

**NORTH AREA PANEL held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00 pm on 18 OCTOBER 2007**

Present:- Councillor J E Menell – Chairman.
Councillors, R H Chamberlain, K L Eden, S J Howell,
A J Ketteridge, H J Mason, D G Perry, J A Redfern, H S Rolfe,
D J Sadler, A D Walters and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- G Bradley, J Pine, C Roberts, P Snow and J Starr.

Also present: Sgt Ashley Seymour, Essex Police, David Forkin Essex
County Highways West Area and Councillor Hume Essex
County Council.

NP19

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

The Chairman, Councillor Menell, welcomed all present and opened the question and answer session.

A resident of Littlebury, Mr M O’Sullivan asked a question about the District Council’s policy on 20 mph speed limits in areas policed by cameras and agreed to put his question later in the meeting to the Essex County Council Transport Cabinet Member.

Councillor Howell referred to the proposed closure of the Rowntree Way Post Office and proposed that the Panel oppose all four of the closures which had been put forward within the District. Councillor Ketteridge added that the Essex County Council was coordinating a campaign of opposition throughout the County.

Mr P Riding asked a question about affordable housing and in answer to it the Chairman explained that the questionnaire had shown residents’ preference for theme events so the January meeting was being set aside for housing issues including affordable housing and village housing schemes.

Mrs E Sanders of Littlebury asked a question about the implementation of the yellow ‘bus scheme in the District and the Chairman explained that she had asked the Essex County Council Transport Cabinet Member to deal with this matter later in the meeting.

Mr P Lawrence, representing the Turpins Bowls Club, expressed concern about skaters arriving there by car (sometimes badly driven), and ignoring the Club’s reserved parking notices. The Saffron Walden Town Clerk was invited to make representations but declined to do so. Mr Lawrence also queried the Council’s neighbour notification process for the skateboard park planning application, in that the Bowls Club was not notified. Mr Pine agreed to investigate this.

RECOMMENDED that the Council opposes all four of the Post Office closures which have been put forward within the District and joins the Essex County Council’s campaign of opposition for the whole County.

NP20

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Anjum, T P Knight, S V Schneider, and A C Yarwood.

Members of the Panel declared personal and non-prejudicial interests as follows:

Councillor S Anjum, member of Saffron Walden Town Council.
Councillor J E Menell, member of Littlebury Parish Council
Councillor A J Ketteridge, member of Saffron Walden Town Council
Councillor H S Rolfe, member of Great Chesterford Parish Council
Councillor J A Redfern, member of Great Chesterford Parish Council
Councillor K L Eden, member of Saffron Walden Town Council
Councillor R P Chambers, member of Essex County Council and the Police Authority for Essex
Councillor S Howell, member of Saffron Walden Town Council

NP21

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

NP22

HIGHWAYS ISSUES

The Chairman explained that this was the first of the themed items planned in response to the results of the questionnaire. She introduced Councillor N Hume the County Cabinet Member for Highways, Mr D Forkin the Area Highways Manager, Sgt Ashley Seymour the local Police Community Liaison Officer and Mr J Pine the District Council Planning Policy Development Control Liaison Officer, and asked them to respond to questions which had been received.

Councillor N Hume referred to the County's policy of keeping traffic moving and safe, improving KSI statistics and promoting localism. In answer to a request for a 30 mph speed limit at Quendon and Rickling he explained that information derived from traffic flow measurements was against such a change. The current limit was a consistent use of the existing policy to not impose limits where they were unlikely to be adhered to. In answer to questions from Mr Bedborough he promised to look again at the evidence for consistency. Councillor P Wilcock asked the Cabinet Member to consult the Police and the Chairman of the Parish Council too.

Mr D Forkin received questions from Councillor R Chamberlain about monitoring of contractor's work and lack of reply to a letter about this. He had also questioned the placing of a variable message speed restriction sign at Ashdon. Mr Forkin described the supervision and monitoring process and said that he was unaware of the problem of flood debris removal. Correspondence was replied to within ten working days. He would look into these matters.

Councillor P Wilcock expressed concerns about the level of service from the Area Highways office since office had moved to Harlow.

Councillor N Hume received questions from Mrs E Sanders about progress with the introduction of natural traffic calming and Yellow Bus transport to schools. He explained that the policy was to introduce natural calming where it fitted into the setting and there was no personal risk. He understood that town areas were more suitable than country ones. Yellow buses had significant cost implications and could not be introduced without Government funding.

Mr O'Sullivan (?) of Littlebury asked about 20 mph speed limits policed by cameras and Councillor N Hume said he did not disagree with these especially if the Government would pay for them. In answer to a question from Councillor P Wilcock Councillor Hume said that a 25mph limit around the Newport primary school would be considered by County Highways.

Mr M Young commented that he thought there had recently been improvement in road safety in the north of the County.

Councillor S Howell mentioned the need for a pedestrian crossing near R A Butler School and the Chairman added that the nearby Thomas More School was requesting lollipop crossing attendants. Councillor Hume commented that the Highways Authority had to work within priorities.

Councillor H Rolfe welcomed the change of tone at the County Council and said he wished to work in partnership with the County and was glad the new representatives were in post. At the same time he was aware that he Highways Authority was under-staffed and under-resourced. He welcomed the emphasis on localism and asked that the B184 and the B1383 be included in consideration of consistent speed limits and inquired how the effect of switching off lights would be evaluated.

Councillor Hume said that no targets had been set for evaluating the impact of switching off the lights in Uttlesford and Maldon.

Mr J Broomfield asked Sgt Seymour about police presence to enforce speed limits in Littlebury. Sgt Seymour said that there was a regular police community support officer presence, and he assured Mr Broomfield that he would discuss with officers the comment that speeding traffic was not caught.

Ms H Shibata asked about monitoring of the effects of lighting changes and was informed that results would be released at the end of the trial.

Councillor P Wilcock said he had heard that police were not very visible in Uttlesford and he suggested they should write to the Parish magazines to allay the fear that they were not there.

A resident of Quendon informed the meeting that a Community Speed Watch was being formed which so far had 8 volunteers.

Councillors Smith, Redfern and others asked questions about speed signs and traffic issues in their parishes.

The Chairman of the Panel then thanked all three speakers and adjourned the meeting for five minutes before proceeding with the rest of the meeting.

NP23

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS

The Panel considered the report of the Electoral Services Officer on a review of the Polling Districts and Places Scheme required by recent legislation to be completed by the end of the year. Although a full review had been carried out as recently as last year, some amendments to the scheme were being suggested. The review had commenced on 30 July 2007 and had been publicised by notice at the London Road offices and on the Council's website. As regards Saffron Walden Shire ward it was noted that there might be a future need to accommodate two polling stations within the designated polling place for Shire North (Four Acres Common Room). Designation of the R A Butler School instead of Four Acres might become necessary in due course.

As far as Wimbish and Debden ward is concerned Members had decided at the 2006 review to divide the parish of Wimbish into two separate PDs based on Carver Barracks and the Village. This arrangement worked well in May although turnout at Carver Barracks was very low.

The report contained recommendations for that part of the existing scheme falling within the Area Panel's jurisdiction.

RECOMMENDED

- 1 the existing scheme for the whole of the area covered by the North Panel be recommended for adoption, with effect from the publication of the revised register on 30 November 2007, and that the electoral services officer be authorised to prepare a suitable statement of reasons for the decisions made.
- 2 the Council endorse as a statement of principle the RO's remarks that the requirement to make the convenience of electors the primary consideration in conducting a review of polling arrangements may sometimes lead to the designation of school premises, especially where there is no suitable alternative.
- 3 a few electors at Little Walden, transferred from Little Chesterford to Saffron Walden parish, continue to poll at Little Chesterford Village Hall for district ward elections only, until such time as a consequential changes order can be made.

NP24

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Community Development Officer (Youth and Arts) on community development in the area.

RESOLVED that the report be noted, with congratulations for the Motorwise activity and the achievement by the Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre, and officers' actions endorsed.

The Chairman reminded those present that the next meeting's theme would be Housing.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.