

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 23RD JANUARY 2006

Present: Councillor A J Fairbairn (Town Mayor), Councillor Mrs C M Gresham (Deputy Town Mayor); Councillor P J Boatwright (Chairman), Councillor P E Russell (Vice-Chairman), Councillors R R Anklesaria, J Freeman, A E Green, B Ralley and T A W Stock with Mr R Walden (Town Clerk), Mrs H A Hupton (Deputy Town Clerk), Mrs R G Smith (Administration and Finance Manager) and Mr P Jones (Corporate Services Manager (Environment) South Beds District Council)

Apologies for Absence: Councillors M Jones and Mrs A Stock

21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th November 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23 CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT ACT

Mr Peter Jones gave a detailed presentation on the new powers available to District Councils and (to a lesser extent) Town and Parish Councils for dealing with environmental offences including the ability to issue fixed penalty notices. Most of the new provisions would come into effect in April 2006 and the Government would be issuing detailed guidance on its implementation shortly. The new powers included the ability to gate problem alleyways, greater ability to deal speedily with abandoned vehicles, additional litter powers particularly relating to public land not in the ownership of the relevant authority as well as measures to deal with dog control, fly tipping and graffiti.

Any authority wishing to issue fixed penalty notices under these provisions would need to authorise in writing either the relevant employees or some 'other person' duly authorised. This category could include police community support officers or parking attendants employed by Vinci. Mr Jones discussed with Members the practical implications of this aspect of the new powers.

RESOLVED: that the officers be authorised to continue to discuss with District Council colleagues ways in which the Town Council can continue to support it in the effective implementation of the new powers

24 PLANS SUB-COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meetings of Plans Sub-Committee held on 22nd November, 12th December 2005 and 3rd January 2006 (see Appendix 'A') be received.

Following the presentation by Simon Earles of the draft London Luton Project 2030 Master Plan at the previous meeting, Members had deferred approving final comments on the scheme until this meeting.

Mr Raymond Harris, the Council's advisor on aviation and transportation matters, attended the meeting and provided further advice to the Committee on the relevant issues.

RESOLVED: that the following comments be approved for submission to London Luton Airport:

i) The Town Council offers its support for the general principle of airport expansion outlined in the draft Master Plan, subject to the further comments set out below, as the proposals will provide substantial economic benefits for the whole conurbation and will be a major contributor to the new jobs required under the Growth Agenda.

ii) Of the four proposed options, the Council would favour, subject to point iii) below, option D as this will have the lowest environmental impact upon populated areas, particularly from aircraft noise.

iii) Support for runway option D is subject to the imposition of an appropriate planning condition ensuring the existing runway is only used in case of emergencies and that controlled descent approaches are made mandatory in order to minimise the noise impact on the local area.

iv) Should further expansions of the Controlled Air Space be deemed necessary to facilitate this option, the Town Council would, in principle, support such a move although it is acknowledged that the recent extension to the Airspace (as supported by the Town Council) could well be sufficient for that purpose.

v) The Town Council would welcome and support any measures to encourage the continuing trend for Airlines using the Airport to introduce modern fuel efficient and quieter aircraft.

vi) The Town Council would welcome encouragement being given to airport-related employers to locate throughout the conurbation wherever practicable and not to be contained wholly within the immediate locality of the Airport in order to ensure that all areas of the conurbation share in the economic benefits of the development.

vii) The Town Council's primary concerns with the proposals relate to issues of public transport access to the Airport. The draft Master Plan makes extravagant unsubstantiated claims of the benefits of the Translink busway system in providing access to the Airport for employees, particularly those living within the Growth Area. No studies have yet been undertaken to indicate that an extension of the Translink guideway beyond Blackburn Road into the Growth Area is practicable or feasible and the Town Council strongly contends that this is not the case. In any event the information supplied with the draft Master Plan suggests that only 10-15% of Airport employees live within the Dunstable/Houghton Regis area at the moment. For many of these the present Translink proposal does not provide an attractive or even viable means of accessing the Airport.

viii) Catchment area information contained in the draft Master Plan clearly indicates that the majority of potential passengers to an expanded airport cannot be served by existing public transport networks. This particularly applies to those to the west and north west of the Airport in areas such as Oxford, Milton Keynes and Northampton.

Increased passenger numbers from these areas must be provided with an alternative means of accessing the Airport if they are not to be forced to travel by private car adding further to Dunstable's present appalling traffic congestion. The Council accordingly contends that it is essential for the Airport Authority to press the transportation authorities to explore urgently the possibility of a non-road link to Milton Keynes with the further possible tie-on to the Chiltern rail network serving Oxford and beyond.

ix) Whilst the Town Council has major concerns over surface access to the Airport it remains in general support of the principles of expansion and hopes that it will be consulted further on the detailed development of the draft Master Plan.

26 LUTON/DUNSTABLE AND HOUGHTON REGIS LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2006-11 (LTP2)

The Town Clerk reported that on 14th December, 14 Members of the Council had attended a detailed presentation on the draft LTP2 from a representative of Luton Borough Council which was responsible for preparing the plan covering the whole of the Luton/Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbation. The County Council was a partner in preparing the plan and also had sole responsibility for preparing the plan covering the rest of Bedfordshire. Once approved, the LTP formed the basis of Government highways and transportation revenue funding and capital spending approvals. Previously funding under the joint LTP had initially been allocated to Luton who had agreed the "share" to be allocated to the County Council for Dunstable and Houghton Regis based upon the relative populations. From 2006/07 the situation had changed and the County Council would be receiving direct funding from Government for all its administrative area arising from both Bedfordshire LTPs. It was understood that the County Council had received a maintenance settlement of £500,000 for Dunstable and Houghton Regis for the coming year.

Copies of the full LTP had been circulated and the following additional information had been provided at the presentation:

- The Sustrans national cycle network where it runs through the conurbation would be used as a spine from which more cycleway improvements would be undertaken
- The Inspector who heard the Translink Inquiry had issued his report to the Secretary of State who was expected to announce a final decision on the scheme by Easter
- M1 improvements Junctions 10-13: the Highways Agency was expected to announce a preferred scheme shortly
- Dunstable Northern Bypass: the Highways Agency was due to publish a Public Consultation Summary of Responses Report in summer 2006
- Luton Northern Bypass: the second round of stakeholder consultations would take place in mid February 2006
- FirstGroup had been awarded the contract for the Thameslink service from 1st April and agreed works under the contract would start in the next 2-3 years.
- Link road from Boscombe Road to Dunstable Northern Bypass, this scheme was likely to fall outside the £5m ceiling for projects under the LTP and the County Council was exploring other funding routes. It had appointed consultants to investigate 2 alternative routes for the link road to meet the Bypass either at Thorn roundabout or at the new M1 Junction 11A

RESOLVED: that the following suggested amendments to the draft LTP2 be forwarded to Luton Borough Council and Bedfordshire County Council:

- i) Re-enforcing the essential nature of the Boscombe Road/ Bypass link in ensuring maximum benefits from the Bypass.
- ii) Preparing in advance of the Bypass measures to enable a heavy lorry ban in the town centre and speed restrictions in residential areas including adding west Dunstable to the areas where 20 mph restrictions are to be considered, to ensure that such measures can be implemented at the same time as the Bypass and the Boscombe Road/Bypass link road are completed and opened to traffic.
- iii) Formally adopting the link road from Kingsway to the White Lion Retail Park as open to all classes of traffic.
- iv) Ensuring the package of measures in the Plan recognises the existing appalling traffic congestion in the Dunstable area and includes measures to improve the situation for the private motorist and does not concentrate solely on public transport
- v) Ensuring the principal councils procure adequate funding to deal with the serious situation of inadequate bus shelters throughout Dunstable.

27 TRANSLINK: OPEN SPACE AT DOG KENNEL DOWN

The Town Clerk recalled that Plans Sub-Committee at its meeting on 1st November 2005 had approved a number of objections to the intention of Luton Borough Council, to replace public open space affected by the Translink scheme at Dog Kennel Down, Houghton Regis with new public open space on part of the former railway embankment between Dog Kennel Path and High Street North plus either (a) new open space at Blue Waters, Houghton Regis or (b) The Paddocks, Dunstable. Similar objections had been lodged by South Beds District and Houghton Regis Town Councils.

The Secretary of State for Transport had now determined that these objections would be heard at a public local inquiry. Initially this had been proposed to be held on 23rd March but, following representations from Luton Borough Council had now been deferred until a date in May and at a venue to be advised. Luton Council was required to serve by 1st March a statement of its reasons for proposing the changes and listing any documents to which it may be referring at the Inquiry. Each objector was then required to respond by submitting its own statement.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk be authorised to prepare this Council's Statement of Case following consultation with the Chairman and to represent the Council at the proposed Public Inquiry.

28 DUNSTABLE CEMETERY EXTENSION

The Government Office for the Eastern Region (GOEast) had advised that there had been 3 objections to the confirmation of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) made by the District Council in respect of that part of the private Victoria Allotments required for a cemetery extension. GOEast would be discussing with the objectors and the Council whether it would be appropriate to consider the objections by way of written representations or at a public inquiry.

Whilst the CPO process had been proceeding the Town Council had continued to acquire the relevant parcels of land by agreement. Most parcels had now either been purchased or terms had been agreed and this had taken up most of the Council's cemetery extension

reserve fund. It was therefore proposed that permission be sought to borrow funds to complete the necessary purchases and meet the cost of laying out the cemetery extension. Whilst taking out a loan it was also suggested that the sum be sufficient to cover the cost of the essential re-roofing of the cemetery buildings referred to at the last meeting of the Committee and improved messroom and compound facilities.

The relevant sums were:

Item	Estimated cost £
Roadways	60,000
Landscaping	50,000
Archaeology	7,000
CPO costs (if necessary)	5,000
Land purchases	100,000
Building works	<u>80,000</u>
	<u>302,000</u>

The cost of loan charges in a full year would be approximately £24,000 and if the loan was taken out in the second half of the financial year, those charges could replace the provision in the Estimates in recent years for a contribution to the cemetery extension fund. Funding for future years' charges would therefore need to be considered at the same time next year as part of the normal consideration of the Council's budget. If the loan was approved, details of the various schemes would be reported to Committee for approval in the normal way.

RESOLVED: that Finance and General Purposes Committee be recommended to authorise an application for loan consent in the sum of £302,000.

29 RESTRICTION OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN PUBLIC PLACES

At the last meeting the Committee had been invited to suggest any areas which it wished to be included in an extension of the areas designated by the District Council where the consumption of alcohol was restricted in public places. Members did not suggest any new areas at that time as all the relevant areas under this Council's control were already covered by the relevant Order. The District Council had now given formal notice of its intention to make a new order covering several areas within the District. The only area in Dunstable was the surrounds of Holts Court sheltered housing and the adjoining footpath (Victoria Close). There had been clear evidence of nuisances associated with alcohol consumption in this location.

RESOLVED: that the proposal be supported.

30 STREET NAMING: FORMER EASTGATE SERVICE STATION, CHURCH STREET

RESOLVED: that no objections be raised to the Developers' proposal that this flats development be named 'Eastgate Court'.

31 NORTHERN BYPASS AND LINK ROAD TO BOSCOMBE ROAD

Members noted Minute 1 of the minutes of the Town Centre Management Committee held on 10th January 2006.

The County Council had asked whether Members had any suggestions to make as to a title for the link road project which, confusingly, was now one of three 'link road projects' being considered at the moment. The others were the Northern Bypass which the Highways

Agency now referred to as 'A5-M1 Link Road' and the link road between Kingsway and Boscombe Road, which had the name of Bedford Way allocated to it but could not be formally named as it was yet to be adopted

RESOLVED: that it be suggested to the County Council that the proposed link road from Boscombe Road to the Northern Bypass be known as 'Woodside Connection'

32 THE BEaR PROJECT

Members received and noted proposals of Bedfordshire County Council to develop an integrated waste management facility to be known as BEaR (the Bedfordshire Energy and Recycling Project). Further consultations on the project would be undertaken in the spring.

33 M1 WIDENING – JUNCTIONS 10-13

RESOLVED: that the announcement by the Highways Agency of the Preferred Route for this scheme, details of which had been circulated to all Members, be noted.

34 CEMETERY AND ALLOTMENTS

The Committee received a detailed report of the Administration and Finance Manager on current activities at the Cemetery and the various Allotment sites. Members were pleased to note that, following a recent staff appointment, the team was now at full complement.

35 TOWN CENTRE MAINTENANCE

The Committee received a detailed report of the Culture and Regeneration Manager on current maintenance issues in Priory Gardens and Grove House Gardens and within the town centre generally.

RESOLVED: i) that, in order to facilitate pathway improvements in Grove House Gardens in connection with the Grove Theatre, the memorial tree to Diana, Princess of Wales, be relocated but as close as possible to its original position

ii) that a further report be submitted to the next meeting on alternative secure locations for the wooden eagle sculpture once outstanding repairs had been completed.

36 BUS SHELTERS

Members were delighted to hear that the County Council had advised that capital resources had been identified from the Local Transport Plan for the replacement of bus shelters in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis previously covered by the Adshel contract. Work would take place during 2006/7 but may overrun into the next financial year. Adshel was willing to accept future cleaning and maintenance responsibility for those shelters which contained advertising panels but the Town Council would need to accept responsibility for the others.

Detailed discussions would be taking place shortly with Adshel and the relevant highway authorities and bus operators to prepare a detailed schedule of proposed replacements. Members agreed that the Dunstable Association of Senior Citizens would be consulted prior to a final decision being taken.

It was hoped that funding would also allow the provision of some limited additional shelters and it was agreed that priority for these should be in High Street North (a second shelter opposite Nicholas Way – if feasible), High Street North opposite Ashton Middle School and in Mayfield Road opposite the shopping parade.

The Committee also received a report from the special Sub-Committee (Councillors Green, Ralley and Stock) who had met on 29th November to consider the condition of the bus shelter in West Street opposite the junction with Meadway. A Member had been observing this shelter over a period of two weeks and had observed neither bus users nor other persons who were misusing the shelter. In these circumstances Members felt it would not be appropriate to remove a facility without further clearer evidence of the problem. Members also discussed a request from a resident for the removal of a bus shelter in Meadway adjacent to pedestrian access to Spoodell. The present shelter was in an unsatisfactory and possible unsafe condition and should be removed but it was agreed that this should be replaced with a new shelter as part of the above replacement programme.

37 STAFFING

Members were delighted to note that Mr Ken McGarrigle, the Town Centre Maintenance Officer, had returned to work at the beginning of December following his serious knee injury.

38 RECREATION GROUNDS

The Committee received a detailed report of the Performance and Environment Manager on current issues relating to the various recreation grounds.

RESOLVED: i) that the BMX Club be urged to submit a formal business plan for the management of the BMX track in Peppercorn Park by the next meeting of this Committee in order to demonstrate their commitment to the project

ii) that on occasions where a referee cancels a football match due to ground conditions such as frost or water logging, the match fee shall be refundable in those circumstances but not for any other reason without prior notice to the Council.

39 DOWNSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Committee considered a suggestion of Community Development Committee that football changing facilities at this ground be withdrawn in favour of the area being used for storage and mess facilities for the recreations ground team.

Whilst Members were very concerned at the current condition of the changing area which was in need of significant investment and were sympathetic to the need to provide adequate staff facilities, they were unable to agree to the removal of the facilities during the current playing season.

Officers were asked to present further information on the cost implications of alternative schemes to address the situation to enable the two Committees to jointly agree an appropriate way forward.

40 REPORTS OF OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Committee received minutes of the TIDY campaign held on 23rd November 2005 and observations on various matters included in the agenda supplied by the public transport representative of the Association of Senior Citizens.

41 2006/07 BUDGET

The Committee approved revised estimates for the financial year 2005/06 and draft estimates for 2006/07 together with appropriate increases in fees and charges for submission to Finance and General Purposes Committee.