

**PARKING STRATEGY WORKING PARTY held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN on 1 AUGUST 2000**

Present:- Councillor M A Hibbs - Chairman.  
Councillors Mrs D Cornell, R J Copping, R A Merrion,  
R J O'Neill, A R Row and G Sell.

Also present:- Councillor R P Chambers and Mr P Lainson (Uttlesford  
Access Group).

Officers in attendance:- M R Dellow, Mrs T Halford, Mrs S McLagan,  
M T Purkiss, E J Spencer and A Stewart.

**PS9 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs M A Caton. The four Uttlesford Essex County Councillors had been invited to attend the first part of this meeting but apologies had been received from Councillors Wallace, Westcott and Whitehead.

Councillor R J Copping drew attention to his interest in so far as he was a member of the Dunmow Town Strategy Group and Great Dunmow Town Council, Councillors Mrs D Cornell and M A Hibbs declared their respective interests in so far as they were members of Saffron Walden Town Council and Councillor G Sell declared an interest in so far as he was a member of Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council.

Councillor Chambers declared an interest in so far as he was a member of the Essex Police Authority.

**PS10 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PS11 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute PS3(i) - Highway Signage**

It was reported that permission had been sought for this work to be carried out and it had been booked for implementation during early September.

**(ii) Minute PS3(ii) Fairycroft Car Park - Change Machine**

It was noted that the cost of the change machine had been within budget and Waitrose Limited had met 50% of the cost.

**(iii) Minute PS3(iii) Resident Parking Scheme - Lining**

It was noted that prior to this work being carried out notice would be given to enable the Council to notify local residents and request that cars be moved to enable the new lines to

be painted. Essex County Council had given an assurance that the work would be completed this year.

**(iv) Minute PS5 Saffron Walden Car Park - Usage**

It was reported that a letter had been sent to the Saffron Walden traders and a press release would be issued this week.

**(v) Minute PS6 - Decriminalisation**

It was noted that the correct spelling of the name of the Consultant was Norman Downie.

PS12

**DECRIMINALISATION - DISCUSSION WITH ESSEX COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

The Working Party discussed issues of decriminalisation with Councillor R P Chambers who was the County Councillor for the Saffron Walden division. The Chairman of the Working Party explained that Members were particularly concerned that if the Council was required to introduce decriminalisation it should not be at the expense of local council tax payers. Whilst the County Council had given an assurance over the financial viability of decriminalisation, Members of the Working Party remained to be convinced. Indeed, some Members were still of the opinion that decriminalisation was not appropriate for a large rural district such as Uttlesford.

Councillor Chambers said that he had serious reservations about decriminalisation and he understood that this view was shared by Maldon District Council. He was yet to be convinced of the advantages for Uttlesford. If the financial position could be assured he would feel more satisfied but felt that it was unlikely that the County Council would be able to bind itself to any guarantee. He stressed that decriminalisation was not a political issue within the County Council. Councillor Chambers did not accept the point of view put forward by the Consultant that decriminalisation would free up more police time in this District. Members of the Working Party informed Councillor Chambers that they had been told by the County Council that if the Council did not agree to taking on decriminalisation another agency could take these powers over within Uttlesford. Councillor Chambers said that decriminalisation would not be forced upon the Council. In response to a further question he confirmed that he understood that the portfolio holder at the County Council was in favour of decriminalisation.

Members felt that options of either increasing off-street car parking charges or introducing on-street car parking charges would not assist in efforts to improve the viability and vitality of the town centres. Concern was also expressed that there was little evidence that the police were enforcing on-street parking regulations within the District and questioned what guarantee could be given that traffic wardens would continue to operate. Councillor Chambers stated that there was no intention at the current time to scale down the traffic warden scheme.

Officers explained that the models prepared by the Consultant did not envisage the introduction of on-street parking charges. It was advised that the County Council were merely seeking comments on the consultant's report at this stage and did not require a decision on whether the Council supported decriminalisation in the District. The Chairman of the Working Party said that there were some advantages in decriminalisation in Uttlesford and the situation was much more complex than it appeared to be at first sight.

At this stage of the meeting Peter Lanson, the Chairman of the Uttlesford Access Group, was asked to address the Working Party. He said that decriminalisation gave the opportunity of dealing more effectively with cars parked on pavements which caused danger to people with disabilities, particularly the blind. Parking on pavements also caused damage to the surface

which at a later stage caused tripping hazards which restricted the ability of the disabled to become fully involved in community life. He explained that whilst the police had powers to deal with parking on pavements it was given low priority and there was some concern about the effectiveness of the legislation. The Access Group had taken the matter up with Sir Alan Haselhurst MP and he had forwarded to the group a copy of a letter from the Transport Minister acknowledging the police position and stating that there was no intention to increase police powers at this time. The reply did mention that it was possible to deal with this problem under Traffic Regulation Orders which were enforced through decriminalisation powers. He concluded that he was very disappointed that there was no reference in the consultant's report to issues relating to people with disabilities.

Councillor Chambers replied that the police authority were very concerned about disabled access issues and he would take these matters up with the relevant police officers.

Members of the Working Party were still concerned with the financial models which relied heavily on the introduction of a £60 penalty fine. Officers also expressed concern at the figure of £21,000 which it was alleged would be provided by additional enforcement of on-street parking. It was suggested that the volume of off-street parking was finite and at some stage the projected figures would not be achieved.

### PS13      **DECRIMINALISATION - RESPONSE TO ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Following the last meeting officers had drafted a response to Essex County Council which set out the Working Party's concerns regarding whether decriminalised parking enforcement was appropriate in a largely rural area such as Uttlesford and the fact that despite the financial assumptions and recommendations regarding the deficits and pay-back periods the Working Party remain unconvinced that decriminalisation could be sustainable.

Members made a number of amendments to the draft response and it was agreed that this would be sent to Essex County Council officers and also directly to Councillor Williams who was the portfolio holder at the County Council.

The draft letter would be sent to Councillors Hibbs and Row for their formal approval prior to it being signed by the Head of Community and Leisure Services.

It was noted that the Council had not yet established a policy on decriminalised parking enforcement and this matter would need to be addressed at the Community Services Committee.

A copy of the letter incorporating the Working Party's amendments is appended to these minutes.

### PS14      **ON STREET PARKING - SAFFRON WALDEN**

Officers had been looking at the potential for providing short term parking opportunities on Resident Parking Scheme streets. Officers circulated a paper setting out the implications for the following four options:

- (a) Free parking eg. limited parking of 1 hour.
- (b) Thirty minutes free parking on all streets.
- (c) Town Council option - operating RPS between 6.00pm - 10.00am (ie. free parking between 10.00am and 6.00pm)

- (d) paid parking on designated streets.

The Working Party considered that option B did not provide sufficient time to enable worthwhile visits to be made to the town centre. Option A also had a number of disadvantages. The Chairman of the Working Party considered that there needed to be a balance where the public were not confused by the arrangements and permit holders did not have to move their cars to find spaces in the designated areas. Members also considered that having regard to the money spent on the extension to the Swan Meadow Car Park it would be illogical to introduce free on-street parking in Resident Parking areas. It was considered that Option D addressed some of the issues of improving the vitality of the town centre.

Officers were asked to research in more detail Option D and to undertake consultation with permit holders and to arrange for the parking attendants to continue monitoring the number of empty spaces which were available. Officers were also asked to undertake some research into Option C, possibly with the addition of limited periods of parking.

It was felt that the monitoring period should be undertaken in September and it would not therefore be possible to report to the Community Services Committee at its meeting on 19 September. Consultation should take place on the options presented and agreed at the next meeting of this Working Party which was likely to be in mid-October. The Chief Accountant said that regard needed to be had to the budgetary timetable, particularly if there were financial implications arising from the preferred option.

**PS15 NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be arranged in consultation with the Chairman.

**PS16 RESIDENT PARKING SCHEME - MUSEUM STREET**

Members were advised of a letter from a resident of Bridge Street who was moving to Museum Street, Saffron Walden. Unfortunately, no permit was available in Museum Street for this resident but space was available in Abbey Lane. Officers were asked to advise the resident that a permit would be allowed on a temporary basis in Abbey Lane until space becomes available in Museum Street or Abbey Lane becomes fully subscribed.

**PS17 CAR PARKING - STANSTED AIRPORT**

It was reported that there was an issue developing regarding car parking at Stansted Airport. It appeared that due to the high cost of parking at the airport a number of travellers were leaving their cars in surrounding villages. It was agreed that this matter should be referred to the Airport Working Party for further consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.