

**EAST AREA PANEL held at COUNCIL OFFICES GREAT DUNMOW at  
7.30 pm on 11 JANUARY 2006**

Present:- Councillors C A Cant, C D Down, S Flack, M A Gayler, D W Gregory, E Gower, E W Hicks, M Miller, J P Murphy, F E Silver, A R Thawley and A M Wattebot..

Officers in attendance:- R Chamberlain, M Cox, H Joy and T Turner.

Also present: representatives from the following Town and Parish Councils –  
Aythorpe Roding, Broxted, High Roding, High Easter, Lindsell,  
Great Dunmow, Stebbing and Thaxted.

**EP1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED that Councillor D W Gregory be elected Chairman of the panel for the ensuing year.

**EP2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED that Councillor A M Wattebot be appointed Vice Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing year.

**EP3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M L Foley  
Councillor Flack declared a personal interest as a member of the Essex County Council.

**EP4 GREAT DUNMOW PRIMARY SCHOOL – HOUSING LAND EASTERN BOUNDARY**

The Executive Manager Housing Service gave a detailed presentation on the current parking situation at the new Dunmow Primary School. The school was situated on the B road, formally the A120, while the front access was from Woodlands Park Drive. Since the school had opened there had been significant problems with parents dropping off and collecting their children. They were no designated parking spaces at the school and there were waiting restrictions on Woodlands Park Drive, from which there was only a pedestrian access. Parents had been parking in Stortford Road and action was being taken to prevent this, but it was a very difficult situation to control. The County was now constructing a 12 bay lay-by along the old A120 to provide some dropping off spaces near to the school.

Along the eastern boundary of the school there was a strip of housing land, which had become an unofficial route to the main road and the school had opened up a gate along this boundary. Parking problems were now occurring at Newton Green, as this was the nearest dropping off area. A request had been received from Essex County Council for this Council to approve that this

strip of land be made up to form a proper footpath. Essex County Council had agreed to contribute to the cost but if this request were allowed there would be ownership and maintenance concerns as well as possible issues in relation to safety and lighting.

Over 20 residents from the roads near to the school had attended the meeting. The residents agreed that there needed to be safe route for children to walk to school and the current routes were either too close to the busy road or very muddy. The residents of Newton Green cited incidents of congestion and where parents had parked in front of driveways. The situation was very difficult for residents and dangerous for the children. . The residents asked why there had been no provision for parking within the school grounds and why the side gate to the school had been opened. They also asked if the District Council would consider a residents' parking scheme for the roads affected. Mr Chamberlain replied that signs could be erected to try to prevent parking on the private roads. However, this was not possible on a public road, but a parking scheme might only serve to cause more problems for residents.

The Executive Manager confirmed that the strip of land was housing land and did not constitute a public right of way, and that the school had had no legal right to open the gate on to that land. The Panel then looked at other possible routes for children to get to the school. There was a new pedestrian access to the rear of the school and the 12 parking spaces in the lay-by, which although not nearly sufficient, might alleviate the situation slightly. The Chairman had visited the site and observed that a large number of parents tended to park their cars at Tesco and walk to the school from there. It was understood that Tesco was happy with this as an informal arrangement but did not wish to formalise this nor make a dedicated walkway to the school. There was a safety issue for children walking from Tesco as the path was beside the busy road.

Councillor Murphy said that the current situation had been caused by the incompetence of the County Council. The solution was not to make up the path and open the gate to the east of the school as this would only serve to move the problem elsewhere. He considered that Essex County Council should be required to sort the problem out. He also suggested that the local police should be asked to help with the problems of parking in the surrounding roads.

Councillor Cant said she was saddened that this situation had arisen. She said that when the application had been submitted, the District Council's Development Control Committee had lobbied strongly for some means of off road parking for parents. At the site visit, the Committee had noticed the number of lorries and the flow of traffic and considered the site to be a totally inappropriate location for a school. She thought that the 12 lay-by spaces was a farcical number and would cause even more problems, especially at the afternoon dropping off time. Councillor Thawley added the then Chairman has twice been to County Hall to try to persuade the County to include a turning circle within the site. Councillor Thawley suggested other ideas that might help the situation, including waiting restrictions at school times and the introduction of a walking bus. He also mentioned that it was County Council policy not to have on site parking for parents but this was totally inappropriate for a school in a rural area.

Councillor Gayler said that these problems would not have been so acute if the school had been built on its original location that was further north in the site. He considered that any solution needed to address the problems being experienced by local residents in terms of parking and also the safety of children and parents who were walking beside the road to school. He felt that the proposal to make up the footpath would only increase the existing problems. He had listened to the comments made at the meeting and moved a motion which was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

The motion was put to the vote and Councillor Murphy requested that a recorded vote be taken.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 Essex County Council be advised that the District Council does not agree that strips of housing owned land running along the eastern boundary of the new the Great Dunmow Primary School be made up to a footpath and the school be asked to close the gate along the eastern boundary.
- 2 Essex County Council be pressed to improve road safety measures in close proximity to the school, including a 20mph or 30mph speed limit. erecting barriers in the centre of the carriageway, extending the pavement barriers and the provision of appropriate school warning signs.
- 3 Essex police be made aware of the Council's concerns about road safety issues in the area.

The votes cast were as follows

For the motion: Councillors C A Cant, C D Down, M A Gaylor, G W Gregory, E Gower, M Miller, J P Murphy, F E Silver, A R Thawley, A M Wattebot.

Against the motion: S Flack, E J Hicks.

EP5

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Committee received a report advising of current community based activities. Two new members of staff had been recruited who would be assisting with this work. Progress on the relocation of the Great Dunmow CCTV was reported.

EP6

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members suggested items that could be considered at future meetings.

The next meeting would be considering a report on the Thaxted Day Centre. The Executive Manager Housing Services explained that the day centre was in a bad state of repair and would require complete refurbishment. The facility

was very well used and the Council was looking at various options for its refurbishment. These included repairing the existing building, extending the building or to knocking down the existing structure and rebuilding. A full report on the implications of these options would be considered at the next meeting. In the interim a sum would be put in the 2006/07 estimates. Members suggested that the next meeting be held in Thaxted and that an architectural officer be invited to explain the details of the proposals.

Councillor Flack asked that grants be included as a standard item on all future agenda. She then told the Panel about the Stansted Airport Community Trust that had been set up using the S106 monies from the airport development. There was a sum of £120,000 per annum available for the next 7 years for local community capital projects. Councillor Flack also suggested the Council's senior officers could each be invited to attend the panel to give a short presentation or answer questions on policy issues within their area of expertise.

The Chairman suggested that future topics could include consideration of local transport issues, and also tourism and tourist routes and how they could be developed in the Panel's area. Councillor Murphy asked if it was possible for officers to ascertain the geographical allocation of the Council's resources and to report this to the Panel.

Councillor Gayler reported that the current parish review was focusing on the Felsted/Little Dunmow area and would be appropriate for the panel to comment on the proposals.

The Panel discussed how it could include issues that had previously been dealt with by the Dunmow Local Road Safety Advisory Committee. Mr Leeder from Thaxted Parish Council said that officers had attended these meetings from the County Council and the Police and accident figures had been circulated, which had been very useful. It was intended that the last minutes of the advisory committee would be considered at the next meeting of the panel. In future, if it were felt that road safety issues were not being sufficiently addressed by the panel, alternative arrangements would need to be considered. Under road safety issues Councillor Thawley asked if a future meeting could identify locations in the area where 40mph speed limits had not previously been allowed.

EP7

## **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next meeting of the Panel was to be held on 1 March 2006. The timetable for 2006/07 had not yet been produced but officers would try, as far as possible to avoid meetings of the town and parish councils

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.