

Scrutiny Standing Panel Agenda



Register of Development Proposals Task and Finish Panel Tuesday, 26th July, 2005

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Zoe Folley, Democratic Services Assistant
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Members:

Councillors F Maclaine (Chairman), K Angold-Stephens (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D Borton, Mrs J Davis, A Green, J Hart, D Kelly, Mrs J Lea, Mrs S Perry, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs P K Rush, G Stollar, Mrs J H Whitehouse and M Woollard

<p>PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND</p>
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1. APOLOGIES

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Head of Research and Democratic Services) In considering whether to declare a personal or a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked to pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest in any matter before an Overview and Scrutiny Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE (Pages 3 - 8)

The Panel is asked to consider the Terms of Reference for the review.

The Panel is also asked to note background information produced by Councillor Angold Stephens.

Both documents are attached.

5. PARKING POLICY - RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

District Housing and County Highways Officers have been invited to attend the meeting to discuss exiting policy and procedures in relation to residential parking.

6. ESTABLISHMENT OF REGISTER FOR SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The Panel is asked to consider the nature of questions to be put to Members in order to identify their proposals in respect of the proposed register of development proposals , parking in residential areas and the repair of roads and footpaths.

7. SITE VISITS

The Panel is asked to consider the need for arrangements for site visits to facilitate their consideration of parking policy in residential areas.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Second meeting –22 or 23 August 2005 – Whole day site visit.

Subject to the outcome of agenda item 7 the second meeting will consist of a series of sites visits to locations affected by parking policy decisions in the District. Two possible dates have been proposed for this meeting. They are the 22 and 23 August 2005. The Panel are asked to consider these dates and indicate a preference. It is anticipated that the meeting will take a full day. More specific details will be made available in due course.

Third meeting – 30 August 2005 7.30pm in Committee Room 1

Fourth meeting – to be agreed.

TERMS OF REFERENCE – TASK AND FINISH

Title: Register of Development Proposals (incorporating roads/pavements and parking in residential areas).
Status: Task and finish
Terms of Reference: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To consider and recommend on ways that Members can formally register matters of concern within the Wards they represent.2. To devise a procedure whereby necessary or serious matters of concern can be raised for inclusion within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's future work programme.3. To investigate and review the Council's existing policies for parking in residential areas and to recommend any changes in policy necessary to ensure equality of treatment across the district.4. To investigate and review the process by which roads and pavements are identified for maintenance works, then logged and prioritised and to put forward recommendations, if necessary, for onward discussion with the Highway Authority.
Source: <p>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2005/06 Item Numbers 5, 21 and 29</p>
Reporting Deadlines: <p>Final report to be ready for Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8 December 2005</p>

Work Programme 2005/6

First Meeting – Tuesday 26th July 2005 (7.30 p.m.)

1. Agree Terms of Reference and scope work to be undertaken.
2. Interview Housing Officers and County Highways' Officers to establish existing policy and procedures in relation to parking in residential areas (i.e. not commercial centres, transport hubs etc) and start to understand matters in relation to Terms of Reference (4).
3. Agree the nature of questions to be put to all Members of the Council in order to identify their proposals in respect of the register, parking in residential areas or the repair of roads and footpaths.
4. Consider the need for and if agreed the arrangements for site visits within the district and elsewhere and in particular take into account:
 - Locations where permission for parking has been given;
 - Locations where permission for parking has been refused;
 - Locations where parking decisions have been appealed to the Housing Appeals Panel.

Second meeting – whole day site visits Monday 22nd or Tuesday 23rd August.

5. Site visits take place and Members of the Panel note views/issues they wish to follow up.

Third meeting – Tuesday 30 August (7.30 p.m.)

6. Formal meeting:
 - To debate and agree on matters which arise from the site visits (parking in residential areas);
 - To consider, assess and prioritise comments received from Members in response to the consultation (all matters);
 - To identify any issues on which further advice or guidance might be necessary (all matters).

Fourth meeting – date to be agreed:

7. Start to draw up Panel recommendations in relation to each of the Terms of Reference and agreed process for further consultation.

Fifth and possibly final meeting:

8. Continue to refine final report and recommendations of the Panel taking account of any issues, which arise from the second consultation.

Item	Priority	Report Deadline
<p>Chairman:</p> <p>Chairman: Councillor Fergus Maclaine</p> <p>Vice-Chairman: Councillor Kenneth Angold-Stephens</p>		

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PARKING IN EFDC RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Background.

The Debden Estate was built on Garden Estate principles with large areas of green sward to provide an open aspect and areas for recreation. The roads were relatively narrow as are a number of the roads in other estates within the district and some other residential areas.

When the estate was designed car ownership was at a low level and it was never envisaged that car ownership would ever reach anything like current levels. The situation now is that car ownership is averaging more than one per family and there are no longer sufficient parking spaces on the roads or in designated parking areas for the number of vehicles.

Government initiatives to encourage more use of public transport is unlikely to change the situation, at least not until the cost of ownership becomes too prohibitive.

The Council's policy to date has been to try to ease the situation in places where land is available but, laudably, to preserve the green spaces as far as possible. It therefore strictly enforces guidelines regarding vehicle crossovers, for instance, despite more and more requests, some for quite compelling reasons such as a resident's disability.

Current Situation.

Since residents are unable to park reasonably near to their properties due to congestion, narrow roads or no off-street parking they have, in many areas taken to parking on pavements (partially or wholly) and on the grass verges which, particularly in the winter months, quickly become rutted and muddy and the grass surface completely destroyed. This of course compromises the very purpose for which they were set up and also looks very unsightly.

At one time the Council attempted to repair damaged verges but have now virtually given up because the task has become too great and it is clearly a waste of resources if they are immediately destroyed again. Equally enforcement is piecemeal at best for lack of resources, nor is it helpful to residents to be driven off their road if there is nowhere else for them to go. It has become a constant source of aggravation and complaints from residents and it is beholden on the Council to respond as best it can.

Some work has been done on Council Estates to create more parking spaces but a closer study might reveal where further progress can be made, and little or no attempt to solve this problem has been carried out in other parts of the District.

Whilst this report has highlighted the Debden Estate it applies to several other estates as well as hot-spots in other parts of the District.

By ignoring the problem the Council is perceived by its electorate as ineffective and/or burying its head in the sand.

A Way Forward

Nobody wishes to see a loss of green spaces but equally no-one wants to see the destruction of the verges and the unsightly mess that results.

It would appear that a compromise may be the only way forward and even though it can not provide a complete solution it might ease the problem in the worst affected areas and residents will at least feel the Council is trying to respond to their needs.

It is proposed that a survey is carried out in the District to ascertain whether actions could be taken to ease the problem in some areas by a number of potential solutions, for instance:

- Road widening to permit some parking where none is possible at present whilst minimizing the loss of green space and preserving pedestrians right of way
- Creation of parking bays where loss of green space would not be seen to damage the immediate environment
- Provision of grills through which grass can grow but which can support the weight of cars (this has been the solution used by other Councils).

Such a survey could only be carried out in a phased way and prioritized. For this reason it is proposed that the Debden Estate is targeted as the first priority area.

It is recognized that other initiatives may also help, such as time restrictions to stop commuter parking in residential streets, residents parking permits and stricter enforcement after the new provisions have been implemented. Some of these measures have been or are being considered near to High Street locations as part of an ongoing parking survey.

Clearly this will not solve all the problems but, carefully planned, it should be possible to create a more realistic parking regime without undue loss of green spaces whilst preserving the remaining spaces in a good condition.

Costs

The costs of implementing this are likely to be significant and therefore need quantifying before any decision can be made. It will also have to be phased across a number of years.

Proposal

If members feel this should be investigated it is proposed that it is taken up by O & S 2 and referred to PWG 2 for a feasibility study.