

The **WARWICK AREA COMMITTEE** met at **WARWICK** on the **10th JULY, 2007**.

Present:-

Councillor Sarah Boad (Chair)
“ Ken Browne
“ Jose Compton
“ Michael Doody
“ Eithne Goode
“ Marion Haywood
“ Tim Naylor
“ Raj Randev
“ Mota Singh
“ John Whitehouse

Also Present:-

Officers: Martin Stott, Peter Samwell and Shirley Reynolds (Environment and Economy Directorate), Tony Maione, Peter Hunter and Nick Gower Johnson (Performance and Development Directorate) Mark Gore and John Harmon (Children, Young People and Families Directorate)

1. Election of Chair

Councillor John Whitehouse, seconded by Councillor Raj Randev, moved and it was Resolved:-

That Councillor Sarah Boad be elected Chair of the Warwick Area Committee until the appointment of her successor in accordance with Standing Order 2.8.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

Councillor Michael Doody, seconded by Councillor Jose Compton, moved and it was Resolved:-

That Councillor Marion Haywood be appointed Vice Chair of the Warwick Area Committee until the appointment of her successor in accordance with Standing Order 2.8.

3. General (1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Les Caborn, Alan Cockburn, Chris Davis, Bernard Kirton and Dave Shilton.

(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The following Councillors disclosed the following personal interests:-

- (a) Councillor Michael Doody – agenda item 6 – Warwick District Council Housing Portfolio holder.
- (b) Councillor John Whitehouse – agenda item 4(1) – member of the Management Committee of the Pupil Reintegration Unit; and agenda item 4(3) – member of Sustrans.

4. Public Question Time

(1) Redevelopment of Ridgeway School

The Chair said that she had received notification of a question related to the redevelopment of Ridgeway School and had asked Mark Gore to set the scene for the Committee.

Mark Gore said that as part of the countywide programme of reorganisation of special schools, it had been agreed in early 2005 that the Ridgeway School would become a primary generic special school located on the existing site and that Round Oak School would become the secondary generic special school on a new site on Myton Road. The decision to locate the new primary special school on the Ridgeway School site had been warmly supported by the Ridgeway School community, in the knowledge that this was likely to involve building on the site while the school was in operation. Round Oak School would soon vacate its existing buildings and the Council had given a commitment that the Pupil Reintegration Unit should relocate as soon as possible into those buildings. However, in March 2007, it was suggested that this move might be delayed until September 2008 to enable the pupils of the Ridgeway School to be accommodated temporarily during the building work.

It had been necessary to weigh up competing priorities and the needs of two groups of vulnerable children. There was little difference in costs of the options.

If Ridgeway School remained on site, the building work would be extended by up to 12 months and would have to be carefully managed to ensure that pupils' health and safety would not be compromised and the disruption to their education minimised. Similar projects had been undertaken in the county, one of which involved Woodlands School in Coleshill remaining on site. There was no doubt that this had presented very real challenges for the contractor and for staff at the school and that for some period the school had limited access to some facilities. However, the team charged with delivering the Ridgeway scheme was also responsible for special school projects across the county and were knowledgeable and experienced and understood the operation of special schools. This meant that they would be in good position to minimise disruption.

The PRU in the Central area currently operated in a former police and court building and was not purpose built and not fit for purpose. Conditions for staff and pupils were wholly unsatisfactory and there were serious issues of health and safety that were a concern to the professional associations and trade unions, both teaching and non-teaching, as well as to the PRU management, staff and parents. The most serious concerns had been addressed but others remained pending the move to new premises. There were no full sized classrooms in the building and that seriously compromised the curriculum that could be offered to the young people on site and the education they received. Group sizes were very small and not efficient or effective or a satisfactory experience for those young people. Alternative provision for the PRU had been a priority for the Authority for more than 10 years and the plan to relocate the PRU to the Round Oak buildings was part of the strategy for the reorganisation of special school provision.

Clearly there was concern amongst parents of pupils at Ridgeway who had been given to understand that the pupils would be relocated. He apologised for communication with parents and the school having not been handled well and the Directorate was looking at this issue. The concerns of Ridgeway were reflected however by those of the management and staff of the PRU and, if the offer made to excluded pupils was restricted still further, by parents and carers of these pupils. Alternative solutions continued to be investigated but at this stage it was intended to include in the report to Cabinet in September a proposal to continue with the original plan to relocate the PRU in the Autumn Term 2007 and for building work to begin on the Ridgeway site as soon as possible.

The Chairman said that it was heartening that members of the public looked to the Warwick Area Committee as a first call for dealing with problems but in this instant the Committee had no powers to resolve the issues that evening. However at the end of the discussions, the Committee were likely to formulate a recommendation to Cabinet.

Pat Flynn, Headteacher Ridgeway School

She said that the choice for the use of the existing Round Oak School premises had been described as a temporary solution for both Ridgeway and the PRU. There was a good relationship between the school and the PRU. The Ridgeway School building had been built as a junior training centre and was overcrowded. There were Health and Safety issues at Ridgeway School as recognised by three Ofsted reports and there had been a recent asbestos scare. She had spoken to the headteacher of Woodlands School who had confirmed that there had been enormous difficulties in remaining on site when the building work was in progress.

Emma Padgett, Parent

The children of Ridgeway School should be relocated to temporary accommodation during the building work. Basic tasks needed careful planning between teachers and parents. The children's statements of special needs were not being met in the building. Parents needed specific answers to the problem.

Peter Allan, Head of PRU

He considered it unfortunate that the situation had arisen. He had no arguments with the headteacher of Ridgeway School or the parents of the pupils. However, the fact was that there was no vacancy at Round Oak School because there was an existing long-term commitment for the PRU to be accommodated there. Assurances had been given that the move would take place following a series of Ofsted inspections.

Tony Souter, National Union of Teachers

The NUT was in solidarity with the previous three speakers as there were two sets of very needy pupils. It was a very difficult situation because there was an urgent need for the PRU to relocate. There was a need for both sets of parents and children to be supported. The real problem was one of underfunding.

Councillor Ken Browne suggested as a temporary solution that Ridgeway should move to the existing Round Oak site and the PRU to Ridgeway while the building work was undertaken.

Councillor John Whitehouse said that there was a major question of how the situation had arisen but that was not an issue for that evening but he would ask a question of the portfolio holder at the County Council meeting on the 17th July. He was his group's spokesperson for the whole of children and young people issues and had been appointed to the PRU management committee only within the last three to four weeks and was therefore impartial. He believed that a very strong message should be sent to the Cabinet that the situation was wholly unacceptable. The officers should be asked to work with the two schools with a view to finding an acceptable solution.

Councillor Tim Naylor had heard nothing to persuade him that the Committee should take any other action than adhere to the original plan.

Councillor Jose Compton said that she had not been involved in the discussions but the officers would have thought through the issues very carefully and she favoured the original proposal.

Mark Gore said that the officers would continue to search for different solution to the Ridgeway accommodation issue.

It was then Resolved:-

- (i) That the Warwick Area Committee was extremely concerned at the situation that had arisen regarding the planned move of the Milverton Pupil Reintegration Unit to the Round Oak site and the planned rebuilding of the Ridgeway Special School.

- (ii) That the Warwick Area Committee calls on Cabinet to ensure that the concerns of Ridgeway parents be fully addressed, and that the temporary accommodation provided for Ridgeway children during the rebuilding of their school was the best that money could buy, so that any impact on their education be minimised.
- (iii) That the Warwick Area Committee urges officers to find a solution that allows Ridgeway School to move out to an alternative site for the duration of the building work, and which did not impede the move of the Pupil Reintegration Unit to Round Oak.

(2) Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement – Broad Street, Cherry Street, Guy Street and Coten End, Warwick area

Jill Murray, resident

She referred to a petition of 101 signatures urging the Warwick Forum to rethink some of the changes to the parking arrangements proposed for this area of Warwick. There had been flawed communication channels. Residents had made a range of suggestions for changing the arrangements that were improvements to what was proposed, perfectly workable and met the needs of local residents and businesses. There had been no responses to those suggestions.

Michael Rafferty, resident

The reason for the majority of the residents not signing the petition was that the properties were empty and residents who did not own cars and therefore had no concerns about parking restrictions. He strongly urged that consultation should take place appropriately with residents with a view to improvements to the arrangements.

Martin Stott said that the Directorate would be happy to review the arrangements once they had been implemented. He then referred to a number of questions that had been raised by Jill Murray prior to the meeting and to which she had requested answers at the meeting. The questions were set out below in italics followed by the answer:-

The Department for Transport issues advice and best practice guidance to local authorities regarding the decriminalisation of parking enforcement. Why has Warwickshire County Council in so many instances not followed this Government guidance and instead shown inconsistencies with disregard to much of Government best practice and procedural requirements?

The Department for Transport's guidance had been closely followed in the development of the DPE project in Warwickshire. If Ms Murray provided

examples of where she felt that this was not the case, officers would be happy to discuss this further with her.

The remaining questions are also supported by DFT Guidance. What actions has the Council taken to increase, not reduce, the number of parking places available to residents as part of the new residents parking permit scheme?

Apart from the introduction of on-street pay and display areas and extensions to the existing residents parking scheme the strategy adopted had been to implement as few parking restriction changes as possible.

What evidence can the Council give that the emphasis on developing the scheme has been on where people CAN park? Has the Council considered where motorists who previously offended, will park in future?

The main objective of the scheme was to provide effective enforcement of existing and new parking restrictions including double and single yellow lines, loading restrictions, disabled persons parking facilities and time limited waiting.

Will the Council be distributing leaflets to local people or attaching them to parked vehicles in the affected areas where DPE is to be introduced?

An extensive public awareness campaign was proposed in the run up to August 6th. This included distribution of leaflets, press releases, local radio advertising, street banners, information signs, use of the website (www.warwickshire.gov.uk/decrim) and public exhibitions in Leamington (Royal Priors – 20th & 21st July & All Saints Church 23rd/24th), Kenilworth (Abbey End – 25th/26th July) and Warwick (Market Place – 27th/28th).

Does the Council intend to have a 'honeymoon' period after August 6th and if so what are the details of this?

The Warwick District Council would carry out the day-to-day management of the Parking Attendants and the enforcement regime on the County Council's behalf.

Will the BMA badge scheme be recognised in the area?

Blue Badge holders would be exempt from the need for residents parking permits and any pay and display arrangements.

What evidence can the Council show for predicted demand as well as the demand that existed at the time of the parking studies?

Consultants had carried out a study of parking in the District. Full details of the findings could be found on the above website.

What evidence can the Council show that consideration was given to relaxing or removing existing parking controls because they are no longer appropriate or necessary?

The general view was that all existing restrictions were still appropriate. One or two requests had been received to consider the revocation or amendment of restrictions and they would be investigated. Any further requests would be looked at as part of the scheme review. Meetings were being arranged in November with representatives of local stakeholder groups to discuss the review.

The petition was then received, the wording of which was as follows:-

"I the undersigned feel very strongly that Warwick County Council is choosing to implement new parking arrangements within Guy St., Cherry St., Broad St. and Guys Cliffe Terrace without any appropriate consultation with residents, without any apparent regard for the very disruptive consequences, and without considering workable alternative arrangements.

I consequently would request that the Council postpone the impending implementations until a fuller consultation process has taken place, and alternative methods of parking control are fully examined, including viable suggestions proposed by residents at the meeting at Coten End School on 27th June 2007."

Members were concerned about the apparent failure of communication over the proposals, particularly in light of the public meetings held and publicity given to them. They asked officers to undertake a very early review of the proposals.

(3) Cycleway – Kenilworth to Leamington Spa

Colin Ward, representing K2L

He questioned the need for a cycle route from Kenilworth to Warwick, as he was unaware of a demand for it. The demand was for a route from Kenilworth to Leamington Spa. He understood that the proposed Kenilworth to Warwick cycleway was a Sustrans route and that the funding would not be transferable.

Rodney King, Cycleways

He confirmed that there was a strong demand for a cycleway from Kenilworth to Leamington Spa rather than from Kenilworth to Warwick.

Martin Stott said that he was not aware of the details relating to this issue but that the Council would not turn down funding from Sustrans if it was offered and that it was true that funding provided by Sustrans was not transferrable

Councillor Eithne Goode questioned why Sustrans was determining Council policy with regard to the cycleway when £270,000+ was being funded by the Council. She was unaware of any demand for the Kenilworth to Warwick route

and suggested that it was possible that a mistaken assumption was being made that Warwick University was located in Warwick. In fact there were more students living in Leamington Spa than Warwick. She proposed that Cabinet should be urged to look again at the proposal.

Councillor Tim Naylor supported that course of action.

Councillor John Whitehouse said that he was a member of Sustrans but he also supported the case for the Kenilworth to Leamington cycleway and reminded members that at their meeting on the 22nd November 2005 they had resolved – “That provision be made for the Kenilworth to Leamington Spa cycle route in the provisional Local Transport Plan”.

It was then Resolved:-

That Cabinet be urged to give priority to the Kenilworth to Leamington Spa cycleway rather than the Kenilworth to Warwick route.

(4) Flooding – Eagle Street, Leamington Spa

Mark Pallett, resident

Residents of Eagle Street had been forced to leave their homes as a result of flooding on the 14th June 2007. Severn Trent needed to upgrade sewers and storm drains had not been cleaned out for some time. Pavement levels had slipped over time leading to pooling of water outside some properties. There was a general lack of attention to Eagle Street with a dead tree being left unattended and graffiti and litter detracting from the area.

Peter Hunter said that there was agreement across the public sector to respond to the flooding in Warwick District. There was a proposal for a joint scrutiny exercise with the Warwick District Council to look in detail at the reasons for the flooding.

Martin Stott said that the Environment & Economy Directorate would investigate the storm drains in the area to review the frequency of cleaning them.

Councillor Mota Singh welcomed the proposals and reminded Members that Eagle Street was not the only street involved.

Councillor Tim Naylor suggested the Safer Neighbourhood Team as a route for tackling the graffiti problem.

The Chair asked that the Committee be updated regularly on this issue and said that agenda item on matters arising from the minutes.

5. **Warwick Town Centre Traffic Management Review**

The Committee considered the report by the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.

Shirley Reynolds, Team Leader – Highways and Transportation Studies, and James McKay, Warwick Society, introduced this item.

Councillor Raj Randev welcomed the report and the work done by the Forum. He had a concern about the street-by-street approach because care would be needed to ensure that funding was not exhausted. It was important to have costings. He asked for the final report as soon as possible.

Councillor Ken Browne referred to his comments on the agenda management sheet regarding demand management measures. There was a need to make the route through Warwick less attractive as 76% of traffic on Warwick roads was through traffic.

Councillor Tim Naylor supported the recommendations although the street-by-street approach left the impression that there was no overall strategy.

Councillor John Whitehouse commended the Forum on the progress made. He said that there was clearly a risk of raising expectations too high as the funding was finite. He suggested that there might be a need to seek further funding.

Councillor Marion Haywood congratulated the Forum for its achievement.

It was then Resolved:-

- (1) That the Warwick Area Committee comments be noted.
- (2) That the Warwick Area Committee approves the commissioning of a report into the effectiveness of the chosen package of measures, their funding and the timetable for their implementation and that such report be brought back to the Committee in six months.
- (3) That the Warwick Area Committee endorses the commitment of resources to design and implement an initial phase of the Forum's proposed 'street by street' schemes.
- (4) That the Warwick Area Committee supports the continuing work of the Forum.

6. Well-Being Fund 2007/8 – Funding Proposal – Community Office, Packmores/The Cape, Warwick

The Committee considered the report by the Strategic Director of Performance and Development and it was then Resolved:-

That Warwick Area Committee approves the proposal for a contribution of £15,000 to the development of a Community Office in the Packmores / The Cape area of Warwick set out in section 2 of the report.

7. A445/03 Portobello Bridge, Warwick

The Committee considered the report by the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.

Councillor Browne could see no alternative to supporting the recommendation but considered that in addition the Committee should write to English Heritage and to the local MP with a view to urging him to bring pressure on English Heritage to reconsider its position over the widening scheme.

Councillor Tim Naylor expressed concern that a body that was unaccountable could veto the wishes of elected representatives.

The Chair acknowledged the responsibilities of English Heritage but said that there were times when the needs of people had to be held higher than a building.

It was then Resolved:-

- (1) That subject to (2) below the previous proposals for major widening of Portobello Bridge with associated improvements to adjacent junctions be abandoned and the Warwick Area Committee endorses in principle the proposal to develop options for alternative pedestrian and cycling provision adjacent to the main bridge and that the options be submitted to public consultation.
- (2) That English Heritage be asked to reconsider its decision relating to the bridge widening proposal and that James Plaskitt M.P. be urged to bring pressure on English Heritage to do so.

8. Street Lighting Hours of Operation – Consultation

The Committee considered the report by the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.

Councillor Tim Naylor suggested that local universities and manufacturer should be approached to ask them to develop appropriate technology to deal with the issue of dimming/turning off street lights. He commended the idea of a trial and asked that a list of possible roads for the trial be prepared for the Committee to consider.

Councillor Ken Browne had heard from Canada that when lighting was reduced by 50% there, the result was barely perceptible to the human eye. Although switching off the lights in some area might be acceptable and even welcome, in others it would not be.

The Chair said that she would like to see a demonstration of dimming street lights.

Councillor Mota Singh said that there was a danger that reducing street lighting would be an invitation to criminals.

Councillor John Whitehouse said that there was a need for a very careful audit street by street to improve lighting.

Councillor Marion Haywood said that there was a need to be selective about choosing which lights to switch off or dim. She understood that the photocells used would need to be removed and replaced if any alteration was needed to the timing.

It was then Resolved:-

That Area Committee support a trial of lights being switched off or dimmed in their area in the early hours of the morning and that a list of options for the trial be brought to the Committee to choose an urban street and a semi-rural street.

9. Responsive Services and Empowered Communities – the development of a locality approach in Warwick Area

The Committee considered the report by the Strategic Director of Performance and Development.

Nick Gower Johnson introduced the report and Peter Hunter explained the proposed options for localities.

Although there was some support for the proposals Members expressed a number of concerns about them:-

- (1) There was scepticism about whether the proposals would work and it was not clear that the bodies would be consultative or would have decision-making powers.
- (2) They appeared to formalise what the local authorities should have been and probably were doing already.

- (3) If the bodies were to be consultative, how would this impact upon Town and Parish Councils who already had that role?
- (4) If decision-making powers were given to the bodies from the County Council and District Council, there was a possibility that this would be the start of local government reorganisations.

Nick Gower Johnson undertook to e-mail those members of the Area Committee who had been unable to attend to obtain their comments on the proposals.

It was then Resolved:-

That views expressed by the Area Committee be relayed to the Cabinet when it next considers the proposals at its meeting on 18th October 2007.

10. Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee noted the following provisional items:-

25th September 2007

- Possible proposals on future school organisation in Warwick.
- Proposed Tachbrook Road Cycleway, Leamington Spa – between Queensway and the High Street junction.
- Warwick Bus Interchange.
- A429 Barford to Warwick cycleway.
- Bishops Tachbrook to Leamington Spa cycle route.
- Flooding review update

It was agreed that the representatives of the Warwick Area Committee on the joint scrutiny exercise into the recent flooding within Warwick District would be Councillors Eithne Goode and Tim Naylor and a representative from the Conservative Group members on the Committee to be notified by Councillor Marion Haywood. The findings of the panel would be used to inform an Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee's scrutiny exercise in the Autumn.

11. Minutes of the meetings of 8th May 2007 and matters arising

(1) Minutes

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting of the Warwick Area Committee held on the 8th May 2007, having been circulated, be approved and be signed by the Chair.

(2) Matters arising

(i) Minute 2 – Traffic Noise – A46/Hampton Road, Warwick

The Chair said that the Highways Agency had offered to complete the noise fencing but if there was a need to fill in the gap in the bunding as well, that was the responsibility of the developers.

Councillor Raj Randev said that the developers should be asked to fill in the gap in the bunding.

(ii) Minute 12(2)(ii) – Talisman Square Development Traffic Condition

Councillor John Whitehouse informed the Committee that the section 278 agreement had been signed.

12. Any other items

Nil.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 8.48 p.m.