

The Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee met at Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon on the 21st September, 2005.

Present:-

Councillors George Atkinson (Chair)
“ Richard Hyde (Vice Chair)
“ John Appleton
“ Peter Barnes
“ David Booth
“ Jill Dill-Russell
“ Richard Hobbs
“ Nina Knapman
“ Anita Macaulay
“ Chris Saint
“ Izzi Seccombe
“ Bob Stevens

Officers:-

Julie Crawshaw, Environmental Engineer, PTES.
Marion Davis, Director of Social Care and Health.
Simon Ellershaw, Fire and Rescue Service.
Peter Endall, Principal Solicitor, Chief Executive's Dept.
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport Planning, PTES
Don Foster, Head of Community Services, PTES.
Martin Gibbins, Area Manager, Chief Executive's Dept.
Mark Gore, Assistant County Education Officer.
Pete Keeley, Principal Committee Administrator.
Lynn Skinner, Area Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Dept.
Helen Toogood, Community Partnership Officer
Amanda Wilson-Patterson – Area Administrative Officer, Chief Executive's Dept.
Lindsay Wright, Area Education Officer.

5 members of the public attended.

1. General

(1) Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mike Perry.

(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

With regard to Agenda Item 2 relating to the Provision of School Places in Stratford-upon-Avon Town, Councillor Jill Dill-Russell declared a personal interest as a Governor of the High School and Councillors Peter Barnes and Anita Macaulay declared personal interests because they were related to children who attended the School.

Councillor David Booth declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 4 relating to a Review of Past Community Development Fund Grants, as a member of the Scouts Association.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on the 27th July 2005 and Matters Arising

(i) Minutes

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Stratford-on-Avon Area Committee's 27th July, 2005 meeting be approved and be signed by the Chair.

(ii) Matters Arising

(a) Minute 1 (4) (ii) (a) – Provisional Items – Affordable Housing

In response to comments from the Chair, Don Foster reported that the Cabinet had agreed a response to the West Midlands LGA and that there was nothing further to report at present. It was agreed that a report should be submitted to the January 2006 meeting.

(b) Minute 1 (4) (i) – Question from Rosalind Bolton relating to the road surface of Chapel Street, Wellesbourne and other matters.

Don Foster reported that regular meetings were held with the Wellesbourne Parish Council on various issues and this particular matter was being actively pursued.

Councillor Richard Hyde added that he had spoken to Tony Rogers and that he and the Chair were pursuing this issue with officers.

(c) Minute 1 (4) (iv) – Question from Mr Marsh – Dodwell Park and speed limit on the B439.

Don Foster reported that it was intended to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee dealing with a review of speed limits on non A class roads

(d) Minute 1(4)(v) - Question from Alan Bridgeman relating to Albany Road, Wellesbourne – Permit Parking Scheme

Don Foster indicated that the issues raised by Mr Bridgeman relating to the junction at The Bureau Bar would be investigated further under a review of traffic movement at the junction.

(e) Minute 1(4)(vi) - Question from Eric Vickers about the proposal for double yellow lines in Saxon Close.

Graeme Fitton reported that the parking restrictions in Saxon Close would be revisited as soon as possible.

(f) Minute 1(4)(vii) - Question from Richard Thompson, MD, RJ Thompson Building Contractor, relating to annual parking permit for carrying out work to businesses in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Graeme Fitton indicated that he was contacting the District Council concerning the possible purchase of parking discs by contractors working in the Town and would report further in due course.

(g) Minute 2 – Decriminalisation

Members were advised that a letter had been sent to the District Council on the 14th September relating to three options for a free parking period. The final decision would be taken by the Cabinet when the District Council's views were known. A response was expected before the 6th October Cabinet.

Councillor Richard Hyde expressed strong concern over the delays in introducing the changes agreed by the Committee and at the possible implications for the Christmas shopping period in the Town.

(h) Minute 4 - Highway Maintenance Plan 2005/06 and Five Year List of Structural Maintenance Schemes

In response to comments from the Chair concerning the need to consider tree planting and future highway maintenance costs, Don Foster reported that discussions were being held with the Property Services Department on safety aspects. He added that the Cabinet and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be considering the Plan later in the year.

(i) Minute 5 Toucan Crossing in Shipston Road, Stratford-upon-Avon

The Committee was advised that it had been intended to complete the scheme before the start of the school term but there were funding difficulties with the scheme which had delayed matters.

Discussions were being held with the District Council and the scheme was being reappraised. This might result in a puffin crossing being provided in place of the proposed toucan crossing.

(4) Questions from the public

(i) Question from Mr K Gildea regarding Urban Art

Mr Gildea requested information about the reasoning and how the decision to support the proposal to place a piece of urban art, albeit for a period, on the flat roof of the Toll House. He urged the Committee not to agree to the proposal.

He indicated that he was an acknowledged member of the construction industry with many years of experience of quality building and restoration.

There are only two national monuments in Stratford - the Clopton Bridge and the Gower Memorial, both of which are in close proximity to each other. These are National Monuments to be proud of. If a flat roof was required in this area, for this art form, he suggested the Leisure Centre, or the Moat House Hotel or even one of the many flat roofs of the main Theatre. This proposal was totally inappropriate for a Town of such history.

He asked the Committee not to demean either of these structure, we have some wonderful buildings in Stratford we should all be proud of - please preserve the dignity.

Most of us who live in and love Stratford do not wish to live in a "Theme Park" – or the travesty of what is now Bourton on the Water – This regrettably appears to be the wish of some of the employees of the County Council.

Julie Crawshaw gave a presentation to members showing the proposed sculpture which she understood was intended to remain in place for one year before being moved to another location. She stressed that the artwork project was being undertaken by the District Council who had engaged an artist to undertake the artwork for the festival

She reported that the proposal was supported by English Heritage and the District Council's Conservation Officer. The County Council had contributed £10,000 towards the project.

Don Foster indicated that the bridge was a Grade 1 Listed structure and a Scheduled Ancient Monument and he would ensure that the views expressed would be taken into account when a decision was being taken about the length of time the sculpture would remain in place on the Toll House.

It was suggested that local members should express any concerns direct to the District Council

(ii) Question from District Councillor Michael Crutchley regarding the B4060 road between Clopton Bridge and Tiddington.

Councillor Crutchley informed the Committee that the road in question had no mains drainage and therefore puddles of water formed at the least fall of rain. Although a recent exercise of tar and chip had been carried out, the holes in the road were not filled sufficiently. He enquired when this could be resolved with new drainage and a tarmacadam surface.

He added that the problem made walking along the footpath in wet weather almost impossible. Huge puddles formed very quickly. The footpath was very much in need of a complete overhaul.

There was also a problem of the footpath from Main Street, Tiddington to the Youth Hostel in the Wellesbourne Road. In places it was completely overgrown and full of potholes. He felt this was a disgrace. The path was used throughout the year by many visitors to the Youth Hostel. Many young children walking to Stratford from the Hostel had to negotiate holes and puddles. He asked when could he expect a major overhaul to the road and the adjoining pathway.

Councillor Richard Hyde indicated that he had requested action on the road concerned when he was first elected to the County Council and was advised at that time of the delays because of limited financial resources.

It had been suggested that work should be undertaken over a three-year period and the work was now in the programme for 2006.

Don Foster confirmed that there were limited resources available for such maintenance works across the whole county and confirmed that the road had not been engineered to current standards, including drainage. He

added that flooding was now more extreme. Progressive work would be undertaken working towards treatment of the whole route.

He mentioned that priorities were reviewed annually.

(iii) Question from Andrew Cooper on behalf of the Town Management Partnership relating to a Review of the Decriminalisation Scheme.

The Town Management Partnership (TMP) and its members were surprised that the Cabinet papers of the September meeting didn't include provision for Stratford-upon-Avon. I understand that this was removed to allow SDC to be consulted upon new proposals.

Surely officers and officials were aware that the District Council would need consulting? It seems that a lack of foresight will result in Stratford being prevented from having some 'well needed' adjustments to the decrim scheme.

Previous expectations have been raised by this committee and assurances have been given by officers that some of the key components of any new proposals would be forthcoming before Christmas.

Stratford was at a competitive disadvantage compared to its neighbouring towns who have yet to have decrim. Therefore provision should be made to recognise this and to recognise the raised and dashed expectations to retailers by supporting Stratford during the run up to Christmas by suspending (from 12 noon) on street parking charges for the four late night Thursday's before Christmas and the 25th Nov during the Switch-on event. This would provide a huge boost to the town during a key trading period.

The TMP ask that the changes proposed by WCC are agreed and implemented quickly as previously stated by this committee.

The TMP also asked for the committee's support of the Parking Brochure produced by the Partnership in conjunction with the two authorities, which is now on hold due to this delay. Again we welcome a speedy resolution to the changes in order to allow this brochure to be printed.

Members discussed several aspects of the TMP's comments and expressed strong concerns over the delays in implementing the scheme and in processing the Committee's recommendation regarding free parking. Members stressed that any further delay must be avoided particularly in view of the impact on Christmas shopping in the Town.

The Committee was advised that those amendments to the scheme which had been agreed by the Committee were being advertised under the

appropriate legal processes with a view to them being implemented as quickly as possible.

Support was given to the Parking Brochure.

Members noted that it would be necessary for the Cabinet to agree to delegate any further powers to the Area Committees relating to decriminalisation schemes having regard to financial implications of decisions.

In response to a suggestion that free parking should be introduced on Thursday evenings during the lead up to Christmas, Graeme Fitton advised members that this would lead to confusion amongst motorists who would not know what restrictions were in operation at which time.

Graeme Fitton indicated that discussions would be held with both the District Council and Town Centre Management Partnership relating to off-street parking restrictions including free periods in car parks

In conclusion the Chair stressed that: -

- the scheme should be kept as simple as possible for the benefit of motorists
- the delays in implementing the amendments to the Scheme were unacceptable and that good progress must now be made.

2. Provision of School Places – Stratford-upon-Avon Town

The Committee considered the report of the County Education Officer which sought to outline the position with regard to pupil place planning in Stratford town and indicates possible future measures to be considered.

Councillor Peter Barnes declared a personal interest because a relative attended the Stratford High School.

Mark Gore and Phil Astle of the Education Department introduced the main points of the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:-

Primary Places

- The report related to the position regarding pupil place planning in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon as requested by the Committee at a previous meeting. It was intended to submit a further more extensive report relating to the

pattern of school provision and demographic trends for the whole county later in the year.

- As there are falling roles in some rural schools, those schools have offered facilities for the local community.
- Some parents who lived in the Town preferred to send their children to smaller schools on the fringe of the town.
- There is no requirement on independent schools to provide detailed pupil numbers. A figure of 7% of pupils in the county was used.
- Many factors that had to be taken into account in pupil place planning, including the tightness between supply and demand and also the fact that the birth rate was falling.

Secondary Places

- The demand for places at the High School was increasing
- The reasons for the High School having been constructed to its present capacity were outlined, including affordability.
- The Governors of the High School had indicated they were reluctant to increase its capacity. They had requested that the schools priority catchment area be reduced. This would support the Kineton and Shipston High Schools.
- Rebuilding Kineton School would probably attract new pupils which should reduce numbers travelling to Stratford but the problem with pupil numbers at the Stratford High School needed examination and resolution before any rebuilding work was commenced at Kineton.
- Developer contributions to school provision was normally allocated to the immediate area concerned. This would be required where there was insufficient capacity in existing school provision having regard to expected increase resulting from the development.
- Substantial and complex work was necessary to review priority areas and such work was undertaken 2 years ago in respect of secondary provision in south of the county. Priority areas could not be changed easily.
- Although amendments to priority areas can remove demand from a particular school there was no certainty as to where parents would seek to send their children.
- The expansion of the Stratford grammar schools must not be ruled out. An examination was being undertaken of the legality and feasibility of expanding grammar schools. Currently, of the pupils attending the Stratford grammar schools, only 40% were from the town.
- Any future report should include comments relating to the High Schools at Kineton, Shipston and the Grammar School at Alcester.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, seconded by Councillor Bob Stevens moved and it was Resolved by 5 votes to 3 :-

- (1) That the report on the provision of school places in Stratford-upon-Avon Town be noted

- (2) That the position with regard to school places in primary schools continues to be monitored
- (3) That further work be undertaken to explore the options for meeting the future demand for secondary school places including the possible expansion of the grammar schools in Stratford-upon-Avon and that the outcome be reported to Cabinet and the Stratford on Avon Area Committee at the appropriate time.

3. Stratford on Avon Well being Fund Priorities and Potential Commission

The Committee considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive.

The Area Committee was asked to identify the priorities for the use of the Well being Fund in 2005/06 and to consider whether to approve a Well being Fund commission for the establishment of a fund for disabled access improvements to community facilities.

Following introductory comments from Martin Gibbins it was Resolved:-

That the Area Committee:

- (1) Agrees that the priorities for the use of the Well being Fund shall be those set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report as supplemented by the themes set out in paragraph 2.2 and
- (2) Approves the Well being Fund proposal set out in Appendix A to the report.

4. Review of past Community Development Fund grants

The Committee considered the report of County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive which provided information to Councillors on the way in which Community Development Fund grants were spent for 2003/4, and an update for those funded in 2004/5.

Following introductory comments from Helena Toogood, members requested that their congratulations be passed to the team for the work being undertaken

5. Provisional Items for Future Meetings

23rd November, 2005

- (1) Development Fund 2005/06
- (2) Area Community Learning Plan
- (3) Area Community Education Council report including development plans
- (4) Draft School Organisation Framework 2005/10
- (5) Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) - Draft Year 3 Action Plan Consultation
- (6) B4451/07 Harbury Station Bridge

Future Meeting

- (1) Speed Limits on non A roads
- (2) Affordable Housing (January 2006)
- (3) Education – pupil numbers
- (4) Amalgamation of Police Forces which should involve someone who could respond to the Area Committee to enable a Stratford view to be prepared.

6. Any Other Business

The Chair indicated that the officers must prepare a structured programme for Local Democracy Week 2006.

He also stated that he was disappointed that a recent national survey of Market Towns had not included any Warwickshire Market Towns in the list of finalists and requested that the attention of the appropriate officers be drawn to this fact.

The Committee rose at 6.30 p.m.

.....
Chair