

MINUTES: of the meeting of the Surrey County Council Local
Committee held at 10.00 on Friday 3rd February 2006 at the
Runnymede Centre, Chertsey

Surrey County Council Members

Mr Terry Dicks - Chairman
Mrs Mary Angell - Vice Chairman
Mrs Carole Jones
Mrs Yvonna Lay*
Mr R A N Lowther
Mrs Elise Whiteley

* apologies received

PART ONE - IN PUBLIC

[All references to Items refer to the Agenda for the meeting]

The meeting commenced at 10.05 am.

1/06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Mrs Yvonna Lay.

2/06 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2005 [Item 2]

The Minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

No declarations of interest were received.

4/06 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS [Item 4]

A series of questions had been received and answered in writing by officers as follows:

1. Questions from Mrs Elise Whiteley on libraries

1) Will the County Council please reconsider the threatened closure of the Library in Virginia Water?

2) If the County Council does close this library, what will the money saved be used for?

3) If the library is closed will Surrey County Council open a day centre for retired people who, as a result of the library closure, will be deprived of a much valued village centre meeting place?

Response from Mr Chris Norris, Head of Libraries

The County Council has not yet made a decision to close any libraries. A decision will be taken by the Council on 11 April, following a period of consultation that will include surveys of library users and public meetings.

The case for closing libraries is based on the need to invest in the improvement of libraries, thus money saved and/or released from the closure of some libraries will be invested in extending the opening hours and improving the infrastructure of other libraries.

The decision to close the library, if taken, will not be coupled to any decisions about day centres for retired people, which in general are the province of the District Councils. The consultation about possible closure of the library will include consideration of alternative service provision.

2. Questions from Mrs Mary Angell on libraries

1) The Head of Library Services has told me that New Haw library has been selected for possible closure as it is one of the most valuable real estates sites for sale, and the money will be reinvested elsewhere in the library service. How do I explain this to my constituents as anything other than asset stripping?

2) New Haw Library is a major social centre, particularly for the Eikon youth project, Adult Education classes, for school children and the elderly - please can you explain how a mere mobile library may be considered an equivalent alternative provision?

3) The Big Lottery has awarded £80 million nationally (to be distributed in June) to adapt library buildings to accommodate additional services e.g. creches, advice bureaux - has Surrey County Council considered submitting a bid for such funds to avoid the closure of the libraries under threat?

4) The Surrey Structure Plan (Policy DN12) states:

"Where development leads to the loss of existing facilities for which there is a continuing need, alternative equivalent provision must be made.....This policy also provides a framework for contributing to the maintenance of existing facilities where threatened by development proposals. When assessing the impact of development proposals on existing facilities, the local planning authority should also take into account the potential for the re-use or sharing of existing facilities".

If SCC wish to dispose of the New Haw library site it would have to demonstrate that the premises were no longer needed for library purposes and could not be re-used by another community facility - do you have sufficiently robust arguments to prove that there is no such potential community use for the premises?"

Response from Mr Chris Norris, Head of Libraries

Any discussion of asset values is commercial in confidence, and if the subject of a committee discussion would be handled in Part 2.

The consultation process is designed to elicit from users their needs and allow officers the opportunity to devise alternative provision should the facility be closed. The options for alternative service delivery include "books on wheels" for housebound people, one or more mobile library stops, a book drop off and pick up point in a shop or a "mini library" in a community venue.

Once the criteria for the Big Lottery Community Libraries programme is published, officers will consider whether or not to make any applications for funding.

If the Library Service relinquishes its use of the building, then officers will work on the case for planning consent for change of use.

3. Question from Mrs Elise Whiteley regarding voluntary sector accommodation:

The voluntary sector is finding it very difficult to find suitable accommodation to continue with their activities. In view of the benefit they provide to the community will the County Council please investigate further the possibility of providing such accommodation?

Response from Mr Ian Cresswell:

The Council's scope to provide office accommodation in the Runnymede community for the voluntary sector is very limited at present and unlikely to improve as our rationalisation programme continues to progress and more buildings close. During 2006 the Council will close 2 leasehold offices in Chertsey and will continue to work towards closure of the Runnymede Centre in 2008.

It is widely recognised that accommodation for the voluntary sector is an area of concern and there is a need to engage partners more fully in examining opportunities. Officers believe that the County Council's Voluntary Sector Development Plan (known as Change Up) due at the end of March will provide the means through which future accommodation needs and solutions can be progressed.

4. Question from Mrs Elise Whiteley regarding Station Path, Virginia Water:

Please give a progress update on changes which were being examined for the Station Path from Trumps Green Road to the Railway Station, Virginia Water, to make access to the village easier and safer - residents have informed me that the path needs to be cleaned, and improvements are needed as wheelchairs and perambulators cannot easily access the village centre because of the narrow footway on Trumps Green Road.

Response from Mr Richard Bolton, SCC Transportation Manager for Runnymede

A report will be brought to the next meeting of this Committee to consider pedestrian improvements under the railway bridge on Trumps Green Road. This is as a result of a request by Members (at the Members' tour in 2004) to look at improving pedestrian facilities, following the closure of the Furnival Close pedestrian

railway crossing. The intention is to introduce a priority give-way for vehicles and therefore be able to reduce the carriageway width and increase the footway width for pedestrians. Computer modelling is being completed to give a better understanding on the impact this may have on traffic flow. Assuming there are no tangible drawbacks, and subject to Committee approval the intention is to construct this scheme in the financial year 2006/07. It will be funded from the LTP budget with a significant contribution from the central Safer Routes to School budget.

The footpath between Trumps Green Road and Virginia Water Station (footpath 65) was added to the forward programme following the 2005 Members' tour. Assuming staff resources remain consistent, the proposal is to undertake a feasibility study in 2008/09 with construction the following financial year. Any improvements will take into consideration the Borough Council's intention for the continued use of their Bourne Car Park.

Officers have undertaken a recent inspection of the footpath and in general the level of cleanliness seems satisfactory. Nevertheless residents' concerns will be brought to the attention of Runnymede Borough Council (as the street cleansing authority).

Mrs Whiteley asked a supplementary question about how the cleanliness of the footpath would be raised, and Mr Richard Bolton said that he would be discussing this at his imminent meeting with the Head of Engineering of Runnymede Borough Council.

5/06 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS** [Item 5]

No public questions had been received.

6/06 **PETITIONS** [Item 6]

No petitions had been received.

7/06 **JUNCTION OF KINGSLEY AVENUE AND MAGNA ROAD** [Item 7]

Mr Richard Bolton, Local Transportation Manager, explained that the Quality Bus Partnership included a commitment by the highways authority to provide high quality bus stops and shelters, whilst the bus companies' contribution was to use buses with low level steps to enable access by disabled people and young children. He said that proposed changes detailed in the report had been prompted by reports of damage to low step buses caused by the mini roundabout at this minor road junction, and that removal of the roundabout and installation of raised kerbs would ensure that larger vehicles including buses could safely negotiate this junction. Local member Mrs Carole Jones said that she supported the improvement. Mr Lowther asked that any future bus route improvements take account of proposed reductions in bus services.

RESOLVED

- a) that the proposals shown on Drawing No. R1005-1 (Annex 1) be designed and constructed in 2006-7;

8/06 SURREY HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE [Item 8]

Mr Derek Buchanan of Ringway began by addressing the questions raised in the report. He said that half of the work was carried out by workers employed directly by Ringway, with the other half sub-contracted for a number of reasons including specialist nature, fluctuating workload, difficulties in recruiting locally. All work was monitored using key performance indicators, using monthly meetings which also considered safety and financial matters. He said that Ringway's value for money approach took account of cost and quality, using high level benchmarking to check performance against other similar authorities and customer feedback from the properties whose frontages were affected. He noted a further efficiency measure which had been undertaken to increase recycling, which had generated savings of £300-350k. He explained that road closures were necessary on occasion to safeguard the contractors and the public, and that wherever possible work was clustered to minimise disruption.

Questions raised by members covered: opportunities to undertake work at night, the uncompetitive nature of the charges made for installing dropped kerbs, time taken to complete works, management of traffic flows and the use of traffic lights, and standard designs for "cats eyes". The question of whether Ringway's 25% cost allowance to cover overheads and profit was passed on to sub-contractors was also raised.

Mr Richard Bolton confirmed that the County Council was undertaking a review of cost and quality issues in relation to kerb crossovers, and promised to update members on the results of that review when it reported to the Transport Select Committee. He advised that any use of traffic lights whether by Ringway or utilities companies had to be authorised by his team, and suggested that members should report any instances where they considered that the lights may be unnecessary. He confirmed that the design of cats eyes installed recently had changed, and that the old-style design remained available but cost more, and that in some cases where roads had been resurfaced the cats eyes were not re-installed because of street lighting upgrades.

Mr Buchanan confirmed that Ringway sub-contractors also quote for work taking account of their overheads and risks, and that this was an area for review as part of the contract.

9/06 UPDATE OF LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMME [Item 9]

Mr Richard Bolton informed members that the Runnymede area had benefited from a new distribution mechanism designed to take account of congestion, leading to an increase in locally determined LTP budget from £400k to £430k, which was welcome. He explained that the format of the report had been changed to make clearer the sources of funding for works, noting that there could be no guarantee that the local allocation would continue in 2006-7 until the Council had set its budget. A members' tour in the summer would consider potential priorities for the

coming financial year, followed by a report for decision at the subsequent Local Committee meeting.

The Chairman reminded members that any requests for schemes in their area to be brought forward implied a de-prioritisation of works in another member's area, and asked them to think carefully before making such requests.

In response to questions, Mr Bolton confirmed that a new pedestrian refuge for London Street, Chertsey had been delayed but would be installed in Spring 2006, the Windsor Street crossing feasibility study was due for 2008-9, and that there had been a delay in proceeding with the cycleway over Green Lane bridge for legal reasons. In relation to Virginia Water, he said that resident consultation on the cycleway would be undertaken following completion of the feasibility study, before the design stage in 2006-7.

10/06 **MEMBERS INDIVIDUAL FUNDING ALLOCATION** (Item 10)

The Chairman noted that the originally circulated Appendix 1 to this report had been amended and a new version tabled, to take account of two corrections in amounts: Playhouse for Grange Community Infant School, amount amended to £1850
Inscription for Mrs Fox's memorial in St Peter's Churchyard, amended to £700.

The Chairman also reminded the meeting that all allocations were made on a one-off basis, and that there could be no expectation of ongoing support for particular projects.

RESOLVED

to approve the proposed expenditure from the Members' allocations budget as at Annexe 1.

[Meeting ended 11.10 am]

Chairman's signature