

ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 13 JANUARY 2004

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

Also present at the Chairman's invitation:- Councillors R J Copping, M L Foley, S Flack, M A Gayler and A J Ketteridge.

Officers in attendance:- M Cox, N Harris, S McLagan, J Mitchell, B D Perkins, R M Secker and P Hardy (Essex County Council).

ET41 PRESENTATIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Prior to the meeting statements were made by members of the public.

David Mason – Rosemary Lane, Great Dunmow, Marilyn Neate – Rosemary Lane, Great Dunmow, Michael Miller – Star Lane, Great Dunmow, Anthony Puddick – High Stile, Great Dunmow, Eileen Walsh – Thaxted Parish Council, John Davey – Great Dunmow Town Council, Isabel Grayson – Retail and Commercial Centre of Saffron Walden.

A summary of their comments is attached to these Minutes.

ET42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K J Clarke.

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

Councillors R J Copping and M A Gayler declared personal interests as members of Great Dunmow Town Council and the Dunmow Town Strategy Group.

ET43 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ET44 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute ET31 – Stansted Airport Advisory Panel

The Committee's comments regarding noise insulation had been forwarded to Stansted Airport Ltd. The subsequent letter from STAL to the DoT had asked for all the matters to be considered.

(ii) Minute ET33 – Stansted M11 Corridor Development Option Study

Councillor Cheetham reminded Members that the West Essex Area Forum would be meeting on Thursday 15 January and would be considering the recent Airport Transport White Paper as well as the M11 corridor study.

ET45

**PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS – HIGH STILE ROSEMARY LANE
STAR LANE GREAT DUNMOW**

The Committee considered the objections that had been received to the formal publication of the proposed waiting restrictions for High Stile, Rosemary Lane and Star Lane, Great Dunmow. The review had been undertaken following concerns relating to road safety due to parked vehicles and traffic congestion at these sites.

(i) High Stile

Two previous waiting restriction proposals had been considered prior to the extension of St Mary's School. Objections had been received by residents on both occasions and the Committee had decided not to proceed with these proposals. There was still concern at the problems caused by parked vehicles, mainly at school times, and the proposals had now been drafted to improve the access in and out of High Stile during this period. No waiting at any time was proposed for the junction with Stortford Road and the bends on High Stile. An additional 8.00 am to 6.00 pm restriction was proposed along the length of the road where the congestion problems occurred.

Councillor Gayler said that these restrictions were not the answer to the problems at High Stile. He agreed that there should be restrictions on the corner of Stortford Road, but the other restrictions would either be ignored or vehicles would park further down the road. There should be a more radical solution at this site. Councillor Cheetham said that when the planning permission had been discussed by the Development Control Committee it had asked for an in-out access to the school to enable children to be dropped off. She questioned why this had not been implemented. She was concerned that the County's Education Department was not listening to local views. Councillor Tealby-Watson said that the County's Transport and Education Department should be working more closely together to develop a solution for this site.

Councillor Flack declared a personal interest as the County Council Member for Great Dunmow, as the deputy to the County's Transport Portfolio holder and as a Member of the County's Education Committee. She considered that further discussion should be held with the Governing Body of the school.

RESOLVED that

- 1 arrangements be made to introduce the "no waiting at any time" restrictions.

- 2 The Area Highway Manager be asked to investigate the possibility of increasing the number of walking buses to the school using adequate points away from the school where parents could drop their children.
- 3 The Council meet with education and highways representatives from Essex County Council to try and overcome the traffic problems associated with the School.

(ii) Rosemary Lane Great Dunmow

The Town Council had received complaints concerning vehicles mounting the footway on the south western side of Rosemary Lane when overtaking parked vehicles. This was a hazard for pedestrians walking their children to and from school. There had been a previous attempt to introduce a series of bollards on the footway on the south western side of the lane but the majority of residents had objected to the request. As a result the Town Council had formally requested the introduction of waiting restrictions for this location.

Following receipt of objections it had been suggested not to introduce the measures between properties 2 and 6 as these had no other alternative parking. One objection had also been received to the time changes for the limited parking bays in Stortford Road. Members considered the proposed solution to be a good compromise and it was

RESOLVED that

- 1 The waiting restrictions, omitting the restrictions on the south eastern side between 2 to 6 Rosemary Lane, be introduced.
- 2 The Area Highway Manager investigate the introduction of a series of bollards on the footway opposite; between Pargetters and Chaucer House, to prevent vehicles mounting the pavement and protecting pedestrians walking to school.
- 3 Arrangements be made to change the times associated with the limited waiting bay in Stortford Road.

(iii) Star Lane

The Area Highway Manager reported that an increasing number of complaints had been made to the Town Council from residents regarding people parking all day within Star Lane. The area was covered by an existing prohibition of driving order with an exemption for access only. However, there were still areas within Star Lane that were considered narrow and if parking took place in these areas it would cause an access problem particularly for emergency service vehicles. Since the proposals had been advertised, support had been received for residents parking to be introduced.

The Committee was concerned that the restrictions at the Market Square end of Star Lane affected residents that had no alternative parking facilities and thought that this aspect of the proposal should be looked at again.

RESOLVED that

- 1 arrangements be made to introduce the waiting restrictions, only for the area adjacent to The Downs,
- 2 the Area Highway Manager to discuss with interested parties appropriate restrictions for the Market Place end of Star Lane,
- 3 the area to be considered for possible inclusion in a future residents parking scheme, and
- 4 representations be made to Essex Police regarding the enforcement of the prohibition of driving regulations on Star Lane.

ET46

POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS

Members considered a report which sought to finalise the Committee's General Fund Budgets for 2004/05, based on guidance issued by the Council and subject to Resources Committee's review of the Council's overall financial position at its meeting on 22 January 2004. The report contained details of the Committee's base budgets, including direct costs and recharges, and reflected the decision at the Council meeting on 16 December 2003 to delete the previously set savings targets for this Committee. It also included the budget review items that had been considered at the meeting on 4 November 2003 with proposed changes to both expenditure and income. The proposals had totalled a net budget reduction of £166,000 mainly based on increasing car park charges. These had now been incorporated into the base budget.

Councillor Copping spoke to the meeting about car park charges. He considered that there should be no increase to the charges this year. The proposal was simply to generate a revenue for the Council and there were other ways in which this could be done. In Great Dunmow there was a shortage of car parking and any revenue from the charges should be spent on providing more and better car parks. The increase would have a significant effect on the use of the Town Centre. Councillor Ketteridge agreed that the charges should not be raised this year and pointed out that there had been a substantial increase only last year. The motive was to raise revenue to fund the Council's Quality of Life Plan, but the increase would substantially affect the town's businesses and the viability of Saffron Walden Town Centre. Councillor Foley stated the case for not charging at the Margaret Street Car Park, Thaxted. There had been a 50% decline in retail space in the town in the last decade. It had a very small population and shops fought hard to survive. A charge for the car park would not be economically viable.

Other Members suggested more radical changes to the car parking system and Councillor Corke asked for a cost benefit analysis of pay on exit parking be carried out and the results considered by E & T within nine months.

Councillor Cant said that there should be charges for the Great Dunmow Council Offices and the Saffron Walden Offices on a Saturday to put them in line with the other car parks. Councillor C M Dean pointed out that there was likely to be a rise in the Council Tax if the increased car park charges were taken out of the budget.

RECOMMENDED to Resources Committee and Full Council that

- 1 The Draft Budget 2004/5 as submitted be approved subject to
 - (i) No increases in car parking charges for 2004/05
 - (ii) The introduction of car parking charges at the Council Offices, Great Dunmow
 - (iii) The introduction of charges on a Saturday only at the Saffron Walden Offices.
- 2 The Decriminalisation Task Group to undertake a comprehensive review of car parking in the District to consider exit payment methods as an alternative to pay and display, in consultation with Town and Parish Councils and trade associations.

ET47

LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICE IN ESSEX

At the last meeting, the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation had spoken to the Committee about the proposed LSA. This would involve this Council entering into partnership arrangements with Essex County Council to deliver a seamless service under the name of Essex Highways Partnership. The LSA would set out the services to be covered and those that would be provided by the County Council and those by the District Council, with differing levels of involvement being possible.

There had been a Member workshop on this issue and a meeting with other West Essex Area Forum Authorities attended by the Committees Chairman. Following this a letter had been sent to County Councillor Bass, raising a number of general points to which a response was requested. That response had now been received and Officers had subsequently written back to the County Council saying that informally there was a wish to work towards an LSA subject to committee authorisation. Councillor Cheetham commented that she hoped the agreement would lead to enhanced consultation arrangements for development control.

RESOLVED that Officers be authorised to work with Officers of the County Council to produce a Local Service Agreement for the delivery of the Highway and Transportation Service within the District.

ET48

UTTLESFORD CYCLE NETWORK PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report, prepared at the request of this Committee and the Uttlesford Transport Forum, setting out the progress to date on the

implementation of the Uttlesford Cycle Network Plan and the current programming of works contained in the Plan. It was noted that the County Council had allocated funding in 2003/4 for the construction of a new cycle way from Tesco to Great Dunmow Town Centre and in 2004/5 for the construction of a new cycleway from Mill Lane in Great Dunmow, crossing the Chelmer Valley to Windmill Close/Riverside south of Church End.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the principle of the two cycleway schemes proposed for Great Dunmow be endorsed.
- 2 the Plan be reviewed and a report be made to a future meeting of the Committee.

ET49

PLANNING SERVICE BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee noted that the Best Value Review Improvement Plan had been approved by the Scrutiny 2 Committee on 3 December 2003. The Plan set out five critical success areas. There were action statements to support these each of which set out outcome measures, action measures, the relative importance of each initiative, timetables for each and resources where known.

Considerable improvements could be achieved by reorganising existing processes at no or little cost to the Council but there would be training costs. It also pointed the way to a first class service but this could not be achieved without investment. Some measures were immediate and some medium or long term. Members would have to decide what level of planning service was reasonably achievable in the context of resources and other corporate priorities. The next stage was to test the plan by consultation with stake holders. Following this, any necessary amendments would be presented for approval. The Chairman thanked both Officers and Members who had been involved in this review.

RESOLVED that the Service Improvement Plan be noted and approved.

ET50

REFUSE AND RECYCLING BEST VALUE REVIEW

Members were given details of the Best Value Review that had been carried out of Refuse Collection and Recycling Services. The Review had considered whether the services, namely household and commercial refuse collections, recycling banks and kerbside recycling collections met national and local standards and remained a community priority, met customer expectations and could be more effectively and efficiently provided. As a result of the review process the review group had now produced an improvement plan which had been agreed by the Scrutiny Committee.

The plan set out a number of actions to be taken to continue the improvement, development and integration of the Refuse Collection and Recycling Services. The Committee thanked the Officers and Members that

had been involved in this large scale review. The Committee also commented on the effectiveness of the publicity for the Christmas recycling arrangements.

RESOLVED that the Service and Improvement Plan be approved.

ET51 **KITCHEN WASTE RECYCLING TRIAL**

At the last meeting the Committee had considered ending the trial scheme to separate and compost kitchen and green wastes. The trial had faced major practical and financial difficulties. It was now clear that a separate collection would be unnecessary and not economically viable as the County Council would be replacing their reliance on landfill with anaerobic digestion plants. These would become available in the next few years. There would be explanation and publicity about the changes.

RESOLVED that the kitchen waste trial scheme be terminated on 31 March 2004.

ET52 **GRANTS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE**

As part of the review of the effectiveness of planning grants, at the meeting of the Committee on 4 November, Members had requested a further report on grants in relation to economic development. The report referred to Uttlesford Enterprise and noted that the Council's sponsorship of £5,000 for 2003/04 had not yet been paid. Councillor Copping gave details of the current activities of the Business Development Services (Northwest Essex) Ltd and advised that the grant of £5,000 would assist in providing the service in the Uttlesford District. The report then mentioned the subscriptions currently being paid to the Essex Economic Partnership (EEP) and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP). Councillor Cheetham advised of recent changes affecting the EEP and considered that Officers should ascertain further information.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The sponsorship of £5,000 for Business Development Services (Northwest Essex) Ltd for 2003/04 be paid.
- 2 The subscriptions and sponsorships for 2004/05 relating to the Essex Economic Partnership (EEP), the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and the Business Development Services (BDS) be included in the draft estimates though more information was required on changes affecting the EEP.

ET53 **REVIEW OF ONSTREET PAID PARKING ON ABBEY LANE SAFFRON WALDEN**

The Committee received a report which reviewed the onstreet paid parking scheme in Abbey Lane, Saffron Walden. Officers had monitored the amount of money that the scheme had generated and the comments received from

local residents. The initial concerns expressed generally by residents had proved unfounded in all areas with the exception of Abbey Lane. Here, one local family was experiencing constant problems of not being able to park. It was apparent that the pay and display facility was being used and was popular with local residents and the public for a short stay visit. It was considered that the most practical way forward in Abbey Lane was to dedicate three of the parking spaces to residents parking.

RESOLVED that three out of the nine parking spaces in Abbey Lane be dedicated to residents parking only.

ET54

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Committee was informed of progress with the introduction of a performance management system within Uttlesford. The report recommended the layout of the reporting mechanism and the process to resolve issues of underperformance.

RESOLVED that the proposed performance management system be noted and it be agreed that performance review data be reported to the Scrutiny Committees.

The meeting ended at 10.30 pm

**ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE 13 JANUARY 2004 -
PUBLIC SPEAKING**

REPRESENTATIONS MADE IN RESPECT OF WAITING RESTRICTIONS

(i) David Mason, Rosemary Lane, Great Dunmow

David Mason objected to the proposed waiting restrictions outside his property, as he had no garage or driveway and he had no alternative but to park outside his house. The proposal would free Rosemary Lane of vehicles at school time and this would lead to an increased danger of accidents. The existing parked vehicles were the most effective method of traffic calming. He suggested that bollards or a raised kerb on the other side of the lane would be more appropriate.

(ii) Marilyn Neate, Rosemary Lane, Great Dunmow

Marilyn Neate objected to the waiting restrictions as they proposed no waiting at any time outside her property. The nature of her business meant that she needed to load outside her house and she had no alternative parking. She said it was unfair for residents to be penalised for problems with traffic flow. She was concerned about speeding traffic if the cars were removed, particularly at school time, as the pavement was very narrow. She appreciated that double yellow lines were required near the junction with Stortford Road but felt that these could terminate before the group of cottages.

(iii) Michael Miller, Star Lane, Great Dunmow

Michael Miller hoped that residents parking could be introduced. The proposal would be detrimental to residents at the south end of the lane. The traffic regulation order was not enforced and there was danger to pedestrians using the lane.

(iv) Anthony Puddick

Anthony Puddick objected to the proposed waiting restrictions in High Stile. When planning permission was granted for the school it was subject to a satisfactory traffic management scheme being implemented. This has not occurred and because the school has been built in a cul de sac, there was chaos at school opening times. The yellow lines were proposed before and not implemented. Why were they now being presented at this time? The proposed restrictions would not succeed, just serve to push the problem further down the road. The waiting restrictions were not likely to be enforced and therefore are likely to be ignored by parents dropping off their children to school. The residents of High Stile were not the problem and it is unfair that they should be penalised by these restrictions.

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED IN RELATION TO CAR PARKING CHARGES

(i) Miss Walsh – Thaxted Parish Council

The Parish Council felt very strongly against any charge for parking in the Margaret Street car park, Thaxted. The car park was used by people using the surgery and the dispensary and the Adult Education Centre at Clarence House. It was also the dropping off point for the very successful walking bus to the Primary School. With regards to tourism, free parking was a feature of the publicity material. It was also an incentive for shoppers to use the local shop and to make the Friday market viable. Any charging in the car park would lead to more cars on the town's pavements. The cost of installation and enforcement was likely to outweigh any benefits.

(ii) John Davey – Great Dunmow Town Council

The Great Dunmow economy was very fragile. Increased charges might have an effect on the viability of the Co-op and this would have an ongoing effect on the viability of the Town Centre. Increasing charges would affect the attractiveness of the town for shoppers. Any revenue from car parking charges should be used to provide more car parking facilities. Increased car parking charges would drive more vehicles onto estate roads and other unsuitable places. More parking provision should be made for season ticket users. This would enable long term parking to be managed more efficiently and would reduce manpower. Decriminalisation would require provision of adequate and reasonably priced car parking, by overcharging the District Council would incur far greater costs from dealing with uncontrolled fly parking.

(iii) Isabel Grayson – Retail and Commercial Sectors of the Town Centre

The current car parking charges in Saffron Walden exceed those of most local towns. Many offer an element of free parking. Many local jobs are part time and with large car parking charges it becomes more difficult to recruit. The current pay on arrival system inhibits the public from browsing. Waitrose supermarket is understood to be against any increase and there is a danger that they might withdraw from the scheme completely. The economy of the Town Centre is fragile and any increase in charges, which would further encourage residents and tourists to go to other towns. In recent years a number of strategies had been introduced that had been detrimental to local traders including the loss of free spaces in King Street, loading and unloading reduced in the High Street, resident parking schemes and the closure of the Fairycroft Car Park during evenings and weekends. Some suggestions for alleviating some of the problems include:-

Introducing intelligent car parking machines
Offering free parking on quieter days
Free up residential parking

Shuttle service from Swan Meadow
Some element of free parking followed by a charge
The furthest end of Swan Meadow free parking
Possibility of park and ride.
A manned barrier exit.
Better signage including town centre parking, tourist parking and distance to town centre.