

# WITHAM LOCAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Time of Meeting:** 7:15pm – 10:25pm

**Venue:** Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham

**Chairman:** Councillor T J W Foster

**Contact Point for further information:** Linda Morgan, Locality Co-ordinator

## Membership Present:

Councillor J E Abbott	Yes	Councillor J E B Gyford	Yes
Councillor Miss L Barlow	Apologies	Councillor Mrs S A Howell	Apologies
Councillor D L Bebb	Yes	Councillor P J Hughes	Yes
Councillor G Cohen	Yes	Councillor M C M Lager	Yes
Councillor J G J Elliott	Yes	Councillor S J Lambourne	No
Councillor R Elliston	Yes	Councillor A M Meyer	No
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	Yes

## Also Present:

Lynn Ballard	Essex Regeneration and Development Agency
Eleanor Dash	Planning Policy Manager, Braintree District Council
Chris Fleetham	Assistant Director, Braintree District Council
Linda Morgan	Locality Coordinator, Braintree District Council
Paul Munson	Head of District Development, Braintree District Council
Alison Webb	Member Resources Officer, Braintree District Council

## 51 Declarations of Interest

Personal interests were declared in the following items:-

Councillor J E Abbott declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.2 – Consultation Responses to the Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy as a Member of Witham and Countryside Society and Rivenhall Parish Council who had submitted representations.

Councillor T J W Foster declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.4 – Local Highways Panel for the Braintree District as his company undertook work from time to time under contract to Essex County Highways.

Councillor Mrs M E Galione declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.2 – Consultation Responses to the Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy as a Member of Witham and Countryside Society who had submitted representations.

Councillor P J Hughes declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.2 – Consultation Responses to the Local Development Framework Draft Core

Strategy as a Member of Silver End Parish Council who had submitted representations.

Councillor M C M Lager declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 2.2 – Bid for Grant (Witham Skateboard Park) as a Member of Witham Town Council which had submitted the application, and a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.2 – Consultation Responses to the Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy as a Member of Witham Town Council.

Councillor Mrs J M Money declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 2.2 – Bid for Grant (Witham Skateboard Park) as a Member of Witham Town Council which had submitted the application, and a personal interest in Agenda Item 3.2 – Consultation Responses to the Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy as a Member of both Witham Town Council and Witham and Countryside Society, as the Ward Member and as she lived adjacent to Lodge Farm.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct all Members remained in the meeting for these items and took part in the debate and decision thereon unless otherwise stated under the item.

## 52 Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the word ‘pavement’ in the first sentence of the third paragraph of Minute 44 being amended to read ‘lay-by’, and to the reference to ‘Tye Rd Developers’ in Minute 46.1 on page 44 being amended to read ‘Boars Tye Developers’.

As a matter arising, the Chairman made reference to the newspaper trading arrangements of Mr Rao at Witham Railway Station. The Chairman reported that the Sub-Group established to find a way forward in this matter would be meeting again to resolve issues regarding amendments to the notes of the Sub-Group’s meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> January 2009; to receive a letter sent by Essex County Council; and to discuss a potential solution put forward by the County Council. It was reported that at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009, the Local Government Reform Cabinet Sub-Group had approved criteria relating to the status and working arrangements of Committee Sub-Groups and this information would be made available to Members.

## 53 Question Time

The following comments were made:-

**Mr S Rowley** – Mr Rowley stated that he was a National Cycle Network volunteer for Witham. Mr Rowley stated that he supported the extension of the Blackwater Rail Trail to the north of Witham. Mr Rowley indicated that this was of strategic importance as it would link the Maltings Lane area of Witham to the town centre and to the industrial area.

**Mr S Goodfellow** – Mr Goodfellow considered that the Blackwater Rail Trail would be a very important facility for the Town and that traffic free routes would encourage people to walk and cycle. Mr Goodfellow stated that the trail was a long-established route and that Essex County Council had purchased the land specifically to provide a route similar to the Flitch Way which ran between Braintree and Dunmow. Mr Goodfellow noted that local residents were concerned about people causing anti-social behaviour. However, he considered that the

design of the proposed route should mitigate against such behaviour.

**County Councillor D Louis** – Councillor Louis stated that the current proposed route of the Blackwater Rail Trail could not be completed, as part of the land required was in private ownership and the land-owner was not prepared to sell it. Councillor Louis stated that local residents required a safe crossing point on Maldon Road and that options were available to Members of the Local Committee to ask a developer to contribute towards its provision.

**Mr A Hall** – Mr Hall expressed concern about the closure of an existing access route between Perry Road and Blackwater Lane, Witham. Mr Hall stated that the route had been used by people for at least 20 years and he expressed concern that Braintree District Council had not consulted users, or Witham Town Council about the proposal which he considered would cause inconvenience. Mr Hall indicated that the access was also used by workers at the industrial estate as an emergency fire escape route. Mr Hall stated that he would be challenging the proposed closure of the Right of Way. Mr Hall considered that a fence could be erected along one side of the route only, leaving a pathway for access.

**Mr Wright** – Mr Wright, speaking on behalf of Rivenhall Parish Council, expressed concern about three proposed growth locations in the Local Development Framework Core Strategy which were within the Parish of Rivenhall. Mr Wright considered that these proposals would double the size of Rivenhall and cause traffic problems which would also impact on the A12. Mr Wright expressed concern also that the Witham Countryside Park to be developed in Rivenhall would also add to traffic problems during construction which would involve the extraction of gravel over a 20 year period.

**Mr J Prior** – Mr Prior, speaking on behalf of Rivenhall Parish Council, stated that the proposed growth locations for Rivenhall, including the employment site adjacent to the A12, were totally within the Parish of Rivenhall. Mr Prior considered that the 300 dwellings and shops proposed would double the population of Rivenhall, change the character of the area and lead to increased traffic. Mr Prior considered that the quiet, rural character of the area would be lost forever if the development went ahead. Mr Prior indicated that Rivenhall Parish Council had prepared a Village Design Statement which had been requested and approved by Braintree District Council. Mr Prior stated that the Village Design Statement showed that 88% of Rivenhall residents were against large scale development in the Parish.

At the close of Question Time, the Chairman stated that he would be inviting residents of Sauls Bridge Close, Witham to speak about the Blackwater Rail Trail during the discussion of the Agenda item.

## **54 Local Committee Funding**

### **54.1 Budget Update**

The Committee noted the current budget position.

### **54.2 Bids for Grants from Witham Local Committee**

#### **Witham Skateboard Park**

Consideration was given to an application submitted by Witham Town Council

(W0018) for the construction of a bowl at Witham Skateboard Park.

It was reported that the existing skateboard park had been installed by Braintree District Council. However, following representations from Witham Youth Council, Witham Town Council proposed to construct a bowl at the site which would, in effect, double the facilities available at the site. The application was supported by Councillor Miss L Barlow, Ward Member. Members were advised that the total cost of the project was £56,000 and that funding of £51,258 had already been secured. The application sought a capital grant of £ 4,742.

**Decision:**

That the application by Witham Town Council for a grant of £4,742 towards the extension of Witham Skateboard Park be approved.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Witham Boys Brigade**

Consideration was given to an application submitted by 2<sup>nd</sup> Witham Boys Brigade (W0019) for a grant towards the costs of a mini-bus and to support the costs of a Co-ordinator for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

The Committee was advised that the application was supported by Councillor Miss L Barlow, Ward Member, and a statement submitted by Councillor Miss Barlow recommending approval of the application was read to the Committee. Mr Boon representing 2<sup>nd</sup> Witham Boys Brigade spoke at the meeting to explain the background to the application and how the funding would be used.

Members were advised that the Boys Brigade proposed to use a mini-bus on a weekly basis in association with Witham Scouts and that funding amounting to £2,000 revenue was required to meet start-up costs. It was also proposed to finance a Co-Ordinator's two hour, weekly sessions supporting and supervising the Brigade's 14-plus age group in preparing for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Funding of £1,000 revenue was required. It was envisaged that the Scheme would be able to continue after the initial year of funding as the Co-Ordinator would be required to train two young people and a member of staff in its provision.

Members were advised that the total cost of the projects was £9,000 and it was hoped that the Boy's Brigade would be able to obtain further funding from other sources such as Essex County Council's Youth Opportunity Fund and the Essex Community Foundation and from increased subscriptions, fundraising and the equivalent of volunteer time.

**Decision:**

That the application by 2<sup>nd</sup> Witham Boys Brigade for a grant of £2,000 to meet the start-up costs of a mini-bus and a grant of £1,000 to finance a Co-Ordinator's two hour, weekly sessions of support and supervision for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, be approved.

**55 Local Decisions**

**55.1 Economic Development Strategy 2009-2013**

Consideration was given to a report on the draft Braintree District Council Economic Development Strategy 2009-2013. The Essex Development and

Regeneration Agency (ExDRA) had been commissioned to prepare the Strategy and it was presented to Members of the Local Committee by Mrs Lynn Ballard, Director of Partnership Engagement at ExDRA. Members of the Committee were requested to comment on the Strategy and to put forward amendments.

In discussing the Strategy, it was suggested that it should be forwarded to Witham Town Council for consideration. A Member indicated that Witham had a diverse economy and did not rely on just one employer. This situation had brought benefits to the Town, unlike Braintree which had suffered through the loss of large manufacturing companies. It was suggested that the resilience experienced in Witham should be incorporated within the Strategy. It was suggested also that the ability to access finance on acceptable terms was important and should be included in the Strategy and that greater emphasis should be given to creating a knowledge based economy.

A Member suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group should be consulted on the Strategy as this Group was currently investigating the provision of public transport. A Member suggested also that reference should be made in the Strategy to the creation of a low carbon economy.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the final draft of the Braintree District Council Economic Development Strategy 2009-2013 be endorsed.
- (2) That the suggested amendments to the Strategy, as outlined above, be submitted for consideration by the Cabinet at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

**55.2 Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy - Consultation Responses Relating to the Witham Area**

Consideration was given to a report on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy consultation process and, in particular, to the responses received regarding proposals for the Witham Area. Members were requested to consider the responses and to make recommendations to the Local Development Framework Panel with respect to the proposed development sites.

Members were reminded that the East of England Plan required the Council to provide land within the Braintree District for 4,599 dwellings together with employment and other service uses to be built between 2008 and 2025. The Council's strategy was to concentrate development in Braintree, Halstead and Witham by utilising infill and urban capacity sites, to develop within existing boundaries, and to develop proposed growth locations as extensions to Braintree and Witham. Two growth locations were proposed at Braintree and Great Notley and three were proposed at Rivenhall and Witham. Public consultation on the draft Core Strategy had taken place during November and December 2008. The comments received in respect of the growth locations at Rivenhall and Witham and the proposed regeneration site at Silver End were set out in the report.

The Committee made the following decisions in respect of each proposal:-

### Proposed Growth Location at Forest Road, North East Witham in the Parish of Rivenhall

The draft Core Strategy proposed a mixed use development of 300 dwellings plus community facilities, local shops and open space on an undefined site which could include land between Forest Road and the golf course boundary and land south-east of Rectory Lane between Rectory Lane and the golf course boundary.

#### **Decision:**

That it be Recommended to the Local Development Framework Panel that the growth location north of Forest Road in the Parish of Rivenhall be deleted from the Core Strategy and alternative sites investigated.

### Proposed Employment Growth Location land to the North-East of Eastways Industrial Estate, Witham in the Parish of Rivenhall

The draft Core Strategy proposed a general employment growth location measuring 6.0 hectares as an extension to the existing Eastways industrial estate, within the Parish of Rivenhall.

#### **Decision:**

That it be Recommended to the Local Development Framework Panel that the proposed employment growth location to the north-east of Eastways Industrial Estate in the Parish of Rivenhall be deleted from the Core Strategy and the need for employment land recalculated, with any demand for land being met from an alternative site.

### Proposed Growth Location at Lodge Farm, off Hatfield Road, Witham

The draft Core Strategy proposed a mixed use development of 600 dwellings plus community facilities and local shops on land at Lodge Farm, off Hatfield Road, Witham. The growth location boundary had not been defined.

#### **Decision:**

That it be Recommended to the Local Development Framework Panel that the growth location at Lodge Farm, off Hatfield Road, Witham be limited to 300 dwellings, the potential for incorporating employment land investigated, and the allocated growth area reduced.

### Proposed Regeneration of Silver End

The draft Core Strategy proposed the regeneration of the former Crittall Works site at Silver End.

#### **Decision:**

That it be Recommended to the Local Development Framework Panel that the proposed regeneration of the former Crittall Works site at Silver End be supported, subject to a design brief being prepared for the site, and that the Core Strategy be amended by the removal of actual housing figures from regeneration sites.

## Other Alternative Locations

The following alternative growth locations for Witham had been put forward as part of the preparation of the Local Development Framework's Allocations' Document. The sites were currently being assessed and they would be considered at a future meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel.

Land adjacent to Conrad Road, Witham  
Land at Woodend, Hatfield Road, Witham  
Land between Hatfield Peverel and Witham, south of A12  
Land to the north-west of Witham, south of A12  
Land at Coggeshall Road (south of Observer Way, Kelvedon  
Land between London Road and railway line, Kelvedon  
Land at Feering Hall, Feering  
Land between railway and River Blackwater, east of Coggeshall Road, Feering  
Land between London Road and A12, between A12 and Prested Hall, Feering  
Land to the west of Marks Tey  
Land at The Street (west of Hanover Square), Feering  
Land at London Road (west of New Lane), Feering  
Land to the west of Hatfield Peverel and east of Hatfield Place  
Land at Graceland, The Street, Hatfield Peverel  
Land south of The Street (rear of The William Boosey Public House), Hatfield Peverel

### **Decision:**

That it be Recommended to the Local Development Framework Panel that the alternative growth locations listed above are not put forward for further consideration.

### **55.3 Maltings Lane Forum - Appointment of Representatives**

#### **Decision:**

That Councillors J G J Elliott, Mrs J M Money and R Ramage be appointed to the Maltings Lane Forum.

### **55.4 Local Highways Panel for the Braintree District**

The Committee was advised that as part of its localism agenda, Essex County Council had invited Braintree District Council to set up a Local Highways Panel to determine local highway scheme priorities.

The Panel would enable priorities, funding and highway works to be delivered in a way that best reflected local requirements. The Panel would have responsibility for a substantial element of the highways budget. Decisions taken by the Panel would be recommended to Essex County Council 's Cabinet Member and they would be approved unless there was a strategic reason for not doing so.

It was proposed that the Local Highways Panel should have 15 members comprising representatives of the District Council, Parish Councils, Residents Associations and other democratically elected groups. The District Council's members would include the Chairman plus one other Councillor from each of the three Local Committees.

In discussing this item, the Chairman of the Committee Councillor Foster, referred

to the personal interest which he had declared at the start of the meeting. Councillor Foster indicated that he had sought guidance on this matter from the Head of Law and Governance. The interim advice given recommended that he should not be a member of the Panel and that his place should be taken by the Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

**Decision:**

That Councillor Dr R L Evans, Vice-Chairman of Witham Local Committee, and Councillor R Elliston be appointed to the Braintree District Local Highways Panel.

**55.5 Bramston Sports Centre, Witham – Closure of Cafeteria**

Consideration was given to a report on a proposal to close the cafeteria at Bramston Sports Centre, Witham. The main reasons for the proposal were that the facilities were old and unattractive; the location of the cafeteria was unsuitable; costs continued to rise and income reduce; and there was uncertainty over the future of the Sports Centre. It was reported that initiatives had been implemented by DC Leisure Group in an attempt to overcome these problems, but these had had limited effect.

Staff would be consulted on the proposal, following which a programmed reduction in operational hours would commence from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 concluding in full closure.

**Decision:**

- (1) That Bramston Sports Centre cafeteria be closed as soon as possible after the completion of a consultation period.
- (2) That during the consultation period, starting from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, the opening hours of the cafeteria be reduced from 140 to 104.5 per week.

**55.6 Blackwater Rail Trail Witham - Expenditure of Funding**

The Committee considered a report on options for the expenditure of the balance of funding made available via a legal agreement with Benton Hall Golf Club towards the provision of a cycleway link between the Golf Club and Witham town centre. Approximately £37,000 of the financial contribution remained, for expenditure by 2011.

During the consideration of this item, the Chairman invited Mr Pearce and Mrs French, local residents to speak.

**Decision:**

That the balance of the funding provided via the legal agreement with Benton Hall Golf Club, Witham be utilised as a contribution towards a touchan (pedestrian and cycle crossing) on Maldon Road, Witham, subject to consultation with Benton Hall Golf Club.

**56 Witham Local Committee Priorities**

**56.1 Feedback from the Additional Meeting of Witham Local Committee Held on 23rd February 2009**

It was moved, seconded and agreed that this item be deferred for consideration at a future meeting.

## **57 Future Items**

It was noted that the following items would be considered at future meetings of Witham Local Committee.

19<sup>th</sup> May 2009:-

Land off Joseph Gardens, Silver End  
Health Care Review (NHS Mid Essex)  
Review of Community Halls

June/July 2009:-

Housing Strategy

At 10.15pm, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, it was moved, seconded and agreed that the meeting be extended until the completion of the business on the Agenda.

At the close of the meeting, the Chairman informed Members of the Committee that this was the last meeting which Linda Morgan, Locality Co-Ordinator, would attend as she was leaving the Council after 20 years service. The Chairman thanked Linda for her calm, friendly and helpful manner and he wished her well for the future.

The meeting concluded at 10:25pm.

T J W FOSTER

(CHAIRMAN)

