

NORTH AREA PANEL MEETING held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 10 JANUARY 2006

Present:- Councillors H D Baker, C A Bayley, W F Bowker, R F Freeman, M A Hibbs, B M Hughes, S C Jones, A J Ketteridge, T D Knight, V J T Lelliott, M J Savage, S V Schneider, E Tealby-Watson and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: - G Bradley, W Cockerell, N Morton, C Roberts, A Stewart, and T Turner.

NP1 INTRODUCTION FROM EXECUTIVE MANAGER STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE

The Executive Manager Strategy and Performance introduced herself and explained that an opportunity would be provided in future meetings for a question and answer session at the beginning of the meeting.

NP2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Boland.

The following Members declared interests:-

Councillor J E Menell as a member of the Primary Care Trust, Uttlesford Community Support Group and Uttlesford Community Safety Action Team.
Councillor M A Hibbs as a local architect

NP3 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor R F Freeman be elected Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.

NP4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor M A Hibbs be appointed Vice Chairman of the Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.

NP5 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION

The Chairman outlined the purpose of area panels and explained that he was concerned that this Panel should obtain the input of views from local organisations.

Councillor Hibbs added that he thought the layout of the chairs, with separate provision for Panel and audience was not ideal. He invited any ideas for improvement.

A representative for the Parish of Littlebury said she felt this first meeting should offer at least a five minute opportunity for questions from the parishes and others.

In answer to Councillor J Menell, the Chairman affirmed that Parish Councils had been invited to submit areas for discussion.

Councillor J Menell asked for clarification of the budgetary provision made for the Panel and the Chairman answered that this was to be addressed later.

Councillor T Knight agreed that a long question and answer session was essential and Councillor A J Ketteridge asked whether there was a way of recording the names of all those present. The Executive Manager Strategy and Performance said that there was no requirement to register attendance of anyone except Panel Members.

Councillor Menell suggested that a roving microphone should be used so that everyone could be heard.

A representative for the Parish of Littlebury asked what would replace the Road Safety Local Advisory Committees. The Chairman explained that the role of those Committees would be incorporated into the Area Panel's meetings. He proposed to take the last set of Saffron Walden Local Road Safety Advisory Committee minutes at the meeting of the North Area Panel in February when all relevant officers and members would be invited.

Councillor T Knight asked how residents of her ward could make the point that they wanted draw-string coloured bags, not wheelie bins. Councillor Hibbs stressed the large fines which would be imposed by the Government if recycling rates were not doubled. He added that in places where wheelie bins were impracticable, draw-string bags would be supplied as a special arrangement.

Extensive discussion ensued on the question of introducing wheelie bins:-

Some felt the status quo was preferable since bags were easier for bin men and wheelie bins might inhibit composting.

A representative for the Parish of Arkesden thought wheelie bins should have been trialled in a one village pilot scheme.

Councillor E Tealby-Watson explained that the District Council had no choice of solutions to the dilemma and a representative for the Parish of Ashdon asked to be provided with the reasons for this. The Chairman suggested that Ron Pridham be requested to give a presentation on this topic at the February meeting of the Panel.

A representative for the Parish of Hadstock wished to know how the “exceptions” would be identified in practice and Councillor Hibbs explained that the District Council already had good information about this aspect and it appeared there would be a problem in no more than 10% of cases. The Council would be speaking to anyone who contacted them to express their concerns.

Councillor P Wilcock stressed the importance of achieving waste minimisation in Uttlesford since the District had higher waste production figures than the other Essex authorities. In answer to a question Councillor Hibbs confirmed that if a resident had space to accommodate a wheelie bin there would be no option to have anything else.

The Clerk of the Saffron Walden Town Council wished to know whether the Panel was to discuss broad matters or just matters affecting the northern sector of the District, and he asked why using wheelie bins would reduce waste figures. Councillor Tealby-Watson explained that the wheelie bins would enable the District to introduce another re-cycling stream which would reduce the amount of waste.

NP6

PRESENTATION BY HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP ON NORTH AREA STRATEGIC HIGHWAYS ISSUES

Councillor Ketteridge said he thought there was too much work in road safety and wheelie bins for both to be accommodated in the same meeting. Councillor Hibbs said that other panels had expressed concern about road safety and it might be that road safety could not be discussed in sufficient detail in the usual Panel meeting.

Councillor C Bayley, the former Chairman of the Saffron Walden Local Road Safety Advisory Committee, spoke about the valuable discussions in that Committee.

The Chairman of the Panel explained that in the absence of a representative from the Highways Partnership there could be no presentation, but there was the opportunity to identify outstanding issues.

The following were mentioned:-

- the Audley End Station Cycle Path
- Local Agenda 21 consultation direction
- making transport safer around Saffron Walden
- making transport strategy reflect local knowledge about local road dangers
- speed activated signs
- local issues needing to be raised with the Highways Authority (communication difficulties). Residents should be invited to let the Chairman have details of such issues to raise with Highways.
- there were various concerns about 20 mph zones, school zones, the need for village speed limits and the problems caused in a short stretch of road by a variety of changing speed limits. It was felt the Chairman would be

able to summarize these matters and convey them to Councillor R L Bass of the County Council.

- implementation of a “yellow bus” scheme for school transport.
- provision to residents of information about how road improvement schemes are developed and progressed.
- problems of ratruns between Thaxted and Newport and lack, or inconsistency, of policing of the speed limits on the main road outside the villages.
- inconsistency between speed limits.
- delays to approved road schemes due to funding problems
- the need for a talk by Councillor Bass on the progress of the Traffic Management Strategy. Other topics for discussion with Councillor Bass were traffic speed limit enforcement, calming, weight limit enforcement and provision of safe walkways/footpaths.
- the need for budget provision from ECC to help with traffic problems in parishes

The Chairman agreed that re-instatement of the local road safety advisory committee could be investigated by the Constitution Task Group.

In answer to a question Councillor Hibbs explained that it was not possible in law for the Council to have Parish Members voting with them on area panel decisions but much could be achieved by joint discussion and an awareness of the consensus of the meeting.

Councillor Hibbs summarised the agreed panel discussion areas as:-

- “Yellow buses”
- Road works
- Speed limits
- Ratruns
- Funding
- The Traffic Management Strategy
- Cycle paths and footpaths
- Variable message signs
- Enforcement by the Police

NP7 **PRESENTATION BY PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER ON NORTH AREA STRATEGIC HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

The Principal Environmental Health Officer gave a comprehensive presentation on the Council’s work towards meeting the air quality requirements of the Environment Act 1995, including precise details of air pollution level changes over the years in particular locations. He explained that the two significant criteria in any one location were level of pollution and ‘relevant public exposure’. He added that since people could not be moved away from the pollution it was necessary for any problems to be remedied by reducing the pollution at source, principally from road traffic.

He welcomed questions and local views on sites for the diffusion tubes which are used for monitoring levels, and in answer to a question he confirmed that once an area had been declared and confirmed as an Air Quality Management Area any development that affected air pollution levels would be a material consideration for planning purposes. The standards set were for protecting the health of the population as a whole and not for particular individuals. The Council had no powers to control the cultivation of rape seed close to residential areas

The meeting expressed broad agreement with the location of existing diffusion tubes and Mr Cockerell answered individual Members' questions about possible new sites.

NP8 **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

The Executive Manager Strategy and Performance explained that this item would be a standard one to sum up current issues in the community. Mr A Stewart, the Community Development Manager, introduced Ms N Morton, the new Community Safety Officer.

NP9 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman invited suggestions of items for the work programme and explained that these should be items directly connected with the North Area.

The following headings were received:

- the Saffron Walden Community Hospital and any changes which may affect it (PCT talk to be requested).
- wheelie bins
- road safety
- a presentation by the Saffron Walden Project Officer on her work
- the expansion of Cambridge and its impact for Chesterford Park
- park and ride at Audley End Station
- local schools views on compulsory bussing
- Chlamydia screening in schools
- a report on the reasoning for "yellow buses".
- Tourist Information

The Chairman thanked all present for their attendance at the first meeting of the North Area Panel.

The meeting ended at 9.50 pm.