

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF HIGHWAYS, PARKS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH, DUNSTABLE

ON MONDAY 12TH JUNE 2006

Present: Councillors Mrs C M Gresham (Town Mayor), P E Russell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair); R R Anklesaria, A J Fairbairn, Mrs J Fairbairn, A E Green, M Jones and T A W Stock

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs S A Newton and M Tilley with Mr R Walden (Town Clerk), Mrs H A Hupton (Deputy Town Clerk) and Mrs R G Smith (Administration and Finance Manager)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Mrs B M Boatwright (Deputy Town Mayor), P J Boatwright (Chairman), Ms S Littlechild, B Ralley and Mrs A Stock

158 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20th March 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

159 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A J Fairbairn	Bus Shelters	Personal Interest (Employee of a company within the same Group as the County Council's Highway Maintenance Contractor)
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160 PLANS SUB-COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 29th March, 18th April and 23rd May (see Appendix 'A') be received

161 DUNSTABLE NORTHERN BYPASS (A5-M1 LINK)

The Town Clerk recalled that, at the last meeting of the Committee, it had been agreed to make representations to the Minister for Transport regarding delays recommended by the East of England Regional Assembly in the construction of the Northern Bypass compared with the higher priority being recommended for Translink.

An official from the Government Office for the East of England (Go East) had replied on behalf of the Minister indicating that the Secretary of State had now approved the Translink Scheme which should be a priority for funding in the current financial year. He had also advised that the Bypass was at a relatively early stage of planning and was unlikely to be ready for construction before 2013.

This information had not been conveyed to any other authority and, following a request for clarification from South Bedfordshire District Council, Go East had subsequently advised that this information was incorrect and no decision had yet been taken about whether or not to approve the Translink proposal as Go East was still awaiting the Inspector's report from the most recent public inquiry about the provision of replacement open space. They

acknowledged that there had been a delay in the announcement of the Preferred Route for the Bypass but the Highways Agency continued to progress the scheme to the timetable outlined in their consultation document which envisaged a start of works in 2009 with the road open to traffic in 2010/11. The Director of Go East had apologised that the Council had received the earlier erroneous letter and had assured that steps had been taken to ensure such an error could not occur in the future.

The Town Clerk further reported on the continuing representations being made in support of the need to provide continued protection for the route of the former A5 Eastern Bypass until such time as the effects of the Northern Bypass had been evaluated. This protection would provide one of the alternative routes for the proposed Woodside Connection. He submitted for Members' information a copy of an officer's report to the District Council indicating some level of protection for the route of the Woodside Connection but that, in the absence of any current scheme for an Eastern Bypass, it would no longer be possible to provide local protection for the section of that route south of Luton Road. The matter would finally be determined by the Joint Planning and Transportation Committee and Councillor Tilley (as Chairman of Plans-Sub Committee) and the Town Clerk had briefed the Town and Parish Councils' representative on the Joint Committee of the strong views of this Council concerning the need for the protection of the whole route. He also submitted for Members' information copies of a report to the district Council on the latest position for setting up a delivery vehicle for the Growth Area.

The Committee endorsed the action taken and agreed that this Council must continue to press the case for preserving the southern section of the former Eastern Bypass at every opportunity.

162 HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE

The Town Clerk reported that Bedfordshire County Council had advised that it intended to undertake the following major improvement works during the current financial year:

Bus Shelters and Bus Stop improvements

Road resurfacing:

- Albion Street (October)
- Ashcroft (October)
- Brive Road (June)
- Buckwood Avenue (July)
- Kingsbury Avenue (November)
- Lowther Road (November)
- Mountview Avenue (August)
- Norfolk Road (June)
- Oakwood Avenue (March 2007)
- Oldhill (July)
- Ridgeway Avenue/Western Avenue (December)
- Suffolk Road (January 2007)
- Westfield Road (February 2007)
- Winfield Street (February 2007)
- Beech Road (June)

The following further roads were also proposed for re-surfacing on a timetable yet to be agreed:

- Aldbanks
- Bowmans Way
- Burr Street

Church Walk
Englands Lane
Greenfield Close
Hillcroft
Ickniel Street
Kingscroft Avenue
Mayfield Road
Mentmore Crescent
Regent Street
Edward Street

Footways maintenance:

Croft Green
Oakwell Close
West Parade

The County Council was also proposing to undertake design works during the current financial year in advance of re-surfacing Luton Road. The Town Clerk had requested further information on the nature of these design works and copies of any response would be circulated to all Members in due course.

163 HIGHWAY LAND ADJOINING 2 CHURCHILL ROAD

The owner of number 2 Churchill Road had been experiencing nuisance problems on an area of Highway land adjacent to her property. The County Council had advised that it may be possible to remove the highway rights from the land to enable it to be sold to the property owner for incorporation into their garden but the applicant must first seek the support of this Council.

RESOLVED: that the matter be referred to the Councillors for Watling Ward who be authorised, in conjunction with the Vice-Chairman, to determine the Council's view following a site visit

164 PROPOSED PHARMACY, 64 LANGDALE ROAD

Members were pleased to note that the Pharmaceutical Applications Panel had granted the application for a pharmacy to operate at 64 Langdale Road in accordance with supported representations made by this Council.

165 CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 2005

The Town Clerk recalled that, following the presentation by Mr Peter Jones, the District Council's Corporate Service Manager for the Environment, the Committee had agreed to work with the District Council in the implementation of this Act and the new powers for fixed penalty notices for certain environmental offences.

Officers had been meeting with District colleagues to this end and they had agreed a procedure whereby Town Council staff would have a supporting role (providing evidence, joining in publicity and promotions) to the District Council's new enforcement team who would deal exclusively with fixed penalty notices.

The Act enabled greater powers for the control of dogs and the District Executive would be considering proposals for blanket dog control orders throughout the District. These orders would not, however, cover banning dogs from any areas and Members agreed that it may

well be desirable for this Council to make its own order banning dogs from enclosed children's playgrounds.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk report further on this aspect of the matter once the District Council had determined its own policy.

166 VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNS

The County Council had confirmed that the request for vehicle activated speed warning signs in Frenchs Avenue and Brewers Hill Road had been approved subject to this Council carrying out consultations with any residential properties adjacent to the proposed locations.

Members agreed that the most convenient locations would be in Brewers Hill Road, eastbound outside the recreation area and in Frenchs Avenue, westbound near the proposed new recreation area, thereby ensuring that no residential properties would be affected.

167 STREET NAMING

The developers of the second phase of development at Bramley Court off Luton Road had proposed three alternative new street names but Members felt that all of these could lead to confusion with other existing street names.

RESOLVED: that it be suggested the latest phase of the development be named "Kings Oak Court".

168 DUNSTABLE CEMETERY

a) Purchase of Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Administration and Finance Manager reported on the increasing number of burial plots for which the Exclusive Rights of Burial were being purchased in advance. In some sections of the Cemetery pre-purchased graves accounted for over fifty percent of the available space. As all pre-purchased graves needed to be initially excavated, backfilled and marked, this practice was also placing a heavy burden upon Cemetery staff. It was noted that adjoining authorities no longer permitted the advance purchase of Exclusive Rights. She also reported that a Dunstable resident had applied to pre-purchase thirteen burial plots.

RESOLVED: that this Council no longer accepts applications for pre-purchase of Exclusive Rights of Burial in advance of an interment with immediate effect.

b) Memorials

The Administration and Finance Manager presented full details of proposed repair works to damaged memorials as discussed at the last meeting. It had not been possible to make contact with the owners of all the affected graves nor the owners of all those graves for which adverse reports had been received concerning the recent "topple testing" procedures.

RESOLVED: that following the publication of relevant notices, a Bishops Faculty be sought in respect of all the relevant repair works and in those cases where ownership cannot be traced, the Council undertake the repairs.

169 ALLOTMENTS

It was noted that staff were continuing to monitor the cultivation of allotment plots and where any remained uncultivated for no reasonable cause, notice to quit would be served and the plots offered to persons on the waiting list.

170 PRIORY GARDENS

Members received a report of the Culture and Regeneration Manager on current work and activities taking place in Priory Gardens and were pleased to note that the new lighting scheme was complete.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported on a meeting held with representatives of the District Council and Police at which a strategy for combating problems associated with nuisance behaviour within the Gardens was agreed. This Council would be carrying out works to increase the coverage of CCTV and would be planting brambles in one particular vulnerable area to discourage people from congregating there.

171 GROVE HOUSE GARDENS

The Committee received information on events and activities taking place within the Gardens during the summer months. The major landscaping works associated with the Grove Theatre had started that day. Members also agreed that the opportunity should be taken during the landscaping works to adjust the fencing at the new children's play area in order to provide more space for families and picnics.

172 TOWN CENTRE MAINTENANCE

Members noted recent work undertaken by the town centre team and expressed pleasure at the quality of the recently installed town centre planting particularly in High Street North and The Square.

173 RIDGEWAY AVENUE PLAY AREA

The proposals of selected play equipment companies for the refurbishment of the Ridgeway Avenue play area had been presented to local schools who had indicated a clear preferred scheme.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the receipt of appropriate references, the Town Clerk be authorised to accept the quotation for the supply of the preferred design.

174 BUS SHELTERS

The Culture and Regeneration Manager submitted a report on progress in implementing the replacement programme for bus shelters and Members approved a long list of sites which had been agreed with the Police and the relevant highway authorities. The County Council's contractor would now be pricing the list in order to establish how many shelters could be provided in the current financial year, subject to the grant of planning permission in respect of new advertisement-type shelters.

175 RECREATION GROUNDS

a) General

The Performance and Environment Manager submitted a report on recent work undertaken by the Recreation Ground Team and highlighted problems of vandalism at Luton Road Recreation Ground and issues relating to consumption of alcohol by young people at Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED: that South Bedfordshire District Council be requested to designate Bennett Memorial Recreation Ground as an 'Alcohol Free Zone'

b) Staff Facilities

Following the closure of the former depot in 2004, the Recreation Grounds Team were relocated to the changing room facilities at the Downside Community Centre. This was, however, presenting a number of operational and health and safety issues which needed to be addressed. Members agreed that a permanent solution needed to be established urgently.

RESOLVED: that Officers be requested to investigate and to report back with costing on alternative options including closing the football changing facilities and using the area solely for staff facilities/mess room, utilising storage facilities at "The Place" with a possible extension and renting an industrial unit.

c) Disability Discrimination Act

Members noted the results of an access audit at all Recreation Grounds and at the Cemetery undertaken by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. A number of minor recommendations had been received which would be implemented as part of normal work programmes. The Executive Officer of the Disability Resource Centre had inspected the various sports changing facilities and had advised that, as the facilities at Newton Recreation Ground were fully accessible, the Council was meeting its obligations under the Act.

d) Water Usage

Members noted that Three Valleys Water had confirmed that the current hosepipe ban related to domestic customers only. However it was a possibility that restrictions could be placed on public authorities at a later date, particularly if a drought order was introduced and Members felt that the Council should take a lead in conserving water supplies.

The Performance and Environment Manager reported on alternative methods for storing rain water at the various Council sites.

RESOLVED: that the introduction of rain water storage facilities in time for the next growing season be investigated and a further report be submitted to the next meeting.

176 BLOWS DOWN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the Management Committee held on 17th October 2005.

177 TIDY CAMPAIGN

The Committee noted the Minutes of the meeting of TIDY held on 31st May 2006.

178 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A resident of Canesworde Road thanked the Council for the quality of the current town centre planting displays but expressed concerns relating to the need for additional bus shelters in the Beecroft and Downside areas. She also commented on the desirability of woodland burials and encouraging the donation of bodies for scientific research.