

WITHAM LOCAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: 1st May 2008

Time of Meeting: 7:15pm – 10:30pm

Venue: Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham

Chairman: Councillor T J W Foster

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

Membership Present:

Councillor J E Abbott	Apologies	Councillor Mrs S A Howell	Yes
Councillor Ms L Barlow	Yes	Councillor P J Hughes	Apologies
Councillor D L Bebb	Yes	Councillor M C M Lager	Apologies
Councillor J G J Elliott	Yes	Councillor S J Lambourne	No
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes	Councillor A M Meyer	Apologies
Councillor T J W Foster	Yes	Councillor R G S Mitchell	Yes
Councillor Mrs M E Galione	Yes	Councillor Mrs J M Money	Yes
Councillor J E B Gyford	Yes	Councillor R Ramage	Yes
		Councillor W Rose	Yes

Also Present:

Paul Partridge	Street Facilities Manager, Braintree District Council
Nathan Suppiah	Project Engineer, Braintree District Council
Tom Hamilton	Field Officer, Essex County Council
Eleanor Dash	Planning Policy Manager, Braintree District Council
Juliet Strathern	Planning Policy Officer, Braintree District Council
Joanne Albini	Head of Housing, Braintree District Council
Chris Paggi	Senior Planner, Braintree District Council
Chris Fleetham	Corporate Director, Braintree District Council
Paul Munson	Head of District Development, Braintree District Council
Jan Cole	Field Worker at the Rural Community Council for Essex
Charmaine Dean	Head of Community Services, Braintree District Council
Cllr Joanne Beavis	BDC Cabinet Member for Customers and Communication
Cllr Wendy Schmitt	BDC Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing
David Triggs	Locality Coordinator, Braintree District Council
Melanie Ward	Locality Support Officer, Braintree District Council

Representatives of the Witham Local Community also in attendance: -

Representative	Address / Representing
Paul Petto	Feering Parish Council
Annie Northfield	Witham In Bloom
Tim Bedward-Jones	Bethel Christian Fellowship
Nick Ezra	Kelvedon Parish Council
Lesley Archer	Member of Staff at Little Elms Pre-School
Pauline Merrett	Parent at Little Elms Pre-School

Additional attendees: -

P. Northfield - Witham Voice, Tony Stote - Sycamore Close Resident, Jane Kilgow, Lisa Hawes and other parents and staff from the Pre Elms Nursery School, Community Champion awardees, Alan Battley - Bethel Christian Fellowship, Representatives from the press

3 Presentation to Braintree District's Community Champions

At the start of the meeting the Chairman presented all Community Champions in the Witham area with a certificate and a small token of the Council's appreciation in recognition of their contributions over the year.

4 Declarations of Interest

- Councillor Robert Mitchell declared a personal interest in items 2.5 (Maltings Lane Section 106 Agreement) as he is a part owner of a property in this area, and 3.1(b) (Bids for grants from the Witham Local Committee - Outdoor Event Weather Protection, Feering) as he is a Member of Feering Parish Council.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct Councillor Mitchell remained in the meeting during the discussion of the items referred to but did not vote.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 26th February 2008 and 21st April 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Question Time

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

- (a) Tim Bedward-Jones of the Bethel Christian Fellowship wanted to highlight some concerns relating to Agenda item 2.5, the Maltings Lane development. He considered that the site on offer for the place of worship was inadequate for their needs with particular concern over the lack of car parking. There was an option for additional parking to be provided on the Community Centre site but he felt this was still inadequate. Mr Jones assured Members that the Bethel Christian Fellowship remained committed to this scheme, but that if a solution to these problems could not be found, it might have to pull out of the scheme.
- (b) Lesley Archer, an employee at the Little Elm's Pre-School raised a number of issues relating to their relocation to Spring Lodge (agenda item 2.1). Mrs Archer referred to the increasing costs and inadequate facilities. She also drew attention to the distance that parents, toddlers and staff had to travel with poor/limited parking, difficult access to the building and the fact that toilets are located outside due to the current building works. Mrs Archer emphasised that the Pre-School is a small non profit making organisation and if things continued as they are, then there would be a strong likelihood that it would be forced to close. Pauline Merritt, a parent at the Pre-School reiterated the issues raised by Mrs Archer and in particular how the inadequate infrastructure had resulted in people parking on Chipping Hill causing accident black spots. No refurbishments had been undertaken in the North Witham area, which is now severely lacking in facilities for young children. Parents and staff felt that by far the best solution would be for the Council to carry out urgent repairs to the Pavilion and allow the Pre-school to return there as soon as possible.

7 Local Decisions

7.1 Rickstones Pavilion/Forest Road Community Hall

The Chairman welcomed the representatives from the Little Elm's Pre-School and thanked them for their contributions during question time. Part B of this item was to receive the Petition sent by the Pre-School to the Leader of the Council. Members also noted that a separate petition had been sent to the Local Member of Parliament and both petitions expressed a number of the concerns raised during question time. Members noted that the Pre-School had been forced to relocate to Spring Lodge following closure of the Rickstones Pavilion on the advice of the Fire Service.

Councillor Beavis, Cabinet Member, advised representatives from the Pre-School that, due to a change in responsibilities, Councillor Wendy Schmitt would be taking over responsibility for Community Halls. Councillor Beavis went on to refer to previous discussions that had taken place with representatives of the Pre-School. She explained that the planned review of all community facilities in the district was due to be completed by March 2009 and that this review would include the facilities provided at the Rickstones Pavilion.

Representatives from the pre-school voiced strong concern over the Council's lack of foresight, the time that it had taken to come to a decision on the future of the Pavilion and why had no temporary measures been put in place or investment made in these facilities.

Parents wanted the Rickstones Pavilion to be temporarily repaired and maintained so that like the football club, the Pre-School could remain at the premises until the Council decides on its long term future.

Councillor Dr Evans requested that this issue be raised at Cabinet to request that works be undertaken to make the pavilion safe so the Pre-School could return and use the facilities as quickly as possible.

Decision: That it be recommended to Cabinet: That urgent works be carried out to make the Pavilion safe and enable the Little Elms Pre-School to return to the premises until the long term future of the building is determined by the Council.

Urgent Item

The Chairman agreed to take this item as the consultation document required a response be made by early July before the Committee's next meeting

7.2 British Telecom Proposal to Close Payphones in the District

The Committee considered a report that explained that British Telecom was proposing to close 49 telephone boxes across the Braintree District. Members understood the economic reasons for the closures but asked for details of the telephone usage. It was agreed that information on usage be sent to all Councillors and that Members be requested to send comments to Mr Massow at Braintree Council by 30th June. These comments will then be collated and a response sent to BT by 2nd July 2008.

Decision: That the report be noted and Members be requested to respond to the officer with individual comments by 30th June 2008.

Action: *That Eleanor Dash be requested to email details of the level of usage of the phone boxes to all Members of the Committee.*

7.3 Improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail

The Committee considered a report concerning the proposed improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail between Blue Mills Hill and Constance Close in Witham.

At its last meeting the Committee fully supported the principle of the proposal but expressed concern at the proposed width of the path, feeling that 3 metres was unnecessary and this should be reduced to 2.5 metres.

In presenting the report Juliet Strathern, Planning Policy Officer drew Members' attention to the fact that 3 metres was the minimum width stipulated by Essex County Council, and failure to allow this width for such an unsegregated cycle/pedestrian path could lead to conflict between users. Members noted photographs, which showed a similar type of path that existed along the Flich Way. This illustrated that there was some margin for vegetation encroachment onto the path giving the path a more natural edging but still retaining a useable width of about 2.5m, sufficient for all users to pass comfortably. A 3 metre width would also enable maintenance vehicles sufficient access to carry out maintenance works i.e. hedge/tree trimming and also allow access to emergency vehicles. It was noted that gates and barriers would be placed at either end of the trail to prevent motorised traffic using the path.

Decision: That construction of a 3 metre unsegregated cycleway from Blue Mills to Constance Close in Witham be approved.

7.4 Draft Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008 – 2013.

The Committee considered the draft Strategy prior to consideration by Cabinet at its meeting scheduled for 7th July 2008. In presenting the report Joanne Albini, Head of Housing, requested that Members consider the report that was based on the Strategy Action Plan.

The Strategy supported the development of services that help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The new Strategy would take the form of an action plan, which would be reviewed annually. Members noted that at the end of the 12-week consultation period, the document would be updated prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Decision: That the Draft Homelessness Review and Strategy Action Plan be endorsed.

7.5 Parish Plans.

Jan Cole from the Rural Community Council for Essex (RCCE) presented details of a review of the outstanding actions of all 15 Parish plans published since 2002. This followed on from the presentation given to the Committee at its meeting on 10th January 2008.

The report summarised the actions arising from the parish plans for Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Rivenhall and Witham. Out of the 168 actions, 24 were identified as still to do, 12 as ongoing and 29 in progress. Of these a number were identified as outside the control of the town/parish.

Members agreed that the actions identified in the report should be the subject of a separate discussion by the Committee and include a review of its priorities.

Action: *That the Local Coordinator (Witham) set up a separate meeting to review the Local Committee priorities linked to the actions from the parish plans.*

7.6 Maltings Lane Section 106 Agreement.

Chris Paggi, Senior Planning Officer presented the revised Master Plan for the proposed Maltings Lane Development for Members information.

Members were reminded that at its meeting on 30th January 2007, the Witham Area Committee had granted outline planning permission for this development. At the time Members requested that details of the Section 106 Agreement be presented to the Committee before the decision was issued. Members were therefore invited to consider the Master Plan and details of the Section 106 Legal Agreement prior to consideration by the Planning Committee.

In discussing the report Tim Bedward-Jones of the Bethel Christian Fellowship outlined his concerns over the lack of parking around the place of worship. With the sports ground being in close proximity, he felt that there would be an increase in the number of vehicles in the area, especially visiting football teams on Sundays. Chris Paggi stated that a small number of additional spaces could be added in an area currently marked for landscaping but numbers would be limited, as maximum car parking standards had already been applied to the development. It was noted that residential parking standards were only adequate to accommodate 1 car per house. This in itself would cause a problem with access through the residential area because residents with more than one car and visitors will have no alternative but to park in the highway.

Members expressed concern that the lack of parking might deter potential shop owners from taking up units on the site. The Committee requested that officers review the level of parking provision to include communal sharing of other sites including the possibility of the Business Park Areas, especially at weekends when these units would be closed.

Mr Farley, a resident with a business on Maltings Lane emphasised the difficulties caused through parking restrictions that he felt were unnecessary and were directly affecting his business.

Decision: Members accepted the proposals but asked that the strong concerns expressed over the lack of parking be referred to at the Planning Committee for its consideration.

Action: *Chris Paggi to take up the issues of concern as expressed by the Local Committee, including the potential for additional parking within the Development, increased parking around the site for the Community Centre and the Place of Worship and to investigate the scope for additional parking on the Business Park areas.*

7.7 Proposed Changes to Airspace Affecting the Braintree District.

Paul Munson, Head of Planning, presented a report outlining the details of a consultation document issued by NATS Ltd regarding a redesign of the airspace in the region to accommodate predicted increases in air traffic. The proposal identified preferred routes and amended flight paths. Mr Munson explained that the majority of suggested changes would occur to the North of the District and should not have a significant impact on the Witham area.

Decision: That details of the Consultation be noted and that no comments be made given the limited impact on the Witham area.

7.8 Traffic Management Act 2004 Part 6 – Civil Parking Enforcement.

The Committee considered a report from Paul Partridge, Head of Operations that set out details of government guidance aimed at achieving a consistent approach to parking enforcement across the country.

During discussion of the report Members asked for clarification on the Council's practice of issuing tickets given that some inconsiderate parking on yellow/double yellow lines can be very dangerous. Mr Partridge stated that the Council and all other Essex local authorities give a few minutes grace to the owners of illegally parked vehicles before issuing a ticket.

Decision: Members noted the changes arising from the new legislation.

7.9 Community & Housing Investment Partnership (CHIP) Fund.

Chris Fleetham, Corporate Director, presented a short briefing note to explain how the Community and Housing Investment Partnership Fund would operate. He reminded Members that the fund had been created from the surplus funds arising from the Council's transfer of housing assets and totalled approximately £11m. This would be made available to fund priorities such as:

- (a) the development of new Social Housing
- (b) the development of facilities for Community benefit
- (c) Environmental improvements
- (d) Regeneration activities

A Board had been established consisting of representatives from Greenfields Community Housing and Braintree District Council to administer the fund. Members noted that the Board wished to involve the Local Committees and asked that they be invited to identify community projects that could be funded.

Members noted that the Little Elm's Pre School was one such project that could come under category (b) for possible funding. Chris Fleetham agreed to present this suggestion to a future meeting of the Board.

Members were invited to send any further views or ideas to Chris Fleetham.

Decision: That the report be noted.

7.10 Appointment of Representatives.

The Committee considered and approved a list of appointments to outside organisations for 2008/09.

Decision: That the list of appointments as listed at Appendix A to these minutes be approved.

8 Local Committee Budgets

8.1 Bids for grants from the Witham Local Committee.

(a) Kelvedon Parish Council for the Springwatch Youth Festival, Kelvedon – supported by Councillor Foster.

(Councillor Dr Evans took the chair for item 3.1(a) as the Chairman, Councillor Foster, was directly involved in sponsoring the application as the Ward Member).

Nick Ezra from Kelvedon Parish Council presented details of the bid for a grant of £1,180 to support the Springwatch Youth Festival. This event is aimed at young people and their families to increase awareness of wildlife and habitat and aimed to inject new life into the local youth groups in particular the recently formed youth forum.

Decision: That Kelvedon Parish Council's bid for £1,180 for the Springwatch Youth Festival, Kelvedon be approved.

(b) Feering Parish Council for Outdoor Event Weather Protection, Feering – supported by Councillor Mitchell;

Paul Petto from Feering Parish Council, outlined details of the application by the Parish Council for outdoor event weather protection, in the form of 8 light weight pop up gazebos. Councillor Petto commented that the equipment would be made available for other community groups to borrow and use of the gazebos would significantly enhance future outdoor events held in the Parish.

Decision: That Feering Parish Council's bid for £500 for the purchase of 8 gazebos for outdoor community events be approved.

(c) Witham in Bloom Conservation Group – supported by Councillor Mrs Money

Annie Northfield from Witham in Bloom presented details of the bid for funding to provide additional floral displays at the two Braintree District Council car parks in Witham. The displays would enhance the town for residents and make the area more attractive to visitors. This application was sponsored by Councillor Mrs Money, Ward Councillor for Witham South.

Decision: That the Witham in Bloom Conservation Group's bid for £3,500 for providing floral displays at the two Braintree District Council car parks be approved.

At 10.15pm, in accordance with the Council procedure rules, it was moved, seconded and agreed that the meeting continue for a further 15 minutes.

- 8.2 (a) The Committee was asked to confirm that it was happy to continue funding the **Heritage Improvement Scheme** for the Witham Newland Street Conservation Area at a cost of £15,000 in 2008/09. It was noted that this had been approved in September 2007 prior to the new local committee grant guidelines being agreed.

Decision: That funding of the Heritage Improvement Scheme be confirmed at £15,000 in 2008/09.

- (b) The Committee was invited to note details of Application Forms and Guidance notes sent out to Councillors and to note the presentations offered to Councillors, town/parish councils and community groups. The Chairman gave a very brief resume of the presentation given to Councillors.

Decision: The Committee noted the verbal update.

9 Witham Local Committee Action Plan and Priorities

9.1 Local Committee Action Plan

It was agreed to arrange a separate meeting to discuss linked actions with the Parish Plans

Action: *That the Locality Coordinator arranges a meeting to discuss further actions to resolve outstanding parish issues and combine with a review of the Witham Local Committee Action Plan.*

9.2 Anti-Social Behaviour Sub Group.

Councillor Rose reported that the Police had identified various hot spots in Witham where there were problems associated with alcohol intake. Councillor Lucy Barlow reflected that Witham Youth Council had had useful discussions on how to tackle the problems associated with anti-social behaviour.

Action: *Councillor Barlow agreed to pass on contact details for the Youth Council to Nick Ezra as Kelvedon Youth Council would also be considering similar issues in the near future.*

9.3 Roads and Traffic Action Group.

Councillor Elliot reported on the issues raised at the last meeting of the action group. When discussing the problems associated with parking Mr Stotes raised the issue with parking at the lower end of Rickstones Road. The Locality Coordinator pointed out that this issue had been raised at the November meeting when the issue of parking in the Witham area had been on the agenda. This had been discussed at a meeting organised by Essex County Council on the 8th January 2008.

Action: That the Locality Coordinator send Mr Stotes a copy of the notes from the January 2008 parking meeting.

9.4 Witham Local Committee Priorities.

It was agreed that a separate informal meeting of the Committee be arranged to review the Committee priorities including a look at how the Parish (community led) Plans could be integrated into the priorities.

Action: That the Locality Coordinator organise an informal meeting of the Committee as set out above.

10 Future Items

The Committee noted the list of items for the next meeting and agreed that the following issues had now been added:

- 5.1 Review of Parking Charges. – 15th July 2008
- 5.2 Rickstones Pavilion/Little Elms Pre-School – 15th July 2008
- 5.3 Bids for funding to include the skateboard park – 15th July 2008
- 5.4 Housing Strategy - 23rd September 2008
- 5.4 LDF Consultation - 23rd September 2008

T J W FOSTER

(CHAIRMAN)

APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO GROUPS AND OUTSIDE BODIES 2008/09

Witham			Appointed Councillors		
Braintree District Leisure Community Association - Consultative Board*	2	No	Councillor P J Hughes Councillor A Meyer	Yes	1 year
Rivenhall Playing Field Association	2	No	Councillor J E Abbott Councillor P J Hughes	Yes	1 year
Silver End Memorial Gardens Management Advisory Group	1	No	Councillor P J Hughes	Yes	1 year
Witham Age Concern	1	No	Councillor Mrs S Howell	Yes	1 year
Witham Community Association (Executive Committee)	2	No	Councillor Mrs S Howell Councillor Mrs J Money	Yes	1 year
Witham Park - Management Advisory Group	1	No	Councillor Mrs J Money	Yes	1 year
Witham Traffic Management Liaison Panel	5	No	Councillor J E Abbott Councillor Miss L Barlow Councillor W Rose Councillor Mrs S Howell Councillor R Ramage	Yes	1 year
Witham United Charities	5	No	Councillor J G J Elliott Councillor Mrs M E Galione Councillor J E B Gyford Councillor Mrs S Howell Councillor Mrs J Money	No	1 year