



**Minutes:** of the meeting of the Local Committee for Woking held at 10:00 am on 25 July 2002 at Christ Church Halls and Rooms, Woking.

**Members Present**

Mr David Rousell - Chairman  
Mr Geoff Marlow – Vice-Chairman  
Mrs Elizabeth Compton  
Mrs Margaret Hill  
Mrs Val Tinney

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**Part One – In Public**

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

**34/02 Apologies for absence** [Item 1]

An apology for absence was received from Mrs Sheila Gruselle.

**35/02 Minutes of last meeting of 1 July 2002** [Item 2]

Confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**36/02 Declarations of interests** [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest.

**37/02 Petitions** [Item 4]

No petitions were received in accordance with Standing Order 62.

**38/02 Public Questions** [Item 5]

**Mr Peter Rigg asked this question**

I use the local public footpaths and bridlepaths a lot. Every year I - and many other residents - find it necessary to contact Woking BC (and now Surrey CC) to point out that vegetation, including nettles and brambles, is overgrowing the paths, rendering many of them impassable. It is always necessary to complain before anything happens - and indeed we have learnt that Woking BC used to wait until 8 complaints had been received before taking any action. This year the paths in my area are still uncleared.

Clearing vegetation from paths is an annual, predictable chore. As such, it should be feasible to plan for it to be done, by a reputable contractor after due tendering procedures, at predictable times. The process should not rely on residents' complaints.

Could you please let me know what is being done to improve the current process?"

**Officer reply from Mrs Anne Woods, Divisional Officer North West Surrey, Environmental & Economic Policy**

I am sure people can appreciate that many of our footpaths and bridleways are likely to become overgrown during the summer, particularly given the very wet weather we have experienced this year. Unfortunately I did not receive a list of the paths that require clearing annually when I took over responsibility for Rights of Way, and am having instead to deal reactively with the problems as and when they are reported.

I agree that this is far from ideal, as apart from anything else it is an expensive way of dealing with the problem of overgrowth. I am in touch with Woking Borough Council to try to get a list. Meanwhile, I am sorry the public are experiencing problems with using some paths. I am passing instructions to my contractor to get the paths cut back as quickly as possible, but the scale of the problem means he does now have a backlog of work and I will be seeking the services of another contractor to assist with the work.

I can assure Mr Rigg that it is not our intention to wait until several complaints are received before any action is taken, either this year or in the future. Fortunately most of the people who have contacted me about overgrown paths have been understanding when I have explained the problems we face this year.

From the information I gather this year I will prepare a list, of paths that require annual clearance, so that in future I will be able to contract out the work much earlier in the season.

I am contacting Mr Rigg directly to suggest that we meet up by the footpath and talk this over.

**39/02 Members' Questions [Item 6]**

No Member questions were received.

40/02 **Surrey Schools attainment in Woking: interim report for academic year 2000-2001** [Item 7]

Dr Rowan Swan, Education Research and Development Officer, reported on the attainment of pupils in schools within Woking.

He explained that the report was limited because it did not measure the difference in pupil attainment from when they first start at the school until the time they take their test. This would show how schools have helped to advance their pupils. The Value Added measures will start to be publicly available in the school performance tables in 2003.

It was noted that the report was based on data collected on Surrey as a whole. Woking schools are above national averages but may be below Surrey averages.

The statistics show the attainment of children who go to Local Education Authority schools in Woking. They do not measure the attainment of children from Woking who go to schools elsewhere. Rowan Swan said that they hoped to change school record keeping so that information should be available next year about children who cross borough boundaries between home and school.

Mrs Tinney pointed out that the impact of the spatial strategy on the number of children needing school places must be taken into account in school planning. John Ambrose confirmed this is being done. A deficit is forecast at secondary level to 2006.

Mrs Tinney said that attainment figures could be misleading where children do not have English as their first language. Good work at Key Stage 1 only shows up later at Key Stage 3 or 4. Schools need additional resources to respond to the needs of these families. Rowan Swan agreed to pass this on to the relevant officer and would ask the officer to advise the Committee about how additional resources are allocated.

Mrs Comptom pointed out the need to make provision for the growing number of children with special needs such as autism and dyslexia. Rowan Swan agreed to pass this on to the relevant officers.

Margaret Hill asked whether it is true that (as stated on page 3 of the report) "Slightly less than half of pupils in public care have special educational needs." John Ambrose explained that the national reports preceding the Code Of Practice for Special Educational Needs always envisaged that about 50% of children would have a special educational need at some time in their educational career but that these would not always lead to a formal statement.

Although the report did not discuss truancy, an information sheet on Truancy in Woking was tabled at the meeting. (See Annex 1).

**Resolved that** Members would attend an informal workshop on specific educational issues that affect Woking.

(Tim Lake, Head of Performance Analysis and Improvement, John Ambrose, Local Education Officer and Sue Eckett, Parent and School Support Officer, were also in attendance).

#### 41/02 **Local library developments** [Item 8]

Rose Wilson, Library Services Manager, reported on local library developments. The Library Service in Surrey is undergoing a review and Corporate Performance Assessment. The outcome of these will influence the development of the Annual Library Plan.

Presently, the libraries are focused on improving:

- Stock range, quality and presentation
- Staffing, training and qualification
- Information service
- Information technology and e-service
- Lifelong learning program
- Library buildings
- Automation of customer services

The majority of the libraries' funding is spent on achieving these objectives.

Knaphill Library requires major refurbishment to bring it up to an acceptable standard. However, in the Library Services' current budget there is no funding for library refurbishment. New sources for funds will need to be identified to keep the net revenue and capital cost at zero.

**Resolved that** Officers should explore all options for the future of Knaphill Library and report with specific recommendations at the first possible meeting after the Annual Library Plan is approved and the outcome of the Corporate Performance Assessment of libraries is known.

#### **Non-Executive Functions**

#### 42/02 **Right of way – amendment to footpath 23 in Woking** [Item 9]

The Committee received a report on the proposed diversion of Public Right of Way No. 23, Woking from Debbie Spriggs, Senior Rights of Way Officer. It was noted that there had been some objections to the proposed route. The Chairman confirmed that he had received emails outlining residents' concern that they would not be able to gain vehicular access to their properties via the right of way.

Mrs Compton also raised concerns about the safety of the path.

Debbie Spriggs advised that:

- A barrier was placed at point C (as shown on annex 1 of the agenda item) by Woking Borough Council, which has the effect of slowing cyclists.
- Two of the owners of the land over which the proposed right of way would pass have given their consent.
- Officers have been unable to identify the owner(s) of the remaining small section where the proposed right of way would pass.
- Officers have consulted with the Surrey County Council lawyers who confirm that it is legal to make the proposed amendment in these circumstances.
- Officers have written to all householders adjoining the definitive and proposed routes of the public footpath about the proposed change.
- Officers have also written to all householders who contacted them regarding vehicular rights, stating that private rights of access would be unaffected.
- Officers are dealing with vegetation growing on the right of way.
- When planning permission was given for garages to be built along the right of way, some people were told that this did not give them the right to drive into their garage via the right of way.
- It is a criminal offence to drive a vehicle over a public footpath or bridleway without private rights to do so. Residents driving over the proposed route currently pass over an existing stretch of public footpath at the northern end of the route. Surrey County Council has not prosecuted those people.

**Resolved that:**

- i. The proposed diversion to Public Right of Way No. 23, Woking as outlined in Annex 1 and 2 of the agenda item, is approved.
- ii. The Senior Rights of Way Officer will write to the people who are using the path for vehicle access to their properties and inform them of the Committee's decision and how this affects their vehicular rights of access.

(Christina Smith, Surrey County Council Rights of Way Assistant, was also in attendance).

**Executive Functions**

**43/02 Woking Borough Council Best Value review on "Improving independence for older people (related services)" [Item 10]**

David Johnson, Woking Borough Council Principal Management Consultant reported on the forthcoming best value review on improving

independence for older people (related services). It has been agreed at Chief Executive level that this will be a joint review with Surrey County Council and Woking Area Primary Care Trust. During the review the Woking Borough Council Head of Policy and Performance, Penny Haysom, will be working closely with the Surrey County Council Local Director for Woking.

The discussion identified the following points:

- The review will look at literature, research and other parts of the country to find good practice in other places.
- Ideas about keeping people out of hospital will be covered, including the conclusions of a Social Services study that had been undertaken.
- 'Leisure for Health' encourages people up to 70 to take exercise that makes them healthier.
- The review needs to identify base-line statistics about services and their use.

**Resolved that**

- i. Woking Borough Council Principal Management Consultant and Head of Policy and Performance keep the Local Committee updated with the emerging findings of the review.
- ii. Mrs Compton would be the Local Committee representative on the Best Value Review Committee for improving independence for older people.

(Penny Haysom, Woking Borough Council Head of Policy and Performance, was also in attendance).

**44/02 Allocating Local Committee Funding [Item 11]**

The Committee received a report from Christine Holloway, the Local Director for Woking, on the proposed criteria and process for allocating Local Committee Funding.

**Resolved that:**

- i. The proposed process and criteria for the allocation of undesignated funds is approved.
- ii. The deadline for suggestions from Members is amended to Wednesday 14 August 2002.
- iii. The Local Committee Meeting on 11 September 2002 will decide which proposals will be allocated funds.

**45/02 Vandalism in West Byfleet [Item 12]**

The Committee received a verbal report from Mr Marlow on a meeting of the Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford Residents Association about vandalism.

Members of the public are concerned that vandalism is increasing in West Byfleet and that this is linked to under-age drinking.

It was noted that vandalism near unstaffed railway stations is a countywide issue.

**Resolved that:**

- i. The Local Director would ensure that Trading Standards takes action about sale of alcohol to under-age drinkers.
- ii. The Local Committee would keep this issue in mind when considering youth issues.

**46/02 Future agenda programme for the Local Committee for Woking [Item 13]**

A report was received from Christine Holloway, Local Director for Woking, on the proposed future programme for the Local Committee for Woking for both formal and informal meetings in the coming year.

It was noted that Members could change the programme.

**Resolved that:**

- i. An amendment would be made to Annex 1 of the agenda item to correct a typing error (that the first formal meeting in September is a general agenda, not a transportation agenda).
- ii. The Committee would need a report on the progress of the Neighbourhood Nursery initiative in Sheerwater.
- iii. The proposed future agenda programme for the Local Committee for Woking as set out in Annex 1 was approved with these two changes.

**47/02 The spatial plan and its implication for Woking [Item 14]**

Information was received from Catriona Riddell, Strategic Planning Manager, on the spatial plans for Woking. The spatial strategy is proposing 35,400 new houses in Surrey between 2001 and 2016. It is expected that building in Woking will begin from 2011.

The strategy is currently in consultation stage and the process timetable as follows:

- Summer 2002 – Consultation on draft Strategy.

- October 2002 – Revised draft Structure Plan to be approved by Surrey County Council.
- Nov/Dec 2002 – Further six-week formal consultation period.
- June 2003 – Examination in public – Inquiry.
- Dec 2003 – New Structure plan to be adopted.

The Committee were interested to hear the thoughts and opinions of members of the public so standing orders were suspended for 15 minutes for questions and public discussion.

Mrs Tinney raised concerns about the width of green belt separating towns and villages and the possibility of future developments linking existing towns and villages. She asked for the Spatial Strategy to include a statement that there should be at least 2.5 miles of green belt separating towns and villages from other towns and villages.

**Resolved that:**

The Committee would be kept informed on the progress of spatial planning and its implications for Woking.

**48/02 Exclusion of the Press and Public [Item 15]**

There were no items of business that involved the likely disclosure of exempt information.

**[The formal meeting ended at 12.50 pm]**

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**Chairman**



## Truancy in Woking

Truancy has been highlighted nationally as an important issue from different directions. It is important as part of the pressure to raise educational standards so that we have a workforce able to deal with modern needs of employers. It is also a key issue in terms of Crime and Disorder. Statistics have shown that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of boys and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of girls who truant become involved in crime. Last week there was a statistic on crime stating that 40% of crime was committed by people under 18.

In Surrey the Education Welfare Service deals with the majority of pupils who truant. They work closely with the schools in the area to identify truanting pupils and follow these up with parents to rectify the situation. In some cases whether through the area Education Welfare Service or through the Truancy Project, parents are prosecuted if they are unwilling to co-operate in improving their child's attendance.

The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act gave powers to the Education Authority and the Police to carry out Truancy Patrols to question pupils who it would appear should be in school. If they are unsatisfied by their answer we can return them to school. The law allows us to return children whether they are with their parents not although we do not return accompanied children.

A further project (PSA Project) is working with 2 secondary schools in the area to improve attendance. Each secondary school has an attendance target agreed with the school to achieve the stringent targets agreed with central government.

In the last academic year we have carried out patrols on 19 different days. On those patrols we have stopped 274 young people. 177 were with an adult. All pupils were followed up with their school to check the reason the school was given and to see past level of attendance. If there was an attendance concern this was followed up with parents by Truancy Project Staff. 25 children were removed from the streets and returned to school. Many of the explanations given by pupils or their parents were unacceptable such as birthday treat, going shopping, went out the night before and was tired, overslept and nothing important happening at school that day. 40 pupils said that they were truanting. It also highlights children who have slipped through the net and are unknown to education or have left one school and not gone to another.