



Minutes of the Local Committee for Woking
General Agenda
Meeting held at 7.30 pm on 02 March 2005
at
Old Woking Community Centre, Sundridge Road, Old Woking:

Mr Geoff Marlow – Chairman
Mrs Val Tinney – Vice Chairman
Mr David Rousell
Mrs Diana Smith

Part One – In Public

[All references to items refer to the agenda for the meeting]

16/05 Apologies for absence [Item 1]

Mrs Compton and Mrs Gruselle gave their apologies for absence.

17/05 Minutes of last meeting held on 19 January 2005 [Item 2]

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2005 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

18/05 Declarations of interests [Item 3]

Mrs Diana Smith declared an interest in Item 5 Youth Development Service as her son is a member of the Youth Council.

19/05 Written Public Questions [Item 4]

There were no written public questions.

Executive Functions

20/05 Youth Development Service [Item 5]

David Blake introduced the item. He acknowledged that there was a number of gaps in the provision of youth services due to recruitment and retention difficulties. He explained that the Youth Service was working with other agencies to address some of these gaps.

Mrs Tinney commented that the joint working between the Youth Service and Woking Borough Council was going well; that more young people were taking an interest and that this was a great step forward.

David Blake explained that the Borough Council were very active in developing community services and had recently recruited a Services to Young People Co-ordinator.

Mrs Smith asked if the background papers that had been circulated to members could be available to the public. David Blake agreed that, once they had been agreed by the Committee and by the Head of the Youth Development Service, Graham Combe, that they could be published on the Surrey County Council website.

RESOLVED –

That the Youth Development Service plan for the forthcoming year be noted.

21/05 South East Plan Consultation [Item 6]

Mr Gould introduced the report and commented that Woking had been identified as a regional hub. This means that the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) see Woking as a place where there will be further economic and other development growth in the longer term up until 2026.

He went on to explain that there were real concerns about the amount of development in Woking, and in Surrey generally, that the South East Plan envisaged, but that this was part of a wider Government objective to deliver more housing within the South East. Mr Gould stated that Surrey would have to play its part in delivering some of that housing over the long term.

Members considered draft comments prepared by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. In agreeing these comments as the Committee's response to the consultation exercise on the Plan, members sought to

emphasise further the need for all forms of infrastructure to be in place before development is permitted to begin.

It was then

RESOLVED

That the Executive be informed of the Committee's views as follows:-

The Woking Local Committee is concerned that the plan appears to propose continuing and increasing the pressure for development in Surrey and in Woking in particular. As well as anxieties about the ability of the area to absorb large volumes of new development, the Committee is concerned that the purposes for which development are being proposed are misguided. If, as we believe, there is only limited scope for further building, it is essential that the most urgent needs are tackled first.

In our estimation, the greatest need is for additional affordable housing. Woking is not in need of an expansion in economic activity – our more pressing problem is in trying to recruit to a range of lower paid jobs particularly in the public sector. We are disappointed at the comparatively low emphasis placed on affordability in the report and would wish to see greater weight placed on this aspect in the final South East Plan. However, any further development can only follow the provision of the essential infrastructure – especially road capacity, public transport and health services – to enable a larger community to continue to function.

The implications of our housing concerns for economic and transport policies is clear – that further expansion of economic activity in the Borough is not as high a priority and that the growth in vehicle journeys can be curtailed if more people live and work locally and so do not need to commute to Woking. To this extent, a limited increase in employment would be welcomed over time provided it can be provided without altering the character of the area.

Finally, our view that there is but limited scope for further development stems from a determination that the Green Belt should be preserved and enhanced if possible which is not compatible with the scale of development foreshadowed in the plan.

22/05 Discussion of Key Issues within the Community [Item 6]

The Committee agreed to adjourn the meeting to enable open discussion with members of the community. Issues discussed included Youth, South East Plan, transport issues and truancy. Annex 1 sets out details of these discussions.

23/05 Outcomes of discussions with community [Item 7]

The meeting was formally reconvened and officers were instructed to note and act, where appropriate, on comments raised during discussions.

24/05 Exclusion of the Press and Public [Item 8]

There was no business that required the public to be excluded from the meeting under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

[The meeting ended at 9.25 pm]

Chairman

Summary of issues raised by Residents of Woking South East Division. Response from Members and/or Officers is shown in *italics*

1. Youth Service

The support available from the County Council to voluntary youth clubs and youth organisations was discussed and, in particular, the need to provide training for volunteer youth leaders. If there was no specific budget for this purpose, the savings accruing from running with less than a full establishment could be used to buy in training. There was also a need for support with the costs of premises.

The Borough Youth Development Officer agreed to provide training support to the volunteers trying to establish a youth facility in the area and to consider the possibility of using salary underspend to support voluntary provision.

2. South East Plan

Questions about the status of the plan and its provenance were raised.

The status of plan produced by SEERA was explained.

3. Jack and Jill Steps

Pupils from St John the Baptist school drew attention to the state of these steps which were inadequately lit, in need of maintenance and increased cleaning.

A new lamppost was due to be installed in the vicinity of the steps before the end of the week. Increased sweeping particularly to keep the stairs free of leaves in the autumn would be provided and pruning where necessary would be done. An investigation into the extent of the work needed to reinstate steps from the current slopes would be carried out.

4. Stokers Lane

The condition of the footway in Stokers Lane was highlighted, especially as the County had made this a preferred route to school with the installation of a Pelican Crossing to encourage use.

Stokers Lane is a Right of Way rather than an adopted road and, as such, consultation with colleagues will be needed to establish what can be done and when.

5. Old Woking Road

A large number of points were made in connection with the local desire for a footway to be installed. Speakers emphasised the dangers of pedestrians using this road, especially for children in push chairs and for everybody at night. The conditions also caused concerns to drivers. In support of the case for a footway, speakers referred to the petition of more than 1,000 names which had been collected. There was also discussion of the manner in which the Committee had decided, reluctantly, that the desired works could not be afforded.

Some alternative suggestions to ease the problem in Old Woking Road were proposed including traffic light controlled single-way working, speed reductions and, possibly, associated humps. There was concern that the works to cut back vegetation which had been agreed some months ago had not been carried out as well as fears that pending development was likely to increase traffic flows along this road.

Members of the public also asked for a clear understanding of the resources available to the Committee and the other priorities to which they had been directed so that they could judge whether the desired works were really unaffordable.

Members made the point that the Local Committee was sympathetic to the points that petitioners and others at the meeting were making. There was no dispute that Old Woking Road represented a danger to pedestrians and a challenge to motorists. However, the lowest estimate of the cost of the works was in excess of £400,000. The budget available to the Local Committee for integrated transport schemes, which includes works of this sort, was just in the region of £0.5m. There are a number of schemes already approved locally to be funded from this budget including some addressing problems caused by a lack of pedestrian facilities in Mayford and Sheerwater. The lowest estimate of the costs of works at Old Woking Road would take about a year's entire budget and, if authorised, would preclude carrying safety works anywhere else in the Borough.

Officers undertook to look again at the possibilities of some form of single way working and at both an advisory and/or a mandatory 20 mph speed limit. They also agreed that minor works concerned with vegetation and checking signs would be undertaken quickly.

6. Website

The previous discussion led to a short debate about the difficulty of finding information on the County Council's website.

The Local Director undertook to find the information required and make it available as well as to pass on the comments regarding the ease of navigation round the site.

7. Project Management of Transport Scheme

Concern was expressed that highways schemes started late, overran and, sometimes, were never completed properly.

Officers outlined the project management arrangements and improvements that were being put in place to address these problems.

8. Right turn into Eve Road

Officers were asked about progress in investigating whether this right turn could be reinstated.

Officers replied that data was still being evaluated.

9. Children out of school

Concern was expressed at the number of young people in the area who do not appear to go to school and behave in an anti-social manner.

The Local Director agreed to request more, and more subtle, truancy patrols to address this issue.