress made during 2004/05.

In response to comments made during the debate Chris Larvin made the following points:-

- Although not referred to in the report, a considerable amount of inter agency work was being undertaken relating to school bullying.
- As mentioned in the Area Business Plan activities were being planned for bright children during the school holidays.
- Work was being undertaken to resolve problems of children moving from primary to secondary schools. This included an interchange of staff and a request for feedback on children's progress. This would be included in a report to the July Committee regarding area performance.

- With regard to out of schools provision government guidance would be followed. An external school co-ordinator was being appointed.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the progress made in the development of the Community Learning Strategy and the multi-agency Community Learning Plan for Stratford District be noted.
- (2) That the Area Committee endorses the multi-agency Community Learning Plan for Stratford District 2005/08.

5. Part Diversion of Public Footpath SD313 Hampton Lucy

The Committee considered report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy. The item was considered after Agenda Item 1.

The report recommended that the Public Path Diversion Order for footpath SD313 in Hampton Lucy, which had attracted one objection from the Open Spaces Society, be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

Chris Williams, Footpaths Inspector in the Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy Department introduced the report.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, local councillor for the area when the Order was actually made, advised members that the owners of the land concerned had requested originally that the path be extinguished but following advice from the Council's officers had decided to apply for a Footpath Diversion Order. He reported that a route other than the definitive map route had been used for some years without objections. He considered that there was no undue loss of amenity in the path being diverted.

In response to questions raised during the discussion, Chris Williams indicated that the Council's officers had way-marked a footpath which was being used by the public but which was not the definitive map route or the route proposed in the actual Order.

Members noted that the Parish Council and the Ramblers Association had no objection to the proposal.

Some members considered that there would be a loss of amenity by moving the path from the wood although it was acknowledged that the route through the wood could not be used because of obstructions.

In response to questions relating to the Council's responsibilities for maintaining rights of way free from obstruction, Chris Williams reported that

there was a considerable mileage of footpath routes within the county and these were dealt with on a priority basis. The route the subject of the Diversion Order was not a high priority route.

Councillor Richard Hobbs moved, it was duly seconded and Resolved by 7 votes to 4, with 1 abstention:-

That the Warwickshire County Council (Part of SD313 Hampton Lucy) Public Path Diversion Order 2005 be forwarded to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

6. Stratford-on-Avon Area Performance 2004/2005 and Area Business Plan 2005/2006

The Committee considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive which outlined the performance against actions proposed in the 2004/2005 Stratford-on-Avon Area Business Plan. It also introduced to Members the new Area Business Plan 2005/2006.

During the debate the following points were made:-

- The Plan would enable members to monitor progress through the overview and scrutiny process
- The best use of buildings does not mention the condition of Kineton High School.
- It was acknowledged that problems existed with several buildings and that these should be put forward for inclusion in future plans.
- Improvements could be made to the environment by reducing car journeys to school and by reducing speed limits to 20 mph so as to make it safer to walk to school.

It was then Resolved:-

That the Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee endorses those actions and milestones contained in the new 2005/2006 Stratford-on-Avon Area Business Plan.

7. First Annual Review of Area Working in Stratford-on-Avon

The Committee considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive which highlighted some of the key achievements of area working during 2004/05.

Resolved:-

That the Area Committee notes the report.

8. Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee noted the following items:-

27th July 2005 meeting

- (1) Parish Appraisals and Parish Plans
- (2) School numbers in South Warwickshire
- (3) Highway Maintenance Plan 2005/2006 and Five Year List of Structural Maintenance Schemes
- (4) B4451/07 Harbury Station Bridge
- (5) Asset Management Plans – Social Services Department
- (6) Review of Decriminalisation

Future Meeting

- (1) Speed Limits on non A roads
- (2) Area Community Education Development Plans
- (3) Affordable Housing – County Council's involvement

9. Any Other Business

The Chair received a petition requesting the Council not to fell a mature tree at the location of the proposed toucan crossing on Shipston Road, Stratford upon Avon.

The Committee rose at 6.35 p.m.

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Chair