

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP held at  
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 26  
February 2009 at 11.30 am**

Present: Councillor A D Walters – Chairman.

Councillors D G Perry, J A Redfern and P A Wilcock,

Also attending John Ready and Peter Riding (Saffron Walden Initiative);  
Chris Stoneham (Essex Highways); Barry Drinkwater (ULODA),  
Malcolm White (Saffron Walden Town Council)  
Councillor Sandra Eden (Saffron Walden Town Council)  
Sue Locke (Local Area Access Group)

Officers

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

**SW16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting particularly the Council's Leader Councillor Ketteridge.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H S Rolfe and A C Yarwood.

**SW17 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2009 were approved and signed as a correct record.

**SW18 MARKET SQUARE REFURBISHMENT - POWER BOXES AND LIDS/PAVIORS**

The Chairman commented that the finished works to the Market Square looked very good. John Ready informed the meeting that work would be done to the paviour lids to prevent flexing. Malcolm White added that the catches on these lids had needed to be extended but that they seemed to work now and a contact number was displayed for summoning assistance with any problems if needed.

**SW19 AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT UPDATE - AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN,  
AIR QUALITY REPORT AND SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN**

The Working Group considered the report of the Principal Environmental Health Officer on air quality monitoring in 2009 which had shown levels of nitrogen dioxide at the Thaxted Road junction with Radwinter Road to be significantly above the relevant long term annual average air pollution standard. At other air quality monitoring sites there had been reductions from the 2008 figures but there were still areas of concern in the High Street and at the junction with Debden Road.

Two more air quality monitoring sites had been established along Debden Road and the Principal Environmental Health Officer explained the reasons for choosing these locations.

Members commented that pollution levels and traffic congestion could be reduced by a range of measures including parking restrictions along Mount Pleasant Road, the development of technology for cleaner vehicle emissions and measures to reduce the numbers of journeys to school. They also discussed the possible future pollution effects of potential development schemes; it was suggested that air quality should be a material planning consideration when considering these applications and the Working Group were assured by the Director of Development that it would be one of the factors taken into account when the applications were being considered.

In answer to a question from the Chairman the Principal Environmental Health Officer spoke about the Low Emissions Strategies Guide produced by Defra which concerned the use of the planning system to reduce transport generated pollution and the building up of funds to finance air quality improvements.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer informed the meeting that the Katherine Semar and St Thomas More Schools were now in the process of updating their school travel plans. Work had been carried out at the R A Butler School to provide a shelter, for pupils to wait in, and to separate the pedestrian and car areas on the site. The Saffron Walden County High School had submitted a package of measures to the County Council including signs and possibly a cycle lane up to the School.

Members were concerned about the use of cars by students and the relatively small use of bicycles and felt they should ask for presentations from representatives of the Essex Highways Department and the Saffron Walden County High School on this subject.

SW20 **SPEED LIMIT ENFORCEMENT SCHEME – OP. KILO AND NAP/ESSEX TRAFFIC POLICE**

It was noted that under these initiatives three different roads were targeted each week for speed enforcement. Improved speed guns had been acquired.

The Chairman thought that it was valuable to maintain high visibility police enforcement by frequent random checks on a few roads, and it was important to keep the pressure on for those checks to be done.

## SW21 **FLOOD DRAINAGE SCHEMES**

It was noted that the drains at Bridge Street were much improved but that at the Slade removal of the flaps remained to be done. John Ready raised various points arising from the division of responsibility for the area surrounding the Slade. Chris Stoneham agreed to raise this with Iain Hurwood.

Chris Stoneham also detailed the anticipated schedule for the works being carried out in the High Street.

In answer to a question from Councillor Perry the Director of Development informed the meeting that a report updating Members about alternative arrangements to supplying sandbags would be brought to the next meeting of the Community and Housing Committee.

## SW22 **CAMPAIGN AGAINST OVERWEIGHT HGV'S B184 – UPDATE**

(At this point Barry Drinkwater joined the meeting.)

The Chairman gave an update on the campaign against overweight HGVs. There was a conflict between the need for access to the Town and the need to protect the historic buildings in Bridge Street and their cellars under the road. Essex County Council was carrying out random weight checks on the lorries and seeking the co-operation of the relevant employer when contraventions were discovered. There was also now a vehicle activated sign at the Little Chesterford roundabout which measured the length of the vehicle as a proxy for its weight. The County Council would be improving signs on the approaches to the Stump Cross B1383 roundabout. Information about commercial vehicles using the Swan Meadow Car Park including vehicle registration numbers was usefully being fed to the Council.

John Ready stressed that residents were concerned also about the effect of vehicles as they left the Town. He felt these vehicles should use Sparrows Hill rather than Castle Street. It was acknowledged that such traffic would then use Littlebury, but the B1383 was of more appropriate width.

The Chairman thought the main priority was to aim for smaller sized vehicles.

## SW23 **TRAFFIC DIVERSION ILLUMINATING SIGN STUMPS CROSS**

The Chairman reported that the Highways Agency was unhappy with the idea of an illuminating sign but was prepared as an experiment to provide a fixed sign to deter motorway traffic from routing via Saffron Walden town centre. The Group felt this should be accepted.

**SW24 PAINTING PROGRAMME – CAST IRON BOLLARDS AND LAMP-POSTS**

The Chairman asked Chris Stoneham of the Highways Authority that the 15 lamp posts in the Town's conservation area remaining to be painted black be completed as a matter of priority.

**SW25 LAMP-POST – PATH FRESHWELL GARDENS TO SWAN MEADOW**

Chris Stoneham said that hopefully the work to this lamp-post would fall within the current year's budget.

**SW26 POLLARDING – HIGH STREET/CASTLE STREET**

The Chairman said that the trees, in the third year of pollarding now looked much better. Chris Stoneham added that if the Arboriculturalist was happy with the results of the third year a rolling programme of pollarding would be instituted.

**SW27 LITTER**

Members commented on a press letter, which they felt was excessively critical, about litter in the High Street including discarded chewing gum.

It was felt that there was no litter problem in the Town other than on a summer's evening in the summer. Such litter was generally cleared up quickly. Councillor Perry suggested obtaining the cooperation of the police, PCSOs and schools towards promoting the right attitude.

**SW28 EMBANKMENT STEPS – CASTLE STREET**

It was noted that the desired improvement was to be modest and practical, consisting of a couple of paving stones.

**SW29 REFURBISHMENT OF SWAN MEADOW POND**

Members were informed of the opportunity to obtain a grant for refurbishment of this pond. The Chairman expressed appreciation for the excellent job

carried out by Bruce Tice in preparing the grant application papers. It was hoped that a start could be made in September 2010.

**SW30 POTHoles – UPDATE**

Chris Stoneham reported that repair of the potholes was being carried out by one rapid response and two seek and fix gangs. Members asked that work should achieve a lasting repair.

**SW31 RESURFACING OF PATH FROM THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL TO LONDON ROAD ROUNDABOUT**

The meeting was informed that this work would soon be completed.

**SW32 REMOVAL OF REDUNDANT SIGNS/POLES**

It was noted that 200 signs/poles were yet to be removed and that a similar programme for Great Dunmow had not been begun yet.

The Chairman asked for attention to the leaning post in Castle Street and Chris Stoneham assured him that this would be done..

**SW33 IMPROVEMENT OF SAFETY OF PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS IN CHURCH STREET**

Members were aware that some pavements, eg in Church Street, could not be used by wheelchair users. Malcolm White informed the meeting that the Town Council had applied to widen some pavements and Chris Stoneham was asked to consider these matters.

**SW34 NEW PROJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION – IMPROVEMENT OF FOOTPATHS OFF COMMON HILL AND GIBSON WAY**

Peter Riding asked for consideration to be given to footpath improvement at the side of the Common and at Gibson Way, the path owners being respectively the Town Council and the County Council.

**SW35 NEW PROJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION – PLANT MORE TREES NORTH SIDE OF COMMON**

Members were enthusiastic about planting trees at the North side of the Common and at the Car park to complete the existing planting.

It was agreed that Malcolm White and John Ready would liaise on this matter.

SW36 **NEW PROJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION – NEW PROJECTS FOR TOWN CENTRE**

The Chairman said that he felt the Group had as its raison d'être the achievement of particular objectives and had shown great success in encouraging and sustaining the environment, quality and vitality of the Town in matters which would otherwise have fallen to the Town Council. In the light of new transfers the Town Council was now more in control of such matters and the Chairman felt that if the Working Group continued in existence, its role must be examined and re-defined as for the most part its original objectives had been achieved.

It was agreed that Chairman and the Leader should consider the Group's future role and re-define it if appropriate by the Annual Meeting of the Council on 18 May.

John Ready suggested that the subject of cycle paths would be a suitable one for the Group. There were also suggestions of a permanent VAS sign on Windmill Hill and a Taxi rank in the High Street. The Chairman stressed however that the District Council should not pre-empt the action of the Town Council on these matters.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm.