

PARKING STRATEGY WORKING PARTY held at 6.00 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN on 13 NOVEMBER 2000

Present: Councillor M A Hibbs – Chairman
Councillors Mrs M A Caton, Mrs D Cornell, R J Copping,
R A Merrion and A R Row
Officers in attendance: Mrs T Halford, Mrs S McLagan, M T Purkiss and
A Stewart

PS26 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R J O'Neill and G Sell. 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 and Councillors Mrs D Cornell and M A Hibbs declared their respective interests in so far as they were members of Saffron Walden Town Council.

PS27 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

PS28 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute PS20 – Highways Signage and White Lining

Essex County Council had stated that the total cost for highway signage would be £6,999.50. It was understood that if the contract commenced in November it should be completed by January 2001. However, it was not clear whether an order had yet been placed with May Gurney. It was agreed that Officers would be asked to pursue this matter and to ascertain whether signs had yet been made, an order had been placed and a date set for the commencement of work.

The white lining had still not been carried out and no firm date had yet been given. A letter would be sent direct to May Gurney to expedite this matter.

(ii) Minute PS20 (iii) – Car Parking Stansted Airport

It was understood that the Development Control Sub-Committee had taken enforcement action in a number of cases where unauthorised parking was taking place.

The Airport Working Party had also considered the problem of off-site parking in a number of roads around the District.

It was agreed that Members of the Development Control Sub-Committee should be thanked for the action being taken and asked to maintain vigilance and that all Councillors should be asked to report incidents involving off-site parking to the Corporate Director- Development.

(iii) Minute PS23 – Orange Badge Scheme

A letter had been received from the Uttlesford Area Access Group concerning car parking provision for the disabled in Saffron Walden. The Group would be asked to comment specifically on the issue of disabled parking provision in the High Street.

(iv) Minute PS24 – Parking in Great Dunmow

In response to the questions from Councillor Copping, Officers agreed to report back to the Working Party with more details and comparative figures on the level of parking within the car parks and alleged increased off-street parking.

PS29

DECRIMINALISATION – REPORT FROM ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

It was reported that the Executive Board of Essex County Council at its meeting on 7 November 2000 had made recommendations on the question of decriminalisation of parking enforcement in Essex.

The Executive Board supported the adoption of decriminalisation subject to:

- A countywide approach
- Satisfactory local transport plan bid outcome
- Penalty charge notice fines being fixed at £60
- Full Council approval on 5 December 2000

Following the last meeting of the Working Party, Officers had written to all Essex District Councils to ascertain their current approach to this issue. All responses received so far had been in support of decriminalisation, with only Castle Point District Council seeking further clarification over the financial arrangements.

Officers had examined the County Council report and had made an assessment of the key factors.

It was intended that the scheme would be self financing in the medium/long term and that a levy on penalty charge notices (PCNs) of £2.00 would be made to off-set the set up costs. Districts would be expected to support the deficit through an increased surplus in its off-street parking account. If this did not cover the deficit the locally determined budget would be used as a last resort. It was noted that if there were surpluses these would go into the locally determined budget. Offices expressed some concern at the short timescale for implementation. The County Council wanted to work in partnership with districts in order to achieve economies of scale. It was also understood that

Essex County Council considered that a countywide approach was most appropriate and that the Police Authority could withdraw traffic warden facilities if there were only a few local authorities not adopting decriminalisation.

Members were advised of the Officers assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of adopting an ad hoc agency for decriminalisation. There still appeared to be a question mark over responsibility for dealing with obstruction in on street parking areas and this matter would be taken up by the Head of Community and Leisure Services with the Chief Constable.

Members felt that further information should be obtained on what formula had been used to calculate the return on PCNs and the costs involved in their collection. It was noted that whilst the costs of collecting PCNs would increase by the rate of inflation it was unlikely that the PCN fine of £60 would change in the foreseeable future.

Members felt that it was important that Officer entered into further discussions with Essex County Council and that further financial information on the implications and the set up costs relevant to Uttlesford were necessary. Clarification was also required on the level of contractual commitment on funding.

Councillor Hibbs felt that it was important that the Policy and Resources Committee were made aware of the possible financial implications of adopting decriminalisation powers.

At this stage Councillor Chambers attended the meeting and confirmed that he had put forward this Council's views on decriminalisation. He understood that the portfolio holder was willing to discuss the Council's concerns and the possible financial impact on Uttlesford. It was understood that it was likely that Maldon District Council would be included in the first phase and that Uttlesford would be in the second phase. This would provide an opportunity to assess the impact on a rural area. Councillor Chambers shared concerns that the Council should not be forced into a position where it had to increase off-street parking charges and introduce on-street parking charges to underwrite the cost of this scheme.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 a letter be sent to the portfolio holder, with copies to all Uttlesford Essex County Councillors, stating that the Council requires fuller details of the implications of the financial position relevant to Uttlesford before it can make a recommendation to the Council as to whether it could enter into an agreement with Essex County Council
- 2 a representative of Essex County Council be invited to attend the next meeting of the Working Party.

PS30

INTRODUCTION OF SHORT TERM VISITOR PARKING ON RESIDENTS' PARKING SCHEME STREETS

Further to Minute PS22 Members received an updated schedule illustrating the response to the questionnaire to residents' parking scheme permit holders. A number of replies were still awaited. In view of the uncertainty over the decriminalisation issue it was considered prudent to postpone a decision on this matter until the next meeting of the Working Party. This would also enable further input to be made by residents.

A letter had been received from Saffron Walden Town Council and it was agreed that the Town Council should be advised of the reasons for the postponement of this matter and assured that the points which they had made would be taken into account and that there would be full consultation on any traffic order. In addition it was agreed that a letter should be sent to residents explaining the reasons for postponement.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm