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SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SPELTHORNE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8TH October 2007 at Ashford Park School, Station Crescent, Ashford

County Council Members:

Mrs Denise Saliagopoulos* (Chairman)
Mr Victor Agarwal*
Mr Ian Beardsmore*
Mr Laurie Burrell*
Mrs Carol Coleman*
Mr Frank Davies*
Mrs Denise Turner*

Borough Council Members:

Councillor Gerry Forsbrey*
Councillor Denise Grant
Councillor John Packman
Councillor Jack Pinkerton*
Councillor Robin Sider*
Councillor Richard Smith-Ainsley
Councillor George Trussler*

* = present

(All references to items refer to the Agenda for the meeting)

21/07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Packman and Grant.

22/07 MINUTES (ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2007 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

23/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 3)

Cllr Forsbrey declared a prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 11 para 3.2. Mr Burrell declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 11 para 3.1. Ms Turner declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 11 para 2.11 and Cllr Forsbrey declared a personal interest in agenda item 14.

DRAFT

24/07

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Item 4)

The Chairman made announcements giving an update on the foot and mouth disease; post office closures; SCC's additional monies of £100,000 for improvements to Spelthorne highways. The Chairman also informed the Local Committee that this was the last meeting for Julia Penfound, Area Director and wished her well in her new post with another authority.

25/07

PETITIONS (ITEM 5)

One petition was received and presented to the Committee and Mr J Ward spoke on behalf of the petitioners:

1. A308 Staines Road West/School Road, Ashford

Resolved:

- (i) The petition be noted
- (ii) The feasibility study be undertaken to consider the introduction of a right turn filter arrow and the close of the BP garage entry/exit on School Road at its junction with the A308 Staines Road West, Ashford, to be carried out in conjunction with the Safe Routes to School proposal to provide a pedestrian crossing facility across the A308 Staines Road West.

26/07

MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME (ITEM 6)

Four Members questions were received as set out in the annex attached together with the answers given.

27/07

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (ITEM 7)

Four public questions were received as set out in the annex attached together with the answers given.

28/07

LOCAL COMMITTEE PROTOCOL (ITEM 8)

Resolved:

To agree the Local Protocol as set out in Appendix A to the report as the Local Committee have a protocol to extend the opportunities for residents to engage with the Local Committee at their meetings..

29/07

APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES (ITEM 9)

Resolved:

To appoint Mrs Coleman to the Health and Social Care Partnership as the Local Committee has a place on this local body..

30/07

LOCAL COMMITTEE FORWARD PROGRAMME (ITEM 10)

Mr Burrell reported that the Local Education Officer had asked to meet with the Local Committee informally. The Committee made

DRAFT

the following decisions as part of its practice to agree which reports they should consider formally and informally.

Resolved:

(i) The Area Director in consultation with the Chairman be authorised to agree the programme of reports for the remaining three formal meetings for the current municipal year. In addition to the reports being suggested Members agreed that Educational Attainment, School Attendance and the County Council's Parenting Strategy should be added together with any other suggestions made by Members after the meeting.

(ii) It was agreed that an informal meeting of the Local Committee be held to enable the Youth Service to give a presentation on their vision.

31/07

MEMBERS' FUNDS (ITEM 11)

The Local Committee made the following decisions to promote the well being of Spelthorne residents.

Resolved:

- (i) £3019.98 be made to Saxon Primary School for IT equipment funded by £500 from Mrs Saliagopoulos' allocation and the remainder being funded equally between Mr Burrell and Mr Davies
- (ii) £2,500 be made to Ashford Park Primary School towards the renovation of the Jubilee Garden area funded by £500 from Mrs Saliagopoulos' allocation and the remainder being funded equally between Mr Beardsmore, Mr Davies and Ms Turner
- (iii) £500 be made to Sunbury and Shepperton Arts Festival to be shared equally between Mr Burrell, Mr Beardsmore, Mr Davies, Ms Turner and Mrs Saliagopoulos
- (iv) £500 be made to Age Concern towards the Monday Club for lone older men to be shared equally by all seven Members
- (v) £1710 be made to TALK to provide support for stroke recoverers to be shared equally by all seven Members
- (vi) The Area Director in consultation with the Chairman be authorised to approve £2007 to Staines Rugby Club Minis subject to clarifying the number of Staines residents who are members of the Club and whether a grant can be made to an organisation outside the Borough of Spelthorne
- (vii) £5600 be funded from capital for Rest Room facilities at the Bradbury Centre
- (viii) £6514 be funded from capital for roof repairs at St Hilda's Church
- (ix) £4000 be funded from capital for CCTV and electronic gates at Buckland Primary School
- (i) A decision on Walton Firs Foundation be deferred pending more information being sought.

DRAFT

32/07

SELF RELIANCE PROGRAMME IN STANWELL (ITEM 12)

The Committee made the following decisions as part of its role to keep under review the progress of the Stanwell self reliance programme.

Resolved:

- (i) To agree that to date the progress of the programme was satisfactory.
- (ii) To invite the officers delivering the projects to make a presentation to an informal meeting of the Local Committee about their work and progress in early Spring 2008.
- (iii) An annual review report of progress be made to the formal meeting of the Local Committee in September/October 2008.

33/07

WINDMILL GREEN, SHEPPERTON – REQUEST FOR MAINTENANCE (ITEM 13)

The meeting was adjourned from 8.21 to 8.23 to enable Mr Pegley to address the Local Committee. After discussion it was agreed that various points of clarification were needed especially in relation to the land ownership

Resolved:

- (i) It was agreed to defer a decision until the 10th December meeting when a further report would be made to the Local Committee.

34/07

FORDBRIDGE ROAD, ASHFORD – VEHICLE SPEEDS AND LORRY BAN (ITEM 14)

It was noted that a further road traffic accident occurred in the road earlier in the day. The Local Highways Manager undertook to ascertain if the works could be undertaken as a matter of priority.

The Committee made the following decisions because a petition signed by 102 residents of Fordbridge Road, Ashford concerning excessive speeds and the number of heavy goods vehicles using the road had been presented to the Committee previously and the Local Committee was requested to introduce traffic measures to stop speeding traffic and to enforce the lorry ban.

Resolved:

- (i) To note that Fordbridge Road, Ashford was included on the list for a vehicle activated sign, to be rotated on a six monthly basis.

DRAFT

35/07 A308 STAINES ROAD WEST, FORDBRIDGE ROUNDABOUT TO SCHOOL ROAD – PROPOSED SHARED CYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ROUTE (ITEM 15)

This proposal is part of the development of the adopted Spelthorne Cycle Strategy.

Resolved:

(i) The proposal to introduce a shared cycle/pedestrian route along A308 Staines Road West between its junctions with Fordbridge Roundabout and School Road be approved for implementation.

(ii) The scheme be funded from the Local Allocation 2007/2008.

36/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 19)

The next meeting would be held on Monday 10TH December 2007 at The Thames Club, Wheatsheaf Lane, Staines.

The meeting which commenced at 7pm ended at 9.07pm.

Chairman.....

DRAFT

Annex to the Minutes of the SCC Local Committee in Spelthorne held on 8th October 2007

AGENDA ITEM 6

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

“Would the Local Highways Manager provide an update on the current situation on the pedestrian/cycle bridge for Clockhouse Lane, Ashford please?”

The Local Highways Manager gave the following answer:

“As this scheme is on the boundary between Hounslow and Surrey, officers from both authorities have suggested that funding for the scheme should be shared 50/50 between the London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) and Surrey County Council (SCC). LBH made a bid to Transport for London in June 2007 for their share of the funds and are likely to hear unofficially in October whether their bid could be successful, and to hear formally in December. LBH is also trying to secure developer funding for this proposal. If the LBH bid is successful, a bid for the SCC share will be made to our Executive in February 2008. Funding would need to be provided centrally because of the high cost of the proposal, currently estimated to be approximately between £750,000 and £1 million.

If both bids for funding are successful, design would commence in April 2008. It is likely that it will be a further two years before construction, although in the unlikely event that a public inquiry is required for the compulsory purchase of land, this would be delayed for approximately a further year.

As the bridge itself would be within Hounslow, LBH would project manage the design and construction. They would also maintain the structure after construction. During the scheme development, regular meetings would be held between officers from LBH and SCC to discuss the design, procedures and programme.

Land ownership details have been obtained. Initial contact has also been made between LBH and SCC solicitors regarding authority for LBH to undertake work within Surrey.

Network Rail officers have provisionally indicated that they have no objection to the proposal, subject to certain requirements such as parapet type,

DRAFT

clearance between both structures and ownership of the new structure being met.

For information, it is intended that a 7.5 tonnes southbound weight limit on the Surrey length of Clockhouse Lane would be introduced towards the end of the current financial year, subject to there being no unresolved objection.”

Councillor Sider asked the following question:

“Item 16 of the Surrey County Council Local Committee (Spelthorne) agenda dated 11 December 2006 was a report regarding the proposed implementation of a shared bus stop / taxi rank at Thames Street, Staines submitted by Spelthorne Borough Council some months earlier that year, the idea being to use this bus stop as a taxi rank during the night when buses had ceased running and before the commencement of their daily services. It was also in pursuance of one of Spelthorne Council’s priorities – that of making Spelthorne safe. Paragraph 2.2 of this report stated that the County Council were currently seeking advice from Government of the South East (GOSE) regarding the combined bus stop clearway and taxi rank, and paragraph 3.3 informed members that consultation was underway with GOSE and that their advice was awaited. The question of progress was asked seven months later by Cllr Sider at the meeting of the Local Committee in July 2007, where it was made known, and somewhat astonishing, that GOSE required further details. Can the Area Director inform me why the County Council have not pursued this matter, and will he agree with me as Chairman of Spelthorne Borough Council Licensing Committee, that a time frame approaching one year to resolve a simple issue such as this is totally unacceptable?”

The Local Highways Manager gave the following answer:

“It has taken a long time to deal with this matter, however I have discussed this with GOSE and understand that currently they have a very high level of enquiries. I further understand that approval for the signs has been given and that the approved application should be received within the next couple of days.”

Mr Burrell asked the following question:

“I have noticed that a number of the 'Bus Stops' located around the Borough are covered with a plastic sleeve, and do not have a sign at the top of the pole to indicate which routes use the 'Bus Stop' This is clearly causing confusion with our travelling public as they think that the 'Bus Stops' are not in use.

Can Surrey County Council Passenger Transport Service give an indication as to when this situation will be resolved, and if there is to be a delay in the work programme why is this?”

The Local Highways Manager gave the following answer:

DRAFT

“SCC’s Passenger Transport Group is carrying out a bus stop upgrade programme. Their contractor has installed the poles but not yet "dressed" the stops by adding the flags / timetables etc. There is usually a short delay between the installation of the pole and the flags but I am aware that there has been a greater delay than expected and this matter is being followed up with the supplier. The bus stops are still in use.”

Mr Burrell asked the following question:

“ On the 20th of August 2007 I submitted a request to make available support for 'Spelthorne Potential 2012 Olympians' from the members allowance. Although I have received a response to say that our allowances cannot be used for individual cases, I have been further lead to believe that there is a view we can provide financial assistance to individuals in certain circumstances.

Could a brief report be given to the Committee as to how this might be achieved, and what action Surrey County Council is taking to provide support to potential 2012 Olympic sports persons?”

The Area Director gave the following answer:

“The proposal put forward by Mr. Burrell has been forwarded to SCC Legal Department for an opinion in relation to the use of Members Funds for this purpose given that the Members Allocation Procedure Note' specifically states that "Funding cannot be used as a "grant" to an individual". Enquiries have also been made corporately to determine what action if any SCC may be considering in relation to the 2012 Olympics. A report is currently being prepared of the outcome of these enquiries and will be provided to Members shortly for consideration.”

AGENDA ITEM 7

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr John Carruthers asked the following question:

"At the last Local Committee the first three quarters of an hour was taken up with written questions to the Committee (some in considerable detail) from sitting Councillors, who then each received a formal written answer from an officer. They were then able to spend time verbally questioning the officer present on their subject.

This is surely a misuse of Local Committee question time, for councillors of all people when a question arises, should and are absolutely entitled to email or go in at once to see the relevant officer in person for an immediate answer, and in fact if necessary cross question that officer until satisfied. No benefit

DRAFT

whatsoever is derived from waiting up to three months for the next meeting and then to only receive the usual formal defensive answer. The Councillor in public then is inhibited from speaking freely, has to assess what is said on the spot, and is likely to feel dissatisfied with the result.

Questions from the public then follow, suffer from time restraints caused by the time spent on the above, and are given short shrift. Limited to just one subject, and even then allowed just one query on it, resulting in inadequate coverage in the formal reply. A verbal supplementary question is allowed, but suffers because of the disallowing of the initial full problem specification. The citizen then leaves feeling dissatisfied and this surely is not the intention behind the policy of question time. Also for some reasons the ability of citizens to put clarifying questions to officer reports before Councillors speak, or even afterwards (of course with Chairman's approval) is now refused. Ludicrously, at the last meeting two members of the public had to take the senior Police Officer outside the Hall to put their questions and in fact there received full answers which would have been helpful and informative to the Councillors.

I also note that in the 12th June County Council agenda under Item 13, Page 4 on Local Committees "the role and responsibilities of the Local Committees were growing in developing the local democratic processes". How does the present attitude of this Committee in restricting local input equate with this clear statement from the County Independent Panel.

My question is what are you going to do about the above?"

The Area Director gave the following answer:

"Mr. Carruthers is quite right that Members can ask officers questions at any time but sometimes believe it is appropriate and in the public interest to ask a formal Members question at a Committee which is their constitutional right. The Constitution also allows for any Surrey elector to ask one question of the Local Committee and recent changes by the Council have provided for those people asking a question also to ask a supplementary question at the Local Committee. Previously supplementary questions were at the discretion of the Chairman but now questioners have a constitutional right to ask a supplementary question. There are no time restraints put on Members or Public Questions.

In respect of members of the public being able to put clarifying questions to officers reports, it has to be borne in mind that the Local Committee is a meeting in public and not a public meeting. To enable a lawful decision to be taken, it is important that the Local Committee are not put under undue influence of a particular person or group at the meeting prior to a decision being taken. Otherwise for example another group with perhaps a different view which was not at the meeting might argue that their views were not taken into account. Reports have to contain a paragraph explaining when consultations have taken place and with whom to ensure that Members are aware of this when considering a report and particular officer recommendation. Having said that, the Local Committee protocol does

DRAFT

provide the Chairman to exercise discretion in permitting a member of the public to speak in connection with a local transportation report for no more than three minutes and the meeting is formally adjourned for this purpose as the public cannot participate in the Committee's discussions or any part of the formal decision making process. Alternatively if members of the public wish to seek more information about a report in advance of the meeting they may contact the author of a report as the agenda is published five clear working days before the meeting.

The recent decision to hold a public question time in advance of the formal Local Committee meeting accords with the role of the Local Committee in developing the democratic processes and enables the public to turn up and ask questions without prior notice. The success or otherwise of this new development for Spelthorne will be kept under review."

Councillor Leighton asked the following question:

VAS Walton Bridge Road

This sign has been mostly inoperative since its installation. I am not aware that this sign is intended to be intermittent in operation, especially in view of the high volume of HGV's which use the road and the constant source of concern for residents in that area re shedding loads, speeding, etc.

The reason for in operation given last summer -and again this year - was that the sign's recording capacity gets filled and an officer has to attend to reset. Early September I was advised an order had been placed with the manufacturer to remedy this situation and the adjustment was to be made 'during the next few weeks'.

Can the Local Highways Manager inform me when the adjustments that I have mentioned will be made?"

The Local Highways Manager will give the following answer:

"The reason above for the sign not working is correct. An order to remove the data recording device was placed with the supplier during July and that work was carried out last week. The signs are now operational on Walton Bridge Road."

Councillor Hyams asked the following question:

Damaged speed cushions Russell Road

"Throughout this year 2 of these cushions have remained in an extremely poor state of repair despite regular queries from Cllr Ward Members. During this time the road has been resurfaced, at which time all the heavy equipment and manpower were on hand and the amount of additional tar and time it would have taken to repair them then would surely have been insignificant. Can the Local Highways Manager inform me when the repair work to the speed cushions will be effected?"

DRAFT

The Local Highways Manager gave the following answer:

“The surface dressing that has been applied to Russell Road is a specialist application and different material is required for the reconstruction of the damaged parts of the speed cushions. Remedial works will be carried out within the next month.”

Mr Robert Watts on behalf of Shepperton Residents’ Association asked the following question:

“Although the new Surrey Highways Service has been in place since May 07 its focus on delivery of performance on the ground, improving relationships with customers and improving its interface with members is not working. Even though Community Highway Officers have been appointed, and additional funding has been made available in Spelthorne the highway maintenance on the ground and the response time on complaints is still poor. Specifically no response has yet been received in relation to highway maintenance issues sent to Annette Williamson on 10/08/07. Pavements in Shepperton are still unsafe despite being inspected in April. When will the response system work properly and when will the highway maintenance in Shepperton be improved?”

The Local Highways Manager gave the following answer:

“Three Community Highways Officer Posts are allocated to Spelthorne and one of these posts was filled earlier this year. The other posts should be permanently staffed by the end of the year and I expect the response to enquiries in Spelthorne to improve soon afterwards.

With regard to the issues raised with me in August, I can advise that:

- The pole for the zebra crossing was repaired during August;
- The carriageway of the roundabout at High Street / Russell Road has been added to the list of locations to be assessed for resurfacing next year; and
- The slabs at Bruce Avenue / Kilmiston Avenue are programmed to be replaced with bitmac, in accordance with County Policy. The works are programmed to be carried out within one month and I apologise for this delay.”

DRAFT

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