

WITHAM LOCAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: 10th January 2007

Time of Meeting: 7:15pm – 10:00pm

Venue: Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham

Local Chairman: Cllr T J W Foster

Contact Point for further information: David Triggs, Locality Co-Ordinator

Membership Present:

Councillor J E Abbott	Yes	Councillor Mrs S A Howell	Apologies
Councillor Miss L Barlow	Yes	Councillor P J Hughes	Yes
Councillor D L Bebb	Yes	Councillor M C M Lager	Yes
Councillor K E Bigden	Apologies	Councillor S J Lambourne	Apologies
Councillor J G J Elliott	Apologies	Councillor A M Meyer	Apologies
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes	Councillor R G S Mitchell	Yes
Councillor T J W Foster	Yes	Councillor Mrs J M Money	Yes
Councillor Mrs M E Galione	Yes	Councillor R Ramage	Apologies
Councillor J E B Gyford	Yes	Councillor W Rose	Yes

Also Present:

Graham Butland, Leader of BDC
 Andrew Epsom, Head of Asset Management, BDC
 Jan Cole, Field Worker at the Rural Community Council for Essex
 David Triggs, Locality Coordinator, BDC
 Melanie Ward, Locality Support Officer, BDC

Representatives of the Witham Local Community also in attendance: -

Representative	Address / Representing
Tim Bedward-Jones	Armond Road, Witham/Bethel Christian Fellowship
Ian Goldsmith	Hatfield Peverel Parish Council
John Palombi	Witham and Countryside Society
Roy Belsham	Trustee of Sauls Bridge Sports Ground

1.2 Declarations of Interest

- Councillors Lager, Barlow, Money & Rose declared a personal interest in item 2.2 regarding CCTV as they are members of Witham Town Council who had debated the issue on several occasions.
- Councillor John Gyford declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 3.3 concerning parking in the Witham Area as he is Treasurer of the Witham Labour Party who own a car park in Witham, he left the meeting whilst this item was considered.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, unless stated above, Councillors remained in the meeting during the discussion of the items referred to.

1.3 Minutes

The minutes of meeting of the Committee held on 6th November 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1.4 Public Question Time

Members of the public were invited to address the Committee: -

- Roy Belsham, Trustee of Sauls Bridge Sports Ground requested that the Council press the relevant authorities for a conclusion to various highway matters. Specifically he referred to (i) delayed plans to improve dangerous slip roads on the A12 out of Witham South and Hatfield Peverel North; (ii) Lack of action being taken on the Motts Lane Road Crossing; (iii) Maldon Road Sauls Bridge reinforcement; (iv) Protection of Sauls Bridge Playing Fields from vehicular access still waiting for Braintree Council to carry out protection work.

Response: The Locality Coordinator stated that he would contact the County Council over the highway issues and seek a response from the Council's officers over the matter at Sauls Bridge Playing Fields.

- John Palombi, of the Witham and Countryside Society supported the concern expressed by Mr Belsham over the improvements needed to the A12 slip roads. His main issue related to the street lighting in the Chipping Hill Conservation Area, (i) who is responsible for their maintenance and replacement? (ii) Can they be replaced using high efficiency heritage style lighting? (iii) Who should he contact?

Response: The Locality Coordinator had received a response from Paul Stephen, of the County Council's Area Highways Office. He confirmed that the County Council was responsible for maintenance of the lights. A full copy of Mr Stephen's response would be sent to Mr Palombi.

- Ian Goldsmith, Chairman of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council, also confirmed his Council's frustrations with the lack of action and response from the County Council and the Highways Agency concerning the A12 slip roads. Mr Goldsmith requested that the Committee address this lack of commitment and seeks a clear response from those responsible.

1.5 Urgent Item – Rickstones Pavilion

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Graham Butland, who had come along to give the Committee a report on the very latest position concerning the closure of Rickstones Pavilion.

Councillor Butland advised that under a recommendation of the fire officer he had agreed that the Pavilion should close. This was a result of apparent structural defects, which could make the Pavilion unsafe. He advised the Committee that measures had be taken to relocate the playgroup and the Brownies to Spring Lodge Community Centre with effect from 21st January 2008.

He explained that football teams were still using the changing rooms but immediate remedial works were required as a matter of urgency to allow the teams to use them up to the end of the current football season. Members and officers would be considering if the pavilion should be enhanced or demolished and if the budget allocated for providing alternative premises/improvements 2010 is to be brought forward for use in the 2008/9 Capital Programme.

He would also ensure that consultation took place with the Local Committee.

Councillor Evans as Ward Member expressed his support for the closure given the circumstances but asked that the communities' feelings and views be considered as part of any redevelopment/replacement proposals and that this Committee be kept informed of developments. Councillor Butland agreed to these suggestions.

2 Local Decisions

2.1 Place of Worship at Maltings Lane, Witham

Mr Epsom, Head of Asset Management submitted a report summarising the principal terms and conditions in respect of the transfer and lease of Maltings Lane site to the Bethel Christian Fellowship. Tim Bedward-Jones representative for the Bethel Christian Fellowship generally felt that discussions were proceeding well following meetings with officers and representatives acting for the landowners, but expressed concerns over a number of points relating to the lease, redrawing of the master plan, building design and section 106 legalities all of which had not been available to them or their solicitors. Mr Epsom commented that he felt that the proposed 50-year lease set was reasonable, the section 106 agreement had been renegotiated and almost finalised by Planning Officers following which Mr Jones would be given a copy. Mr Jones requested that further discussions take place with officers and Members of the Committee be involved.

Mr Epsom and Mr Jones responded to a number comments over issues raised.

Councillor Gyford requested clarification from Mr Jones as to whether he wanted the decision to be agreed or deferred due to his many concerns.

Mr Jones responded that he and his colleagues had various concerns and clearly the situation had changed from that proposed in the Summer. However, if the various issue of detail were subject to further discussions he felt that a solution could be reached that would be acceptable to Bethel. Mr Battley, a representative of Bethel wanted it noted that they were still not fully satisfied to date.

Decision:

- (1) That the proposed terms and conditions, as set out in the emails of 23rd November 2007 attached the Committee report, be approved in principle;
- (2) That details of the terms and conditions be the subject of further negotiations involving the Head of Asset Management and Councillor Lager and Councillor Money as representatives of the Committee.

2.2 CCTV in Witham

The Chairman invited the Committee to note the extract of the minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 3rd December concerning funding of CCTV.

Decision: That the Cabinet decision be noted.

2.3 Topic for Debate – ‘Community Led Plans’

Jan Cole, Field Worker at the Rural Community Council for Essex gave a presentation with an overview to show how they assist communities' involvement in Community Led Plans to achieve community objectives and how these plans form a link to working with Members of this Committee and the Development Control process. Communities volunteer their own time in preparing the plan supported by RCCE Field Officer with advice; information and assistance with grant funding. Priority issues from completed Parish Plans in Witham areas highlighted the following: - Traffic volume and road networks. Youth facilities and youth council. Anti-social behaviour and policing. Preservation of local character. Community halls.

These questions were then put to the Committee: -

- How could Parish Plans feed into the Local Priority Action Plan?
- How could the Local Committee assist parishes with taking actions forward, particularly partnership actions?
- How would the Local Committee like to be advised of Parish Plans? What information for newly completed Plans and those being progressed by Parish Councils?

Councillor Abbott stated that Rivenhall Parish Council had secured community involvement and had produced the documents, but they seemed to be overlooked by the District Council in considering planning applications. Jan Cole agreed to raise this issue with the Planning Officers.

Councillor Barlow stated that it should be easy to feed Community Action Plans into Local Committees. Jan Cole offered to produce a plan that would highlight those action points that remained outstanding.

Councillor Lager requested that the Committee be cautious, as aspirations of parishes would not necessarily be in line with those of the District Council.

Parishes could present plans in line with future items and create a rolling cycle on those published. He requested that Parishes try to keep plans specific and not be over ambitious.

Councillor Rose stated that Community Led Plans should form a link into the County Council's Strategic Plan. Local Parishes should know what is best suited within their areas as evidence shows that there is frequently 50%+ local input into these plans.

Councillor Barlow requested that Councillors look at outstanding actions that fall within the remit of the Local Committee and consider if it can help to move these forward as soon as possible.

Jan Cole pointed out that the Committee can refer to plans via the web site to see what plans exist.

The Chairman thanked Jan for the presentation.

Action Point: *The Local Coordinator to have discussions with Jan Cole to determine how the priorities can be fed into the Local Committee.*

3 Local Priorities

3.1 Action Plan

3.2 Report from the Anti Social Behaviour Sub Group

Councillors Ms Barlow, Hughes and Rose, had met to consider the anti-social behaviour matters identified in the action plan. Councillor Barlow reported on the key issues discussed. Members were referred to the recommendation to match fund an additional PCSO within Witham Town Centre Area at an estimated cost of £14,000.

In discussing this proposal Members expressed concern that this was not a one off cost but would be ongoing. It was also suggested greater evidence should be gathered concerning the visible impact of existing PCSO's and what difference they had made. Mr Cohen a member of the public commented that PCSO's were not always looked on favourably in some of the problem areas of the Town.

The Chairman recommended and the Committee agreed that the Sub Group prepare a report for the proposed additional PCSO to be submitted at a future meeting of the Committee.

3.3 Report from the Roads and Traffic Action Group

Councillors Elliott, Meyer and Abbott formed the Roads and Traffic Sub Group but this group had yet to meet.

Councillor Lager highlighted the outcomes from a meeting that had taken place on Tuesday 8th January on "the Strategy for Car Parking in Witham"

The meeting had covered both the provision of on street parking, which is the responsibility of the County Council and off street parking, the responsibility of the District Council.

It was agreed that the notes of this meeting be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

Councillor Abbott requested that the Road Traffic Action Group meet as soon as possible with future items to consider for discussion:

- Coleman's bridge foot and cycle path from Rivenhall to Witham junction from the A12 as no signs or lights present.
- Update reports on Witham Railway Station and Motts Lanes bridges.
- Address the enforcement of parking on grass verges.

Action Point: Locality Coordinator to bring together the Sub Group at the earliest opportunity.

4 Information

4.1 Local Committee Budgets

It was noted that the report due from the Head of Law and Governance had been deferred to the February meeting.

Councillor Lager wanted to inform the Committee of the need to request that 2007/08 Local Committee budgets be carried forward to the 2008/09 year.

The Committee considered a bid proposed by Mr Ian Goldsmith, the Chairman of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council and Councillor Bebb, Ward Member for Hatfield Peverel for funding of solar-powered speed cameras.

The Committee asked various questions clarifying the bid.

Decision: That a grant of £5,000 be made to Hatfield Peverel Parish Council for the purchase and installation of Traffic Speed Measuring Equipment.

4.2 Health Facilities in Witham

Councillor Rose put forward a proposal setting out the need for a minor injury facility in Witham. The Primary Care Trust had recently rejected the need for a Local Medical Centre in the area despite many years of campaigning. He proposed that the Chairman of the Committee write to the Chair of the PCT setting out the case and asking for further discussions/inviting them to attend the Committee to take part in a debate.

Members supported the proposal and Jan Cole referred to new provisions enabling public involvement due to come into force as part of new legislation on 1st April.

Decision: That the Chairman of the Committee writes to the PCT as described above.

4.3 Mid-Essex Area Forum Budget

Members noted the grant information. Councillor Lager wished to encourage members to decide on what to bid for by the next meeting and send suggestions to the Locality Coordinator.

5 Timetable and Arrangements for Future meetings

The schedule of the Year's meetings was noted.

6 Future Items

The Committee noted the list of items for the next meeting.

T J W FOSTER

(CHAIRMAN)