

HIGHWAYS SUB-COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 2 FEBRUARY 2000

Present:- Councillor R C Smith - Chairman.
Councillors R P Chambers, M A Gayler, R D Green, D W Gregory, P G F Lewis, Mrs J E Menell, R W L Stone and P A Wilcock

Also present at the Chairman's invitation:- Councillors A Dean and R B Tyler.

Officers in attendance:- Mrs M Cox, A Forrow, Mrs S Nicholas, Mrs C Stearn (Uttlesford District Council), B Goodwin, P Hardy and W G Rose (Essex County Council), Sergeant J Sones (Essex Police TMO Chelmsford).

I. STATEMENT BY PARISH COUNCILLOR

Mr Patrick Hughes from the Sampfords Parish Council spoke to the Sub-Committee about the state of the road surfaces in the parishes of Sampfords, Hempstead and Radwinter. A summary of his statement and the reply from Essex County Council is appended to these Minutes.

I. APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M L Foley, E M Hill and R J O'Neill.

Councillor R P Chambers declared an interest insofar as he was an Essex County Councillor.

I. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 1999 and the special meeting held on 17 November 1999 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute HW24 - weak bridges - weight restriction orders

It was reported that a reply had now been received from Railtrack, to this Council's request for it to carry out a detailed weight assessment on the Howe Wood Road Bridge, Littlebury. The letter advised that there was an agreement between Railtrack and the County, that the County Council's consultant carried out the assessment which was then verified by Railtrack. The results would determine which body would pay for the repairs. The assessment was now almost completed and would shortly be sent to Railtrack. Councillor Mrs Menell pointed out that there was no practical alternative route for vehicles over 7.5 tonnes to get to the properties at Merton Place. This being the case, the Sub-Committee hoped that the process could be completed as soon as possible and it was

RESOLVED that the County Council and Railtrack be urged to complete the weight assessment as soon as possible.

I. PARK ROAD STANSTED

Prior to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 11 January 2000, the Chairman of the Park Road Residents' Association had addressed the Committee about the removal of bollards at Park Road, Stansted. This matter had now been referred to this Sub-Committee for consideration.

Members received a report outlining the background to this issue and the current situation. When the Stoneyfield estate was being built, bollards had been erected by the Saffron Walden Rural District Council on land between Park Road and Stoneyfield Drive. In 1999, the owner of 29 Park Road. The Council had received requests from local residents to reinstate the bollards.

It was now clear that the former RDC had erected the bollards on land that was not within its ownership. As this Council did not own the land on which the bollards were originally erected, it did not have any right to erect a barrier on this land. Also the Council could not erect a barrier on the access road as it would interfere with existing rights of way over it.

The matter had been taken up with Essex County Council's Transportation and Operational Services. The District Manager stated that for a number of reasons, he considered the matter to be a private one and not one in which the Essex County Council would wish to become involved. However, action would be taken in the form of warning signs and road markings to improve the safety of the Park Road/Church Road junction.

At this point, the Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow residents of Park Road, Stansted to address the meeting.

Mr West spoke on behalf of the Park Road Residents Association. He stated that for the last 45 years Park Road had been a quiet cul-de-sac. Since the removal of the bollards it was being used as a cut through route. There was not a satisfactory pedestrian walkway on the road and he was concerned about danger to the public. Also he was concerned about the dangerous junction between Park Road and Church Road. He considered that the reasons for closing the road today, were even more valid than when it was closed in 1953. The Residents' Association had tried to negotiate and find a solution but steps were now needed to reinstate the closure.

Mr Newman, owner of number 29 Park Road, then spoke to the meeting. He explained that his deeds granted him right of access to Park Road and the bollards had been illegally placed. He thought that the most sensible solution would be to place a bollard between the land which was in his ownership and the land in the private ownership of number 3 Stoneyfield Drive. However, there was a problem with the rights of access of the owner of that property.

Members then asked a number of questions and discussed possible solutions, including no entry signs and the provision of barriers with keys. A number of solutions had been discussed, but these had not been pursued for various reasons.

The Chairman then reconvened the meeting. Councillor A Dean said this was a very complex subject, but he did not wish the Council to wash its hands of the matter. He hoped that if the residents could come to some agreement the Council would assist in bringing about the solution. He also suggested the provision of a deterrent sign at the entrance to Stoneyfield Drive.

Councillor Wilcock asked if this Council could request the County Council to erect a no entry sign at the Stoneyfield Drive/Park Road entrance. The Area Manager replied that the County Council had an interest in protecting rights of pedestrians using the public footpath but could make a Traffic Regulation order if the landowner requested it.

There appeared to be a number of possible options, and the Head of Legal Services suggested using mediation officers who might be able to facilitate a compromise between the various parties.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Council arrange a further meeting between the various interested parties, Highways officers, District Council officers and Councillor A Dean, and
- 2 the possibility of engaging a mediation service be investigated.

I. SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE

The Sub-Committee received a detailed report which summarised the recent history of the Saffron Walden Town Centre Management Scheme. In 1993, the Saffron Walden Town Council had requested Essex County Council to take action to remedy the inconvenience and potential danger caused to the public by traffic congestion and indiscriminate parking in Saffron Walden Town Centre. Proposals had been drawn up and consultations undertaken and, following consideration of formal objections in October by this sub-committee 1998, the order took effect in June 1999. The loss of overnight on-street parking and the lack of disabled parking had caused strong initial public reaction and action had been taken to amend the order to remedy these matters. There had also been general concern at a number of aspects of the scheme and the Area Manager had undertaken to conduct an immediate review of the scheme.

At the Council meeting on 23 November 1999, it had been suggested that the Council should commission its own independent survey. Officers had subsequently been instructed to identify funding of up to £4,000 for the survey.

The report drew attention to the complex nature of this matter and the various factors to be taken into account before any review could be undertaken. Members needed to be clear about what was to be reviewed; was the review to address particular aspects of the existing scheme, or was it to start from scratch? The decision also needed to be made on whether the review should be commissioned by the County Council or on behalf of this Council.

The report drew a number of conclusions. To conduct a meaningful public opinion survey on the relevant issues would require expertise and a sound understanding of traffic management procedures. The District Council did not have appropriate expertise in this field but could employ a consultant who did. The County Council had the expertise to undertake or advise on the undertaking of such a survey. The County Council was the highway authority and would be required to confirm the feasibility of any proposals arising from analysis of the survey response, before agreeing to arrange the design and implementation. The District Council would have final approval of any scheme.

The County Council was keen that the survey be undertaken by the District Council and, if it was performed in a competent manner, would provide a

contribution of up to 50% of the cost. It was clear that there was no easy answer to the problems caused by traffic in Saffron Walden Town Centre.

No solution was going to satisfy everybody and the best hope was finding a formula that was acceptable in some degree to the greatest number of people. A partnership between the district council and the county council appeared to be the best way forward.

Councillor Tyler agreed that any lasting solution would have to be a matter of partnership. However, he still considered that Essex County Council did not enjoy the full confidence of the business community and the residents of Saffron Walden. This was why he had called for an independent survey. He then proposed and it was duly seconded that

- 1 To avoid delay and abortive work and expenditure, the survey should be tackled and reviewed in a spirit of partnership with the county council.
- 2 The officers, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee and such other member(s) as the Sub-Committee may determine and with any appropriate representatives of the community, be authorised to determine how the study would be undertaken, the content of the questionnaire, the geographical areas to be covered and the parties to be consulted and decide upon the appointment of any independent consultant.
- 3 Once the results of the survey have been analysed, the officers, in consultation with the Members, already named, prepare proposals for consideration by the Sub-Committee.

In answer to a question from Councillor Gayler, officers said it was still hard to predict the timescale of this review. The question of who should contribute towards the funding was also yet to be decided, but the district council had identified a sum of £4,000 from this year's budget.

The Area Manager confirmed that if the county council was to drive the review it would appoint WS Atkins as the consultant. He had full confidence that they would undertake a fully independent survey to the requirements of the district council. He confirmed that the county council was still willing to contribute 50% of the cost of the review as long as the county council were satisfied that the survey was undertaken properly.

Councillor Wilcock questioned whether it was actually necessary to appoint a consultant. He felt that more useful initial discussions could take place within the working group together with the relevant interested parties. Other members considered that a consultant, with the necessary technical skills and expertise, would need to be appointed at some stage, but Councillor Tyler agreed to amend his proposal to state that a consultant would be appointed, only if necessary.

Councillor Gayler asked that a further recommendation be added that the officers negotiate with the county council over funding issues.

The Sub-Committee hoped that this matter would now move forward quickly.

RESOLVED that

- 1 to avoid delay and abortive work and expenditure, the survey be tackled and reviewed in a spirit of partnership with the county council,

- 2 the District officers, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee and Councillors R D Green and M A Hibbs, the District Manager and with any appropriate representatives of the community, be authorised to determine how the study would be undertaken, the content of the questionnaire, the geographical areas to be covered and the parties to be consulted and decide upon the appointment of an independent consultant, if necessary,
- 3 once the results of the survey had been analysed the District officers, in consultation with the Members already named, and the District Manager prepare proposals for consideration by the Sub-Committee, and
- 4 District officers be instructed to pursue the issue of joint funding with Essex County Council.

I. LOCALLY DETERMINED BUDGET 1999/2000

The Sub-Committee received a schedule which showed the progress of projects approved for inclusion in the Locally Determined Budget for 1999/2000. The schedules showed the effects of variation in project costs following further investigation, design and construction. Some adjustment of funding between projects had been found necessary to meet variations in estimates and outturn costs but the programme would be completed within the overall budget.

I. LOCALLY DETERMINED BUDGET PROGRAMME 2000/01

The Sub-Committee was advised that the list of requests on which consultation with parish councils had been undertaken in January 1999 had been updated to include additional requests received during the past 12 months. Schemes now in progress or completed had been deleted. Recommended items for inclusion in the 2000/01 Locally Determined Budget Programme would be drawn from the list of requests and would be reported to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

I. SPEED LIMITS IN CHELMSFORD ROAD GREAT DUNMOW AND BARNSTON

The Sub-Committee considered a report which had been referred from the Development Control Sub-Committee. It set out the response from Essex County Council to Members' requests for further information on the implementation of a 30mph speed limit on the B184 in Chelmsford Road, Great Dunmow and the A130 in Barnston. With regard to Chelmsford Road, Great Dunmow, The Area Manager wondered why the Fritch development had been given substandard visibility splays through the planning consent granted by the District Council. County officers said that their objective was to reduce speed in villages but putting in a new speed limit and signage was necessarily effective in achieving speed reduction. The Police TMO representative said that a survey had been carried out at the 30mph limit through Ford End, Chelmsford and showed that the 85th percentile speed had reduced by only 2mph. Some Members had reservations about this assessment.

RESOLVED that a report be submitted to the next meeting of this sub committee.

I. 30 MPH SPEED LIMITS ROUNDELS

Members were advised of the Government's reply to their representations on the use of roundels in 30mph zones.

I. ROAD SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Local Road Safety Advisory Committees held on 6 and 8 December 1999 were received. At Minute DRS29, Councillor Gregory asked that county officers look at placing double white lines on the hill on the A120 near to Dunmow where there had recently been two fatal accidents.

I. ROAD SAFETY WORKING GROUP

The Chairman reported that a new working group had been set up under the Uttlesford Community Safety Action Team with a remit to look at the increasing number of road traffic accidents in the Uttlesford District. The Working Group comprised a representative from Bocking Traffic Police, Community Safety Officers, a representative from Essex County Council, the Road Safety Officer and the Chairman of the Highways Sub-Committee

I. LAST MEETING - ROAD SAFETY OFFICER

The Chairman informed members that this was the last meeting that Christine Stearn, the Council's Road Safety Officer, would be attending before taking retirement. Members of the Sub-Committee thanked her for all the valuable work she had undertaken to help to improve road safety in the district. Members wished her many happy years of retirement.

HW39MR W J ROSE

The Chairman referred to the impending retirement of Mr WJ Rose, District Transportation Manager who had worked tirelessly for the County Council over many years. Although it was likely that Mr Rose would attend the Sub-Committee's next meeting, the sub-Committee wanted to place on record now appreciation of the services rendered to the community.

I. M11 ROUND-A-BOUT - ROADWORKS

The Chairman mentioned forthcoming roadworks on the M11 roundabout. He pointed out that there had been no consultation with this authority and said that any complaints should be addressed to the Highways Agency.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.

STATEMENT BY MR HUGHES - THE SAMPFORDS PARISH COUNCIL

Mr Hughes said that the road surfaces in the parishes of the Sampfords, Radwinter and Hempstead were very poor. Two deaths had occurred on the roads before Christmas which he attributed to the poor state of the road.

The Highways Department had told him that they did not have sufficient funds to undertake the work. But, Mr Hughes felt that too much money was spent in administration, planning and consultants. He also said that there was wastage in the materials used and that excess material was disposed of by the contractors.

The Area Manager, said that Mr Hughes had made a number of unfounded statements. The contractors were paid per square metre and would not be paid for any wastage. Excess material was recycled and reused. Some resurfacing work had been included in this year's programme.

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