

**NORTH AREA PANEL MEETING held at the GREAT CHESTERFORD
COMMUNITY CENTRE at 7.00 pm on 12 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Present:- Councillors R F Freeman, H D Baker, P Boland, M A Hibbs, A J Ketteridge, J E Menell, M J Savage, P A Wilcock and A C Yarwood.

Officers in attendance: - G Bradley Leisure Manager, J Elson Funding and Strategic Partnership Officer, R Harborough Planning Policy and Conservation Manager, S Hayden Community Development Officer, D Millership Essex County Council Highways Department, C Roberts Committee Officer, J Starr Community Development Officer (Youth and Arts), A Stewart Community and Development Manager, and T Turner Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance).

Representatives from the Parishes:-

Arkesden	K Barwood
Great Chesterford	P Fentem
	M Cole
	C Cole
	M Cookson
	T Fowell
	H Rolfe
Hadstock	R Betser
	H McIlwrick
Hempstead	S McCarthy
Langley	K Rivett
Littlebury	P Farnsworth
	M Hancock
	P Hubbard
	E Sanders
Radwinter	J Hardisty
Saffron Walden	P Riding (Saffron Walden Initiative)
	M White (Town Council)
Wendens Ambo	A Wade
	S Wilde
Wimbish	D Corke
	M Young

Also present S Holland (Herts and Essex News)
P Garland (Local Agenda 21)
J Broomfield, E Goddard, T Guyer, J Higham and C Lethbridge (members of the public).

NP26

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chairman Councillor Freeman welcomed all present to the first peripatetic meeting of the Panel and opened the question and answer session.

Mr McIlwrick (Hadstock) asked that switched street lighting be made available to parish councils and the Community and Development Manager said he would inquire about this.

The Chairman in answer to a question informed the meeting that all funds were now available for the skate park project. A delay until March would occur to meet the availability of the sub-contractor, but this gave the advantage of working in better weather.

Councillor Mrs Menell asked for provision of a portable loop system at future meetings. She added that she felt the Area Panel at present had nothing to offer the PCT and so this aspect should be the province of the whole Council via Scrutiny rather than individual Area Panels. In answer to a question she suggested that the new chief executive and chairman of the reformed health authority be invited to a meeting of the Area Panel to discuss this matter.

Mr P Riding asked how planning permission had been granted for flats to be built near the recycling centre. The Chairman explained that the site was a brown-field one and the development categorised under a Government initiative as "live/work units". Further questions were asked about keeping the premises subject to an occupancy condition and taxing as for business use.

In answer to a question from Mr M White the Chairman explained that representations about car parking charges in Saffron Walden should be referred to the Environment Committee which would meet on 26 September to consider the recommendation of the Decriminalisation Working Group.

Mr Betser suggested that to help trade in the Town the first hour of car parking should be given free. The Chairman stressed that the car parking facilities were there to help all visitors to the Town as well as shoppers. He explained that the cost of systems for payment on exit (which use either machinery or alternatively labour) was much higher than other solutions. Car park charges were tailored to the characteristics of individual car parks.

Several speakers said that the advertising of Swan Meadow Car Park at the bottom of Windmill Hill should be more noticeable and inviting. Ms Millership said there was no problem with a change of the sign and the Chairman asked her to review the signage.

NP27

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Bayley, R P Chambers, B M Hughes, S C Jones, T D Knight, and V JT Lelliott.

Declarations of interests were made as follows:-

Councillor H D Baker as a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council and of the Almshouses Board.

Councillor M A Hibbs as a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council.

Councillor A J Ketteridge as a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council, Councillor J E Menell, as a member of the Primary Care Trust and the Littlebury Parish Council.

Councillor A C Yarwood as a member of the Newport Parish Council.

Stuart Wilde as a member of the Wendens Ambo Parish Council.

NP28 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 30 May 2006 were approved as a correct record subject to the addition of Councillor V J T Lelliott's name to the list of those who gave apologies for absence from the meeting.

(i) Minute NP20 – Road Safety Task Group

The Chairman said, in answer to a question from Councillor A J Ketteridge, that this matter would be considered later in the meeting in conjunction with the item on traffic calming at Littlebury. Councillor J E Menell informed the meeting that her interest was as a member of the Uttlesford Primary Care Trust not of the Community Safety Action Team.

(ii) Minute NP24 – Area Champions.

The new Area Champion, John Starr was welcomed to the meeting. Councillor Mrs J Menell asked for the Area Champions' job specification to be forwarded to her.

(iii) Minute NP20 – Funding of cycle routes.

Mr P Riding asked for information on this matter and Ms D Millership said that it was all a part of the Station developments.

NP29 **PRESENTATION BY SARAH SAWARD PROJECT OFFICER**

The Panel received a comprehensive presentation by Sarah Seward on her role as, initially, Saffron Walden Project Officer, and now, Market Towns Project Officer; its origin in the Saffron Walden Healthcheck; the wide variety of initiatives which had already sprung from the Healthcheck; and the plans for new initiatives on a broader geographic basis supported by further funding from the District and County Councils.

In answer to questions she explained that the work with the villages was predominantly about access but that village plans would probably play a larger part in it soon.

The Panel offered its congratulations to Sarah Seward on the extent and quality of the work she had done.

NP30 **COMMUNITY PROJECT GRANTS**

The Community and Development Manager informed the meeting that £4,000 of the available funds had been ring-fenced for use within four specific areas. All available grant types were oversubscribed with applications.

RESOLVED

1 that the Council be requested to increase each Panel's allocation of funds for grants by £10,000.

2 that grants be awarded in the sums recommended in the report

3 that officers review large scale projects (over £100,000) to establish how best to support them, and provide a report on this to a future meeting of the Panel.

NP31

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION STREET LIGHTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Community and Development Manager presented a report about the decision taken by the Essex County Council to consult District Councils about a proposed change to their Street Lighting Policy and Practice by switching street lights off between midnight and 5.00 am to save cost, energy and CO2 emissions.

Ms D Millership explained that all street lights were being detailed on a map for the purposes of this consultation and that there would be exempt areas eg accident remedial sites.

Members expressed some concerns about effective curfewing of vulnerable people, pedestrian and driver safety and the cost of switching particular lights off. Suggestions were made of dimming the lights, switching alternate lights off, or switching off between 2.00 am and 5.00 am to meet these difficulties. Some of the meeting thought the main advantage would be the reduction in light pollution to the benefit of wildlife and star-gazers.

It was noted that some parishes owned particular street lights and the meeting considered that parishes should be consulted individually since only the parishes could respond with the necessary level of detailed consideration.

RESOLVED that a letter be sent to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways seeking reassurance that the decision in this case will not be taken without proper consultation of all parishes.

NP32

AUDLEY END AND GREAT CHESTERFORD RAILWAY STATIONS

The Community and Development Manager presented a report providing Members with details of a survey undertaken by Mouchel Parkman Consultants on behalf of Essex County Council about the condition of and access to Great Chesterford and Audley End Railway Stations. The improvements recommended included three new designs for the station layout at Audley End and one for Great Chesterford as well as a park and ride scheme.

The proposal for the park and ride scheme was to provide commuter car parking in Saffron Walden town centre and a bus service to take commuters to the station. The Swan Meadow car park, a few minutes walk from the town centre, had been identified as a suitable park and ride site because it had about 50% spare capacity. It was thought the new service could also pick up passengers at other important stops along the way such as the High Street, Council Offices and the High School subject to spare capacity and would supplement the existing services.

The report said the park and ride would provide extra parking capacity without the need to extend the station car park and that nearly half the commuters using the station came from the town. The park and ride could be introduced on an experimental basis initially with a suitable charging structure to attract customers. A list of detailed works recommendations was appended to the report.

The meeting discussed, in particular the park and ride proposal, and agreed that consultation with the local Parish Councils was imperative. There was some concern about whether the proposals would fail for lack of funding as in the case of the Cycleway; some of the meeting were unhappy about the suggested use of Swan Meadow car park as an overflow for station parking; it was said that the Business Forum saw the extra Swan Meadow car park capacity as important to the prosperity of Saffron Walden and suggested that the County Council should negotiate a price for use of the Swan Meadow capacity rather than giving it away: doubts were again expressed about the adequacy of the breadth of consultation undertaken.

RESOLVED

1 that a letter be sent to the Essex County Council stressing the need for consultation with affected parishes in the case of all schemes before decisions are taken and requesting a copy of the full report.

2 that the local Essex County Council Member be invited to attend the next meeting of the Panel to address the issues which have been raised.

3 that the Mouchel Parkman report be referred to the Uttlesford Transport Forum with a report back to the Panel at its next meeting.

NP33

UPDATE ON STANSTED AIRPORT

The Planning Policy and Conservation Manager gave the meeting a brief presentation about recent steps which had taken place in the Stansted Airport planning application process. He mentioned the exploration of the BAA Environment Impact Statement, community involvement, receipt of representations from individuals, Greater London Authority, statutory consultees, environmental groups, strategic health authorities, other local authorities including two Suffolk District Councils, companies and the East of England Development Agency as well as input received and still to be received from the Essex County Council, and input to be received from the applicant giving further details of the environmental effect observed to date.

In answer to a question he confirmed that BAA had announced their intention to proceed with the application for a second runway. It was expected that such an application would be submitted in the summer of 2007.

NP34 **TRAFFIC CALMING IN LITTLEBURY**

At the invitation of the Chairman Mrs E Sanders, a resident of Littlebury, gave a presentation about the advantages of alternative "Natural" systems for road traffic calming, eg different road surfacing, traditional signposts rather than proliferation of urbanising signs. She also advocated the use of more CCTV and police attention, and asked for care with use of road tolls which re-directed traffic to country lanes.

The Chairman of the Committee commented that the main limit on this would be funding, but the principles of such calming could inform highways judgements made by others. Members discussed the setting up of a task group (further to Minute NP20 of the meeting held on 30 May) for one year to tackle the issues raised in the villages generally and with immediate reference to Ashdon, Hadstock and Littlebury. It was understood that minuting could not be provided but Members felt it was important for the task group to have a budget. It was felt that three District councillors should lead the Group with representation from Parishes, Police and the Area Highways Authority.

RESOLVED that a task group be set up, further to Minute NP20 of the meeting held on 30 May, for one year, to tackle issues raised relating to traffic calming in the villages.

NP35 **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES**

The Panel considered the report of the Electoral Services Officer about the statutory review of polling districts and places commenced by the Council on 1 September 2005. Under legislation, the Council had to decide on suitable arrangements for its district after appropriate consultation. The new scheme adopted would operate at all elections held from the effective date onwards.

Saffron Walden Town Council had asked for a new polling venue for Castle South-West Polling District; they thought the use of St Mary's Primary School was unsatisfactory as the school had to close for the day and they suggested the Football Club as a suitable alternative. Members considered a report on facilities at the Football Club, including disabled access arrangements, prepared by the Project Officer.

The boundary between Shire North and South Polling Districts needed amendment. The original line deviated from following the centre of Peaslands Road to achieve a better balance between the numbers of electors allocated to each part. The Bell College new development access was such that the new dwellings there should be included in the same Polling District as the adjoining properties north of Peaslands Road.

A suggestion had also been received from Councillor Savage that consideration should be given to the provision of separate polling facilities at Carver Barracks for the use of service personnel and their families.

RECOMMENDED

1 That St Mary's School in Castle Street should not continue to be the designated Polling Place for Castle South-West Polling District that the venue at the football club be used as an experiment, and that the present division between Castle South-East and Castle South-West Polling Districts should remain unaltered.

2 That option 1 be selected for the amendment of the boundary division between Shire North and Shire South Polling Districts and that the Four Acres Common Room continue to be the designated Polling Place for Shire North.

(The description would be amended to read: 'Shire North: that portion of Saffron Walden Shire ward north of a line commencing on the western boundary of the ward where it meets with Audley ward at the junction of South Road with Peaslands Road, and running in an easterly direction along the centre of Peaslands Road to a point on that road, and continuing in a generally easterly direction along the rear boundary of 1 Peaslands Road, and then in a generally northerly, easterly and then southerly direction around the perimeter of the development site east of Bell College, and then continuing along the line of the Slade and then in an easterly direction along the rear boundaries of properties fronting Peaslands Road, and then in a southerly direction along the centre of Thaxted Road to a point on that road, then in a generally easterly direction along footpath 37, bridleway 19 and bridleway 18 to the ward boundary west of Cole End Lane.')

Shire South Polling District would then comprise the remainder of Shire Ward.

3 That a separate Polling District be formed in Wimbish based on Elder Street and Carver Barracks (and possibly Thaxted Road west of the junction with Elder Street and Cole End Lane as well), and that the village/community hall off Rowney Avenue and Broad Oaks Close be designated as the Polling Place; the remainder of Wimbish parish would become a separate polling district and would continue to poll at Wimbish Village Hall; officers be requested to devise a suitable boundary division for agreement by the Operations Committee.

4 That the remaining polling districts and places, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, be confirmed without alteration.

The Panel welcomed John Starr, the new Community Development Officer (Youth and Arts).

The meeting ended at 10.45 pm.