

ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 9 SEPTEMBER 2003

Present:- Councillor A R Thawley – Chairman
Councillors C A Cant, J F Cheetham, C M Dean, C D Down,
R F Freeman, E J Godwin, E Tealby-Watson and A Wattebot.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman: Councillors S Flack,
M A Gayler and M A Hibbs.

Officers in attendance:- M Cox, P O'Dell, N Harris, S McLagan,
B D Perkins and R M Secker

Also in attendance: P Hardy and D Howard (ECC).

ET16 STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Before the meeting, Mr Stewart, a resident from Stansted made a statement regarding the proposed waiting restrictions at Bentfield Road, Stansted. Mr Wilton and Mr Pritchard, residents from Thaxted, made statements relating to the proposed waiting restrictions in Stansted. A summary of their comments is attached to these Minutes.

ET17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K J Clarke and D Corke.

Councillors C A Cant, J F Cheetham, C M Dean, C D Down, E J Godwin, E Tealby-Watson, A R Thawley and A Wattebot declared their interests as members of SSE.

Councillor C M Dean declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6, proposed waiting restrictions – Bentfield Road, Stansted Mountfitchet, as a member of Stansted Parish Council.

Councillor A Wattebot declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5, proposed waiting restrictions – various sites, Thaxted, as a member of Thaxted Parish Council.

ET18 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ET19 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute ET5 – Chesterford Research Station Master Plan – Outcome of Consultation Exercise

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It was confirmed that the Master Plan had now been approved.

(ii) Minute ET7 – Proposed Pedestrian Crossing – Peaslands Road or Mountpleasant Road

The Area Manager advised the meeting that the consultations in respect of this scheme had not yet been completed.

(iii) Minute ET8 – Split of highway network into routes of strategic and local significant

Councillor Thawley referred to a meeting that he had attended with County Councillor Bass regarding the principle of the County Council proposing more local decisions to be taken by the Council. This would be set out in a draft Local Service Agreement and hopefully considered at the next meeting of the Committee. County Councillor Bass had been invited to present the proposals at the next meeting.

(iv) Minute ET13 – Flooding Relief

The Committee was advised that the scheme at The Street, Manuden would commence shortly. In Saffron Walden the works to the Slade would be progressed once a few detailed matters had been resolved.

(v) Minute ET15 – Essex Waste Management

The Chairman reported on a recent meeting of the Waste Management Advisory Board. That meeting had agreed a draft constitution which would be sent out for further consultations before the final draft was approved. A copy of the Constitution would be circulated to Committee members seeking any comments, but as the deadline for responses was before the next meeting of the Committee it was

RESOLVED that the Acting Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee be authorised to approve the Constitution of the Waste Management Advisory Board.

ET20

PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS – VARIOUS SITES, THAXTED

The Committee was informed of the objections that had been received in response to the formal publication of the proposed waiting restrictions for various locations in Thaxted. The measures had been prepared at the request of the Parish Council following concerns about road safety and traffic congestion. One objection had been received that related to all the proposals. Further specific objections had been received to the proposals for the Tanyard/Weaverhead Lane/Copthall Lane junction and for Bolford Street and members of the public had spoken about these earlier in the meeting. The Highways Area Manager suggested holding a meeting with residents to further discuss these issues.

RESOLVED that arrangements be made to introduce the waiting restrictions as published, with the exception of the proposals relating to the Tanyard/Weaverhead Lane/Copthall Lane junction and Bolford

Street, which were deferred to enable further discussions to be held with the residents and the Parish Council.

ET21 PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS – BENTFIELD ROAD STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

The Committee considered an objection that had been received in response to the formal publication of the proposed waiting restrictions for Bentfield Road, Stansted Mountfitchet. The measures had been proposed by the Parish Council because of concerns relating to road safety due to vehicles parking either side of the junction with Bentfield End Causeway and traffic congestion at this location. One objection had been received by a local resident affected by the proposals. He had spoken earlier about his concerns and those of other residents in the area. The Highways Area Manager suggested meeting with the objector to discuss further his concerns.

RESOLVED that the decision be deferred to enable further discussions to be held with the Parish Council and the local residents.

ET22 DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT

The Committee received a detailed report from Councillor M A Hibbs, the Chairman of the DPE Task Group. The Task Group had been established in 2003 with a remit to report back to this Committee with a recommendation as to whether or not to adopt decriminalisation of parking enforcement powers (DPE). These powers enabled a highway authority to take over responsibility for non enforceable parking contraventions from the Police, putting full responsibility on local authorities both to make traffic regulations and to enforce them. The power would rest with the County Council, as Highways Authority and the District Authority would be delegated responsibility, through an agency agreement for the operational aspects of implementing the powers. The Council had to decide whether or not to adopt and implement DPE itself, or through a contractor, or leave ECC to do so through a third party.

The report set out in detail the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the powers. There would be implications for this Council in terms of a need to review and update all traffic regulation orders and to recruit additional staff.

The Working Group had given particular consideration to the financial implications of adopting the powers. The financing was complex and the figures had had to be based on some predictions at this stage. There were various options for accounting and these would be further analysed and the preferred method incorporated into the business plan. At this stage it appeared that after the first 18 months the On Street Parking Account would be running at a deficit of approximately £94,000. ECC had indicated that this deficit would not affect the Council's application to run DPE and had confirmed that, through the Agency Agreement, it would treat the first operational year deficit and the ongoing deficit as acceptable deficits and reimburse the District Council accordingly. This should ensure that there would be no extra tax burden on the local Council Tax payer.

The Working Party had concluded that by adopting DPE the Council would have more control over local issues and enable a closer working relationship with town and parish councils. It would also fulfil the good practice guidelines set out in the strategy document. However, it would be prudent for the Council to ensure that it only entered into a partnership arrangement with ECC if it could guarantee that the figures set out in the report were regarded as an “acceptable deficit” and would be continually underwritten.

The Committee discussed this issue in detail and concluded that it was preferable for this Council to operate the scheme rather than another authority or an outside body. Members emphasised that it was essential to obtain a cast iron guarantee from the County Council that it would pick up the deficit particularly as this area was very rural and limited income could be expected from its car parks and on-street parking. There was some concern at the complicated nature of the accounting and also the implications for in-house administration. Councillor Godwin said the proposed levels of staff appeared rather low and officers agreed to check this. Councillor Freeman did not think that any of the options were suitable and commented that a scheme should not be implemented if it could not be self-financing. Councillor Hibbs said that, in the long term a formal body would be required to oversee the DPE, but in the meantime, it would be useful if the working party continued during the implementation.

RECOMMENDED to the Council to

- 1 adopt DPE subject to a robust business plan that identifies the cost implications for the Council, and
- 2 enter into an Agency Agreement with ECC which clearly holds it responsible for any deficit on the on-street parking account,
- 3 appoint, subject to ECC’s confirmation of funding, a DPE Officer with effect from January 2004.

The Committee then further

RESOLVED to retain the services of the Task Group to meet with Officers to discuss the ongoing implementation programme for DPE.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Officers and Members of the DPE Task Group for all their efforts in undertaking this daunting task.

ET23

POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05

The Committee received a report which outlined the Council’s proposed approach to budget setting for 2004/5, within the context of the newly adopted Quality of Life Plan. It also contained early proposals for budget amendment and areas for further research following the meetings between the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of Resources, Committee Chairman and appropriate officers.

The Committee was advised of the Committee's budget for the current year including known or projected variations. Members then went on to consider the budget review items for 2004/05. Councillor Gayler, the Chairman of Resources Committee, said that these items would be discussed further and be brought back to the next meeting with indicative figures attached.

Councillor Tealby-Watson asked about the inclusion of a sum for flooding improvement/protection. She was advised that this was included within the capital budget and the Committee asked that the current amount of £50,000 be included within the Capital Programme for 2004/5.

The Chairman informed the meeting that if the County could achieve its recycling target, significant funds would be available from the Government amounting to 2½ % of the total waste management project. Uttlesford had not yet been advised of its target but Members agreed that every effort should be made to try to achieve this.

Mention was made by Councillor Flack of proposed improvements to the Civic Amenity Site in Saffron Walden. It was agreed that the Head of Environmental Services would circulate a note of what was being proposed by the County Council and whether Members had any comments.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the budget base position and agree the proposals for budget review which would form part of a more detailed report to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

ET24

STREET CLEANSING AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS

The Committee was informed that the contracts for street cleansing and vehicle maintenance had been re-tendered in 1996 they were both for the period through to 31 March 2003 with an option to extend for a further period through to 31 July 2006. The contracts had been awarded to the Council's Direct Service Organisation (DSO). When the contracts were reviewed in September 2002 it had been agreed that, as an interim arrangement, the contract should be extended by one year to March 2004. This was agreed by Members because these two services were the subject of a best value review. The action plan resulting from the review had identified a number of weaknesses. These had now been addressed and improvements made. Any necessary detailed future changes could be made within the terms of either contract.

RESOLVED that the Street Cleansing and Vehicle Maintenance contracts currently held by the DSO be extended for the period through to 31 July 2006.

ET25

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Committee was advised that in relation to the Best Value Performance Plan and the CPA Corporate Self Assessment there was a need for the Authority to strengthen the range of performance information and report this on a regular basis to both Members and Managers. To achieve this, a

comprehensive performance system had been developed using around 60 performance indicators that were already generally collected within the Authority. The indicators had now been extended to include all sections within the Council.

In order to keep the process simple and straightforward it was recommended that the reporting of performance be linked to a traffic light system showing the degree of slippage from the performance target. Members agreed those proposed for this Committee. They also commented that the reporting system should be designed so as to be useable for those with impaired sight.

Councillor Tealby-Watson thought that better facilities should be available for families with young children and officers agreed to look into this matter.

Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham was disappointed at the number of planning applications that had been determined within 8 weeks. She asked for a breakdown of the figures, between those that had been delegated and those that had been referred to Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Committee agreed the range of performance measures and targets proposed for this Committee and agreed to the use of the traffic light system,
- 2 the Committee noted that a further report would be made to Committees early in the new year.

ET26

GOLDS NURSERIES

The Committee received a report updating the Committee on the current position at Golds Nurseries Business Park.

Councillor C M Dean commented that the site had been improved and was now secure and hoped that maintenance of the site would continue. At the present time there were 12 vacant units. Members asked who had been approached in terms of marketing the site and Officers confirmed that details would be provided for the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.

**STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AGAINST PROPOSED
PARKING RESTRICTIONS IN STANSTED AND THAXTED****Mr Stewart – Stansted resident**

Mr Stewart stated that he objected to the proposed restrictions and circulated a petition from other residents in Bentfield Road. He said that the residents affected had no drives or garage as an alternative for parking their cars. There had been no accidents at this junction in fact the parked cars helped to slow down the traffic. Mr Stewart was a blue badge holder and would find it difficult to walk any distance if his car was parked further away. He was also concerned at the nature of the consultation and asked for a more thorough review of the situation in conjunction with residents.

Mr Witton – Thaxted resident

Mr Witton lived at Bridgefoot Cottage, Copthall Lane. The waiting restriction would directly affect him and other properties in the row. The area proposed for the restrictions was not where the congestion occurred. If the restrictions were implemented there would be five residents after three spaces and there was nowhere else to park nearby. It would affect his way of life and also the value of his property. The cars parked on the road served the purpose of slowing down the traffic.

Mr Prichard – Thaxted resident

Mr Prichard lived in Bolford Street, Thaxted. The waiting restrictions were proposed for the three parking spaces in front of his house. He had no alternative parking and would have to park elsewhere which would just serve to move problems further down the road. The parked cars helped to slow car at the junction and also provided a barrier between the road and the very narrow pavement. He asked the County officers to meet with residents to discuss an alternative situation