

Green and Built Environment Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 29th January, 2008.

Present:- Councillors Parmar (Vice Chair in the Chair), S Chaudhry, Coad, Dhillon, Maclsaac, Parmar (Vice-Chair), Plimmer, Small and Swindlehurst (until 8.55 p.m.)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Anderson, Dhaliwal and Dodds.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Hewitt.

PART I

42. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

43. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 5th December, 2007 were approved as a correct record.

44. Member Call In – Road Safety Improvements: Northborough Road, Slough

Councillor Anderson advised that he had submitted a Member call-in relating to traffic calming measures on Northborough Road, following the receipt of a petition from residents dated 30th November, 2007, requesting the installation of two pedestrian crossings and raised table speed humps to improve safety in the road. He was concerned that there had been a fatal road accident in the locality and felt it was important that road safety improvements should be made to protect local residents, including elderly people who lived in the vicinity.

Mr Will Ansell, a resident in the Britwell area, addressed the Panel as the lead petitioner. In his opinion it was essential that a road crossing be installed on Northborough Road, at the Farnham Road end. He advised that some residents were not in favour of speed humps and petitioners were not in favour of chicanes being installed. He also requested that traffic calming measures be installed near to the Franklin Avenue junction with Northborough Road and suggested that a raised platform type crossing would be suitable. Mr Ansell argued that the safety measures were essential so that residents could safely cross the road and force traffic to slow down.

The Head of Transport, advised that Officers had conducted a site visit in conjunction with Thames Valley Police on 13th December, 2007, to look at the incidents of speeding traffic and pedestrian levels. A manual pedestrian count had been undertaken at the Long Readings Lane and Farnham Road locations between the 14th and 21st January, 2008. Personal injury crash

records for Northborough Road had been investigated and revealed that during the last three years from September, 2004 to October, 2007 there had been a number of incidents including one fatal incident. The traffic counts would be analysed to determine whether a formal pedestrian crossing was justified- if so, then a traffic scheme to achieve these aims would be considered. The Officer advised that there was a Northborough Road/ Long Readings Lane redesign proposal in progress. If the safety measures needed were so extensive that they could not be included within this scheme, then a separate Northborough Road safety scheme would be included on the transport scheme priority list and prioritised alongside all other existing transport schemes. It was noted that the updated prioritised transport scheme list would be submitted to the Scrutiny Panel in March, 2008 and the proposed solution to the Member call-in would be reported at that time.

Members agreed that the road did require crossing places, particularly for elderly residents and considered that the issue should be progressed as quickly as possible.

Resolved - That the Officer submit a report to the Panel meeting on 26th March, 2008, detailing the entries on the transport priority list, together with a specific report detailing the outcome of the request for traffic calming measures on Northborough Road.

45. Presentation: Drugs and Community Safety- April to December 2007

The Panel welcomed Chief Inspector Dave Parker, Deputy LPA Commander, Slough who had agreed to attend the meeting to answer Members' questions on policing matters in Slough.

The Head of Drugs and Community Safety, outlined a report and presentation, updating the Panel on the achievements of the Safer Slough Partnership in improving community safety and reducing drug problems in Slough. The Officer discussed crime statistics for Slough between April and December, 2007 which indicated that crime had reduced overall by 8.7%. Members noted that robbery had decreased by 16.3%, burglary by 10%, whilst shoplifting had increased by 11.3%. The Officer discussed the CCTV and Care Line operations and highlighted that the CCTV section had reported 2,146 incidents to the Police, which had resulted in 773 arrests. The Care Line system now served 2,435 clients, 1,835 of whom were over the age of 65.

The Officer advised that between April and June, 2007 there were 128 drug seizures in Slough. In relation to drug treatment it was noted that between the 1st April and 30th September, 2007, 510 people were receiving drug treatment and this was an improvement on the previous quarter. Waiting times for treatment were short and on target and 97% of clients who received treatment had a care plan. Members noted the work of the drug intervention programme and the young people agenda.

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The Officer discussed various crime and burglary initiatives including the Smart Water scheme, the Stratefield Road Gating Order, the Vehicle Crime Awareness Days on 7th and 8th December, 2007, and the Northborough Road Dispersal Order that was introduced between May and November, 2007.

Chief Inspector Dave Parker advised that there were now six Polish speaking Police Community Support Officers in the town and this had greatly assisted policing in the town centre. He advised that violent crime had decreased but common assault had increased by 15%. It was notable that on Friday evenings the town centre in Slough appeared to be quieter.

Members thanked the Officer for his report and submitted a number of questions as follows:-

- A Member was concerned regarding the number of attacks on taxi drivers in the town and he felt that there was no support for these individuals. Chief Inspector Parker advised that there had been an increase in taxi related crime around Christmas time and it was suspected that this was due to the drivers handling increased takings. He advised that there was victim support in terms of the Criminal Injuries Board and it was agreed that the Member would give details of the taxi driver to the Police Officer so that he could provide advice.
- A Member advised that lead had been burgled from her garage roof and she had phoned the Police for assistance. She was unhappy that the Police had not turned up. She also was unhappy that drug dealers were operating near to her property; this had also been reported to the Police but the operation continued visibly. The Member also questioned why elderly, vulnerable people were not given burglar alarms, one of her constituents was robbed and did not have a burglar alarm. It was felt that residents of People 1st properties were more vulnerable and were not receiving burglar alarms. It was agreed that People 1st would be asked to submit a report to the Panel explaining their policy on the issue of burglar alarms to their tenants.
- A Member asked if and when the Council would use voice responsive CCTV. The Head of Drugs and Community Safety advised that there was no budget at present for such a scheme. Chief Inspector Parker advised that other Councils who were operating this scheme had reported a mixed view of its success.
- In relation to drug use, a Member asked whether drivers involved in road accidents were being routinely tested for cannabis. She also asked whether more resources were being put into drug prevention. Chief Inspector Parker advised that car drivers were tested for drugs and advised that there had been success in the detection of home grown cannabis.
- A Member raised concerns relating to the recent Police operation in the Chalvey area and stated that he had found it difficult to contact the Police.

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He also asked whether the Council could impose conditions on private landlords to restrict the number of residents in their rented properties. Chief Inspector Parker advised that the front counter of the Police station opened late at night and there was also a telephone at the front of the building. He also advised that all Officers had voice mail and would respond to queries and that the Police website gave contact details. Police were also present at neighbourhood action group meetings when residents could speak to an Officer directly if they had any concerns. In relation to the Chalvey incident leaflets had been given to all residents to explain what had happened during the raid recently. He advised however that Police could not intervene with rental agreements between landlords and tenants but the Strategic Director of the Green and Built Environment advised that where houses were in multiple occupation the Council could take enforcement action where necessary.

- A Member felt that the Police were doing their best in difficult circumstances but noted that there were still organised drug dealers in the Slough area and questioned what the strategy was in these cases. In response Chief Inspector Parker advised that the Police would continue to deal with drug dealers and raids took place on a frequent basis. He reminded Members that residents should continue to report such crimes to Crimestoppers and the dedicated drugs team would deal with these incidents.
- A Member considered that the use of CCTV in the town was very important and questioned why it was always necessary to plead for funding. The Head of Drugs and Community Safety considered that it was a big decision to have a large CCTV presence in the town and there were also human rights issues. The Assistant Director, Transport and Planning, felt that CCTV was only one of the preventative measures that could be used to reduce crime. She advised that the Council would however consider the introduction of a scheme that linked traffic flows with CCTV and that forthcoming legislation would allow the Council to use CCTV more widely.
- In response to a Member request for the crime reporting telephone number the Police Officer that residents should ring **08458505505**.

Resolved - That

- (a) The Panel notes that progress is being made in delivering the Safer Slough Partnership's safer and stronger communities fund statement of agreed outcomes 2005/06 – 2007/08.
- (b) The Panel notes that a large amount of work has been done to reduce anti-social behaviour and that the Safer Slough Partnership has targets to further improve performance in the area of drugs and alcohol.

- (c) Growth bids have been considered in the 2008/09 budget setting process to secure funding for the Community Safety Project Officer, more gating projects and to help meet the cost pressures on the Drug and Alcohol Action Team budget.
- (d) A report be submitted by People 1st to the 28th March, 2008 Green and Built Environment Scrutiny Panel, to explain their policy in the distribution of burglar alarms.

46. Cippenham Development- Outstanding Matters

The Principal Engineer (Highways), outlined a report to update Members on outstanding matters in the Cippenham development, including the Green Wedge area, the adoption of minor access roads and the finished ground levels of the recently raised land between the M4 noise prevention bund and the adjacent residential housing development.

In relation to the Green Wedge landscaping and playing fields, the Officer advised that the grass seeding in the Autumn was not carried out because of wet weather. The use of grass turf would be considered as an alternative but the previously reported estimated completion in late 2008 was now doubtful. The Officer advised that enforcement action relating to the lack of completion of the work was not recommended. He advised that under a S106 agreement, there was a condition limiting the number of homes that could be occupied before the four pitches were completed.

The Officer updated Members on the adoption status of minor access roads and Members noted that only Hoylake Close remained unadopted. Members outlined a number of questions and observations as follows:-

- A Member was concerned that there was a lot of mud on the site road and that the new landscaping that had been planted on the bund was covered in weeds. The Officer responded that the road was inspected regularly and it was found to be acceptable with no evidence of mud. He agreed however that he would monitor the road regularly and the frontage area would be looked at to rectify the problem with weeds.
- Members were extremely concerned that the four pitches were not yet completed and felt that enforcement action should be taken at the earliest opportunity to rectify this situation. Members felt that it was acceptable to lay turf on the pitches to achieve a reasonable playing surface and felt that the turf could be monitored and improved where necessary. In response the Officer advised that there had been limited legal and enforcement staff to take enforcement action previously. It was noted however that from the 1st April, 2008 the Legal and Planning Sections would have additional resources to review the enforcement procedure in this case. It was anticipated that the requirements of the Section 106 Agreement would ensure the early completion of the work.

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- Members raised concerns in respect of the Little Chapels Way/Wood Lane highway layout and it was agreed that the Officer would consider this issue.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted and that the site road be regularly inspected to ensure that there is no excess of mud caused by construction traffic.
- (b) That the Panel considers that the position relating to the incompleteness of the four pitches is unsatisfactory and requests that the Head of Development Control ensures that the condition within the Barrett Section 106 Agreement relating to the completion of the pitches is enforced, so that the occupation of units is limited unless the pitches are completed satisfactorily.
- (c) That the Council's Parks Department must be satisfied with the proposals regarding the revised turf/grass seeding for the playing fields.

47. Kerbside Recycling - Feedback on Consultation

The Head of Environmental Services and Quality outlined a report updating Members on the results of the public consultation exercise on the future of kerbside recycling, and detailing the next steps in changing the recycling service. Members were advised that following a Cabinet decision in September, 2007, a public consultation was carried out to allow residents an opportunity to give their views on the future of kerbside recycling collections in Slough. The Cabinet had resolved that the public consultation exercise should focus on the provision of a 240 litre wheeled bin for recycling materials and that the weekly landfill bin collection service should not be altered. It was also decided that the collection of food waste in future years would be investigated. The Officer summarised the responses including, that 90.5% of people thought the provision of a kerbside collection of plastic bottles was either very important or fairly important, and that 75.6% of people would prefer a fortnightly wheelie bin collection with plastic bottles, to the weekly black box scheme. The Officer concluded that there was clear support for the introduction of a fortnightly wheeled bin recycling collection of a mix that included plastic bottles and glass. There was opposition to the introduction of bi-weekly food waste collection. It was noted that if Cabinet approval was given on 11th February, 2008, then instructions would be issued to the Council's contractor Slough Accord, for the procurement of collection vehicles and the sourcing of wheeled bins for a planned October, 2008 service commencement date. Members considered the report and raised a number of questions/observations as follows:-

- A Member was concerned that the wheeled bin would be used for ordinary household waste and asked whether it would be transparent so the contents could be viewed. In response the Officer advised that the bins

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were being used within 50 other Authorities areas including Reading and there was always a problem with spoilage when recycling. It was anticipated that the bin would be a different colour so that it was obvious it was to be used for recycling purposes. He also advised that people would be given educational material to show what could be placed in the bins – it was noted that the transparent bins were not affordable.

- A Member asked whether the scheme could be introduced on a trial basis in some areas of the Borough before implementation. The Officer felt that this would be difficult because this would confuse members of the public and there would be operational issues.
- In response to a suggestion by the Strategic Director of the Green and Built Environment, Members agreed that a visit to the Grundon site would be useful for Panel Members.
- A Member asked whether the current black boxes would be collected by the Council. The Officer advised that the boxes would be collected as part of the first round of wheeled bin collections or it was suggested that residents may wish to keep the boxes to carry waste to the wheeled bin.
- A Member questioned the procedure for obtaining a home compost bin and was advised that the scheme was operated by WRAP.
- A Member suggested that a flyer could be issued showing photographs of items that could be placed in the bin, to assist residents who did not speak English. The Officer advised that there would be a range of ways in which residents were educated and noted that a recent scheme that was run in conjunction with mosques and the Polish Church and other organisations was successful.
- In relation to the seasonal variation in load, a Member asked whether there would be adequate provision to handle seasonal variations, for example to collect more plastic bottles in summer months and at peak holiday times. The Officer responded that the vehicles would be reconfigured where necessary and that larger containers would be offered for bigger households.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Panel notes the report and endorses the introduction of a fortnightly wheeled bin recycling collection of a mix that includes plastic bottles and glass.
- (b) That the Head of Environmental Services and Quality arrange a Grundon site visit for Members of the Panel during the summer months(prior to August).

48. Report on the approach taken to enhance Health and Safety in Slough Workplaces- An Example ' Builders Merchants'.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer outlined a report and presentation to illustrate the focused partnership approach taken by the Council towards improving work place safety and the contribution to the Berkshire wide Fit 3 health and safety initiative, targeting builders merchants.

The Officer advised that the economic cost of health and safety incidents to the Slough economy was £30m. Part of the remit of the Environmental Health Team was to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of those who worked and lived in Slough and target poor performers and high risk premises. The Officer explained the Council's contribution to the Berkshire wide Fit 3 initiative that took place between June and July, 2007. Builders merchants were identified as a high risk sector due to the nature of the work place and accident statistics available. It was necessary to assess compliance on the four main causes of work place injury and create a service delivery plan to set out the actions the Council was taking to promote health and safety.

It was noted that 10 of the 11 companies involved had excellent controls in place and fell into the medium to low risk category. No major health and safety concerns were noted and the need for formal service of notice was not warranted. It was noted that the 11 builders merchants would not be subject to re-inspection for some time but would be revisited where necessary in the event of accident notification or work place complaint or enquiry. Members raised a number of questions as follows:-

- A Member asked whether the Officer would have found more contraventions if the visits had been made unannounced. The Officer advised that this course of action was taken five years earlier and several enforcement notices were served at this time. Unannounced visits would continue on a routine basis and complaints and accidents would always be followed up. The Officer had the power to stop operations at the premises immediately if the work was found to be dangerous, otherwise an improvement notice would be served if necessary. It was noted that this often happened in the case of food premises but Officers were obliged to have regard to the Council's policy.
- A Member asked whether the Team had inspected glass merchants and glaziers in the town. The Officer advised that such an inspection had not taken place but he would suggest this initiative to the Berkshire Liaison Group and include in a future programme.

Resolved -

- (a) That the Panel notes the report and approves a continued focused, partnership approach to improving work place safety in Slough.

- (b) That the Senior Environmental Health Officer recommends to the Berkshire Liaison Group that a programme of inspection of glass merchants and glaziers be considered as a future initiative.

49. Performance Monitoring 2007/08 – Budget Strategy

The Strategic Director of the Green and Built Environment referred to the performance monitoring report which highlighted the Council's overall performance from financial management to service and HR activities. The Officer submitted a further report to the Panel which identified the budget forecast 2008/09 to 2010/11, as applicable to the Green and Built Environment Services Section. In terms of new growth added, the Officer highlighted the additional funding required for waste and recycling improvement and the funds for the landfill tax escalator required due to the increased Government tax from April, 2008. Within public protection, additional budget was required within highways maintenance and for the post of a Planning Enforcement Officer. The Officer referred Members to new savings added to the budget and it was noted that overall the budget provided for more growth than savings.

Members raised questions as follows:-

- A Member noted that in some areas of the town there was provision to park for a period of 15 minutes; in her opinion this caused an extra burden on traffic wardens. She suggested that the number of parking attendants required could be reduced if the 15 minutes parking period was abolished, thereby reducing the Council's parking budget. In response, the Officer advised that the parking team had initially suggested half hour parking but this was amended following requests to reduce the period to 15 minutes, to accommodate people who wanted to park for a very brief period.
- A Member questioned whether restricting items at the Chalvey waste disposal area cost more than the clean up exercises needed when residents resorted to fly tipping. It was also noted that people carrier type vehicles could not enter the barriers at the waste disposal site and were channelled through to the area where trade vehicles were required to pay to tip waste. In response, the Officer advised that a scheme to enable Slough residents to obtain a permit to use the waste disposal area would be considered in future.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council's projected budget for 2008/09 and future years be noted.
- (b) That the assumptions underlying the budget strategy be noted.
- (c) That the Strategic Director of the Green and Built Environment explore the use of resident permits for use at the Chalvey waste disposal site.

50. Thames Water- Remaining Flooding Issues: Verbal Update

The Assistant Director of Transport and Planning, reported that a list had been compiled indicating areas that needed to be addressed by Thames Water. Of this list approximately half of the issues had been dealt with. The Officer explained that sewer flooding was the responsibility of Thames Water whereas river flooding was the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

The Officer advised that a meeting had taken place that day between the Council and Thames Water and waste water specialists and other staff had attended. Members were advised that Thames Water received capital funding in five year sections currently running from 2005 to 2010. The priority when the bid was made in 2004 was for leakage and it was anticipated that for the next five year budget between 2010 and 2015, the priority would be for sewer flooding and odour control. The bid for funding was made to OFWAT for various schemes and they then distributed the funding. Thames Water would hope to receive support from the Council when making their bid and a draft would be forwarded to the Council in July, 2008 for a final submission in July, 2009. It was noted that the Council would discuss the Local Development Framework Core Strategy with Thames Water.

Thames Water had advised that their prioritisation process was based upon calls received at their call centre. It was noted that for example a 50 signature petition counted as only one complaint to the call centre. For Members' information the call centre contact number was **08459200800**.

The Officer advised Members that Thames Water would attend the next Panel meeting on 26th March to give a presentation. If Members had any particular questions that they wished to put to Thames Water then the Officer requested that the questions be forwarded to her in the near future.

Resolved – That the verbal update on Thames Water be noted and that any questions for Thames Water be referred to the Officer at the earliest opportunity

51. Future Work Programme

The programme was noted and the following items were added to the meeting on the 26th March, 2008.

1. A report on the Council's highway programme.
2. The Transport Scheme Priority List.
3. A presentation by Thames Water.
4. A report by People 1st on their policy relating to the distribution of burglar alarms.

52. Pre-Meeting for Road Consultation Schemes

The Assistant Director, Transport and Planning, sought Members' approval for a road traffic schemes consultation meeting to be held before each Green and Built Scrutiny Panel meeting. It was noted that the meeting was for Members only and not open to members of the public. Details of the meeting would be forwarded to Members through the Members' Bulletin, by the Council's Road Transport Officer.

Resolved - That the Panel approves the convening of a consultation meeting to be held at approximately 5 pm, prior to Green and Built Scrutiny Panel meetings.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 p.m. and closed at 10.45 p.m.)