

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 17 JULY
2009 at 10.00 am**

Present: Councillor A D Walters – Chairman.
John Ready (Saffron Walden Initiative); Chris Stoneham (Essex
Highways); Barry Drinkwater (ULODA); Jenna Mattholie and
Richard Watson (Sustainable School Travel, Essex County
Council).

Officers
present: W Cockerell (Principal Environmental Health Officer),
R Harborough (Acting Director of Development) and R Procter
(Democratic Services Officer).

SW1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J A Redfern,
H S Rolfe and A C Yarwood; and from Sue Locke and Peter Riding.

SW2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2009 were approved and
signed as a correct record.

SW4 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute SW14 – Castle Street/Bridge Street junction

No progress on provision of steps had been made, and Chris Stoneham
agreed to pursue this matter.

(ii) Minute SW14 – Yellow Bus Scheme

No funding was available for this scheme.

(iii) Minute SW – Congestion busting schemes

Of three potential schemes proposed, two had had to be abandoned, primarily
on the grounds of cost. Consideration of the third scheme would form a
possible future agenda item.

SW5 MARKET SQUARE ENHANCEMENT

Since the last meeting, the enhancement scheme had been completed. The
Chairman said this was a good result, and although there had been some
controversy in the local press, the scheme had won a Market Town East
award. John Ready said this was an example of both environmental
improvement and of partnership working.

SW6 AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Air Quality Monitoring

The Working Group considered the report on air quality monitoring in 2008. The Principal Environmental Health Officer said monitoring of sites showing measurements in excess of 40 µgm³ would continue, and if results for 2009 revealed similar values, it would be necessary to consider extending the existing air quality management areas. It was reassuring that the figures confirmed the majority of people in Saffron Walden did not have air quality issues.

The report was discussed briefly, and points were made as follows:

- Issues affecting pollution in Saffron Walden included pressures of traffic due to road size and medieval streets, as well as increased traffic from the 'school run'.
- Air quality monitoring revealed there had been a significant increase in air pollution as against the objective standard of 40 µgm³. The Working Group asked for its concerns at high air pollution levels to be noted by Essex County Council.
- One measure to address queuing traffic on Radwinter Road was road-widening. The Acting Director of Development said that for significant development a traffic assessment report is required.

Air Quality Management Action Plan

The Principal Environmental Health Officer presented a final Air Quality Management Action Plan for approval. He explained that consultation on measures to improve air quality had taken place with stakeholders, and that responses had now been incorporated into the plan. A costs/benefit analysis had been included, which ranked various measures to improve air quality. Top of these measures was the school travel plan initiative, and representatives from Essex County Council's Sustainable Travel team would be giving a presentation as part of this Agenda item. He invited the Group to approve the plan and to recommend it to Environment Committee.

The Chairman said priority should be given to the area at Thaxted Road, as this showed the greatest level of pollution.

RECOMMENDED that Environment Committee adopt the Uttlesford Air Quality Action Plan 2009 for Saffron Walden.

School Travel Plans

The Chairman welcomed representatives of the County Council's Sustainable School Travel team to the meeting. Richard Watson, Sustainable School Travel Advisor, gave a presentation on School Travel Plans. He said 85% of

schools in Essex and 37 out of 45 schools in Uttlesford had a travel plan. Initiatives to encourage walking and cycling to school were promoted. In reply to questions, he said annual monitoring took place, and schools were asked to re-write their plans every three years.

The Chairman was pleased that the majority of schools had drawn up travel plans, and recommended the Sustainable School Travel team should engage in a publicity campaign. He suggested the District Council's Communications Officer, James Burton, could assist with publicising information on this subject.

SW7 POLLARDING – HIGH STREET/CASTLE STREET

It was noted that the second of three pollarding phases in the High Street and Castle Street had now been concluded, and a yearly maintenance programme would in future be carried out.

SW8 FLOOD DRAINAGE SCHEMES

The flood drainage system at Windmill Hill had now been restored, and surveys had been carried out for the High Street. A programme of works would start in the autumn.

The Chairman referred to the recent flash flood, which had overwhelmed drains at Bridge Street/ Windmill Hill, and which had now been the subject of investigation by Iain Hurwood. In terms of remedying the situation, there were issues regarding surface water run-off from the land owned by The Fry Trust, and a meeting had been arranged. Chris Stoneham said the drains would be cleared on a three monthly jetting programme. John Ready asked that more regular checks be carried out on these drains. As the flooding had entered two houses, he was also very concerned that suitable contingency plans be prepared, particularly with regard to police responses and the immediate diversion of traffic during a flooding incident. Chris Stoneham said it was for the police to close the road, but that Highways could provide appropriate signage.

John Ready raised various points arising from the division of responsibility for the area surrounding the Slade. Whilst responsibility for the river itself rested with the Environment Agency, the banks were dealt with by the Town Council and by Uttlesford District Council. The bore under the road was the responsibility of Highways. As Chairman of the Bridge Street Residents' Association, he sought clarification of some grey areas. The Chairman agreed there was potential for confusion regarding responsibility for maintenance, and said the situation should be monitored. The Acting Director of Development said that under the Water Bill, the County Council would become responsible for all flooding, but that there would need to be agreement between parties as to who would discharge that responsibility on the ground.

In response to a question from John Ready, Chris Stoneham confirmed the disabled parking bays outside the Library would be made available by the end of June.

SW9 CAMPAIGN AGAINST OVERWEIGHT HGVs

The Chairman gave an update on the campaign against overweight HGVs. There had been no problems for some time. Essex County Council would be funding a sign which would measure vehicle length and which would light up when the permitted size was exceeded. Chris Stoneham confirmed that the sign and post would be erected by the end of the year. The Chairman welcomed this measure. He said the Standards Agency had done excellent work in carrying out random monitoring, and he was confident the numbers of HGVs entering the town would be reduced.

SW10 TRAFFIC DIVERSION VAS STUMPS CROSS

The Chairman reported that this matter was progressing only slowly, as it involved a number of different agencies. It was unacceptable that there was no plan to prevent motorway traffic routing via Saffron Walden town centre at present. Proposals had been put forward for a sign which would illuminate when a diversion from the motorway took place.

Chris Stoneham said input had now been received from the Highways Agency on the type of sign to be installed. Provision had been made in the budget for this financial year. The Chairman welcomed this news.

SW11 PAINTING OF SIGNPOSTS IN CONSERVATION AREA

The Chairman asked for confirmation that lamp posts and signposts in the Town's conservation area would in future be painted black. Chris Stoneham said this was now the case, and the Chairman expressed thanks for the full co-operation his request had received. The Chairman noted that Uttlesford District Council was responsible for painting of posts in Swan Meadow car park, where paintwork was in poor condition.

SW12 SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN ENTRANCE SIGNS

A request to approve signs for the Town entrances had been received from the Saffron Walden Partnership Board. The Working Group confirmed its agreement in principle to the erection of such signs, but considered that the wording of the signs was a matter for agreement between the Town Council and the Partnership Board.

SW13 NEW PROJECTS FOR TOWN CENTRE

The Chairman said outstanding items were being tackled with the full co-operation of Essex Highways and the District Council, and most had been completed satisfactorily. He now sought new initiatives, and hoped to work

with groups which had access to funding on any issues where there was a shared interest.

SW14 LITTER

It was important to target the high profile areas such as the Common and Park Lane, as most complaints related to these areas. Residential streets were not such a problem.

SW15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted the VAS on Newport Road had worked well. Two further areas should be considered for such signs: Bridge Street/Windmill Hill; and Thaxted Road. Chris Stoneham said these requests would be considered. Costs would be approximately £4K - £5K per illuminating sign.

Barry Drinkwater requested an update on proposals for a taxi rank for the High Street. Chris Stoneham said this matter had been in abeyance pending the resolution of a waiting restriction review which had been conducted earlier in the year. He considered it advisable that the proposals should tie in with the review. The experimental waiting restrictions in the Town had been very successful, and the taxi rank would be dealt with this year. Barry Drinkwater said it was important to progress this issue, and the Licensing Committee would look on with interest.

The meeting ended at 11.25 am.