

CABINET MINUTE ON TASK AND FINISH REPORT - 10 APRIL 2006

The Chairman of the Register of Development Proposals Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel presented a report in relation to parking in residential areas. The Cabinet were informed that the Panel had attempted to regularise the Council's approach to parking issues throughout the District. The Panel had offered suggestions for the local customisation section of the Highways Local Service Agreement for the Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder, Head of Environmental Services and Essex County Council as the Highway Authority to consider. The Panel had also considered it important for the Council to monitor the operation of the Local Service Agreement, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that consideration should be given to the establishment of a Local Forum for the discussion of highways issues.

The Panel had considered parking to be a particularly important issue within the District and had proposed that the residents' parking schemes for Epping, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill, which the Cabinet had approved in 2003, should be implemented without delay and take priority over traffic calming measures. The Panel felt that the current crossover arrangements should be strengthened, and that their impact upon the existing street scene should also be considered. Finally, the Panel had proposed that the enforcement of parking schemes and crossovers, by both the Council and the Highways Agency, should be performed in a more pro-active manner.

The Head of Environmental Services reported that the Highways Local Service Agreement had not yet been finalised, as further discussions were necessary with regard to the customised sections. There was a further meeting scheduled in the near future with the Head of Highways and Transportation at Essex County Council. The Cabinet agreed that a letter should be written to the County Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, signed by the Leader of the Council, requesting that the Local Service Agreement be dealt with as a matter of urgency. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that the County Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation should be invited to attend a forthcoming Overview and Scrutiny meeting; the Leader of Council agreed that the invitation should be incorporated in the letter to be written by the Head of Environmental Services.

The Head of Environmental Services reported that no local forum currently existed and reminded the Cabinet that the Council had representation on the West Essex Joint Member Panel that considered Highways issues. It was suggested that the local forum should be a member body to support the Council's representative on the West Essex Joint Member Panel, however the Cabinet only agreed to approve the establishment of a local forum with no recommendation on its composition.

The Head of Finance clarified for the Cabinet that the agreed budget for District funded traffic and parking schemes was in the sum of £200,000 per annum. However, funding had been brought forward into 2006/07 for parking reviews and associated traffic management measures, thus the current budget profile was:

- 2006/07 - £490,000;
- 2007/08 - £0;
- 2008/09 - £200,000; and
- 2009/10 - £200,000.

RESOLVED:

Loss of Highways Agency:

(1) That, although highways issues are now a matter for Essex County Council (ECC) Highways, an interest be retained by the Council in parking issues and securing subsequent improvements for residents;

(2) That the operation of the Highways Local Service Agreement (LSA) be routinely monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

(3) That the establishment of a local forum to discuss highways issues and managing a database of priorities, particularly parking schemes, within the District be approved;

(4) That, in order to notify members of planned works in their area, the Highways schedules of works for the District be published in the Members' Bulletin;

The terms of the LSA:

(5) That the Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance be authorised to discuss the non-specific nature of the LSA with the Head of Environmental Services and ECC Highways in order to decide whether the following points should be raised in the local customisation section:

(a) Paragraph 4.1 *County Routes* - The need for an additional sentence to read 'In particular the Highways Authority will consult with the District Council on major roads when up-grading or re-surfacing works are to be carried out so that the issue of on-street parking may be considered with a view to improving the flow of traffic, providing safe provision for pedestrians, and protecting the environment';

(b) Paragraph 4.2 *Local Roads* - The need for an additional sentence after '...respective Councils' to read 'This includes considering changes to the road lay-out to improve on-street parking provision if thought desirable by the District Council';

(c) Paragraph 4.3 the last bullet point referring to items not included in the LSA merely says 'On street parking', this needs clarification e.g. on-street parking management and enforcement regulations';

(d) The need to address Highways approach to enforcement in the LSA, e.g. where residents are crossing pavements illegally to park on their front drives.

Residents Parking Schemes:

(6) That the Residents Parking Schemes in Epping, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill, approved by the Cabinet in 2003, be progressed as a matter of urgency and take priority over traffic calming measures except when it may be more cost-effective as part of a traffic management scheme which includes parking considerations.

(7) That, in response to concerns expressed by residents and Councillors, wider parking reviews and residential parking schemes be funded and carried out systematically across the District, especially in roads close to areas where approved parking schemes had been implemented;

(8) That, in order to progress parking schemes on Housing land as soon as possible, Housing Services liaise with ECC Highways and up-date their database accordingly;

(9) That the sequence of decisions leading to highways improvements on Housing land be reviewed with ECC Highways by Housing Services, and in particular at what stage residents should be consulted;

(10) That the annual budget for District funded traffic and parking schemes (currently £200,000pa) be maintained until the funding division between ECC and EFDC for such improvements becomes clearer;

(11) That a database and recommendations be maintained by Environmental Services on non-housing land with priorities set along the lines of those for Housing land and that the priorities be decided by the Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance in liaison with the Head of Environmental Services;

Cross-overs:

(12) That the maximum length of a cross over be maintained at 6 metres

(13) That the specification for cross-overs on Housing land include a requirement for surfacing to be porous and bound, but not shingle, so that surface water will not drain onto the road or the drains, and any remaining open area be landscaped to minimise the impact on the street scene;

(14) That Housing Services guidelines include a statement that when cross-overs are considered the overall impact on the street scene be considered;

(15) That ECC Highways be encouraged by negotiation through the Joint Member Panel to adopt the proposals outlined in resolutions (12) and (13) above;

Enforcement:

(16) That ECC Highways and the District Council be more pro-active in enforcing parking regimes and cross-overs to avoid damage to kerbs, pavements, statutory undertakings, verges and greenswards preferably through persuasion rather than legal proceedings or physical barriers, which should only be used as a last resort.

(17) That the relevant Portfolio Holders monitor the progress made with the recommendations and report on a regular basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and

Correspondence:

(18) That the Head of Environmental Services draft a letter to the ECC Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, to be signed by the Leader of the Council, requesting:

(a) that the LSA be dealt with as a matter of urgency; and

(b) that the ECC Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation be invited to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons for Decision:

The Task and Finish Panel felt that parking issues had not had their deserved attention and that this needed correcting if severe gridlock or congestion on some primary and local roads were to be avoided in the future. Parking was important to residents, both at their homes and workplaces, but many roads had already exceeded saturation level in terms of parking. The Panel felt that action had to be taken otherwise the Council risked an ever-deteriorating environment as well as serious public discontent.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To implement some or none of the Task and Finish Panel's recommendations.