

**ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**BURY ST EDMUNDS AREA WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 30 November 2010 at 5.00 pm  
in Conference Chamber West (F1R09), West Suffolk House, Western Way,  
Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor R D Everitt (Chairman)  
Councillors Mrs Alexander, Ereira-Guyer, Farmer, Hale, Jones,  
Mrs Mildmay-White, Oliver, F J Warby and Mrs P A Warby  
(substituting for Rout)

BY INVITATION: Councillor Nettleton.

**32. Substitutes**

The Working Party was advised of the following substitution:-

Councillor Mrs P A Warby substituting for Councillor Rout.

**33. Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rout.

**34. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**35. Declarations of Interests**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

**36. Presentation from the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds**

The Working Party received a presentation from Colin Blumeanu of the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds who advised that the Theatre Royal had recently adopted a new mission statement which was *'learning from the past to inform the present and explore the future'*. He informed the Working Party that there had been 350 different performances held over the past year and in future they would be working with The Apex to ensure both organisations offered complimentary performances.

Members noted that the Theatre Royal currently worked with various organisations including the Borderline Personality Disorder, West Suffolk MIND, Costume Creators project with people with learning disabilities, primary and secondary schools and were currently investigating becoming a teaching organisation in consultation with the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin University, RADA, Cambridge University and the University of Exeter.

Mr Blumeanu advised that in September 2007 the Theatre Royal had generated income of £2,690,902, 21% of which was from public funding and 12% from philanthropic donations. He added that the Theatre Royal received £350,639 from the public purse; however they returned £370,170 to the Exchequer. The Theatre Royal currently employed 22 full-time posts, 42 part-time posts and 66 contracted staff. The Working Party noted that in 2009/2010 the Theatre Royal contributed £3,548,504 to the local economy.

Members stated that the touring performances were a great addition to the programme and were always well received by the community. The Working Party noted the contribution that the Theatre Royal made to the cultural environment offered by Bury St Edmunds, however queried how the Theatre would cope when grants from Suffolk County Council were reduced or removed. Mr Blumeanu stated that the Theatre Royal was preparing for a reduction in funding but was exploring alternative options, such as joint marketing with The Apex and more training opportunities.

The Working Party questioned whether the philanthropic funding was ad hoc or whether it was targeted. Mr Blumeanu stated that there was a structured approach to seeking philanthropic donations and if any Member was aware of a group who had not been contacted then perhaps discussions could be held at a later date. Members suggested that city bankers who had moved into the Borough could be contacted.

The Working Party thanked Mr Blumeanu for his informative presentation.

### **37. Town Centre Lettings/Vacancies: Update**

The Economic Development Manager reported on the latest position regarding the letting of the commercial element of the town centre.

Bury St Edmunds town centre had continued to thrive, with the current vacancy rate at 6.7% as opposed to 6.9% a month ago. The Working Party noted that Sports Direct, Quick Stitch, Runability, Sylwia Style, Odyssey 2 and C&B Beautiful had all opened recently, with Sahara opening on 6 December 2010, Ivory café bar opening on 10 December 2010 and Europa Maxi and Mozza Indian takeaway coming soon.

The Economic Development Manager highlighted that the annual business ratepayers event entitled 'Bury St Edmunds – bucking the trend' would be held in the Conference Chamber on 17 January 2011 at 5.30 pm and would include various guest speakers.

Members enquired why some units seemed to be let quicker than others, for example the old Monsoon premises had been empty for some time. The Economic Development Manager stated that non lettings were for numerous reasons. Councillor Ereira-Guyer requested that a report be presented to the next meeting of the Working Party providing more detailed information on those units which had been empty for a long period of time and had not apparently been let.

### **38. Options for Off-Street Borough Car Park Charges 2011/2012**

The Working Party considered Report B330 (previously circulated) which provided information on management initiatives to effect improvements to off-street car parks in Bury St Edmunds over the last year and to put forward proposals for alterations to parking charges for 2011/2012 for consideration. The report contained the following appendices:-

- A schedule of existing and proposed charges;
- B plan of St Andrew's car park showing annexe area where all day parking was proposed;
- C comparative season ticket prices for Borough car park; and
- D regional car park charges comparison.

In 2010/2011 many management initiatives were operated in the Borough's off-street car parks in Bury St Edmunds, which included:-

- (a) co-ordinating and traffic management for major events, such as the Christmas Fayre, funerals, Tour of Britain, Remembrance Sunday, 3 Regiment Army Air Corps Freedom of the Borough and the Royal visit;
- (b) car park maintenance, including re-surfacing and re-lining works at Robert Boby Way;
- (c) refining and improving traffic management strategies as a result of upward demand at the Cattle Market/arc car park;
- (d) providing traffic management and ambassadorial 'meet and greet' services for The Apex opening events;
- (e) creating a brand new parking facility for over 40 cars at School Yard West and planning for the implementation of a low emissions car park at School Yard East;
- (f) creating two electric car charging bays at the Parkway Multi-deck Car Park;
- (g) partnership project working with major Anglian Water works at Ram Meadow, which involved close parking management for 10 weeks leading up to Christmas 2009, de-silting works by Environment Agency at Ram Meadow and providing contractor parking for fitting out work at The Apex;
- (h) working with Highways on expansion to neighbourhood residents' parking schemes, including changes to Zones H and F, and introduction of Zones J and K and implementing charged parking on Cotton Lane; and
- (i) providing additional parking to meet demand at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre to include a new pay machine and signage.

Every year the Council undertakes a review of the parking charges for off-street car parks. Like other fees and charges there is a need to keep parking charges under review in order to maintain a good quality service and keep pace with rising costs. The variation in car park charges was also aimed at ensuring parking occurs in the most appropriate location for the length and type of stay. The proposed changes to the car park charges were suggested for implementation from 4 April 2011.

The Chairman advised that correspondence had been received from Andrew Hunter, Chairman of the Parking and Transportation Sub-Committee of the Bury St Edmunds Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which expressed concern that increasing town centre car parking charges would not be good for the town centre businesses, and they in turn were part of the community providing essential services and employment. The proposed additional costs could drive out local customers to out of town shops where parking was free or would use internet sales. It was felt that several years ago Bury St Edmunds had a tremendous competitive advantage in cheap and easy access to the town centre, which had been eroded over the years by development, traffic management and charging. The Chamber of Commerce also felt that parking policy should be seen as a way to attract customers to the town centre and

keep the heart of the community beating, not simply as a revenue raiser and means of traffic management.

Members raised concern that increasing car parking charges would remove the competitive edge that Bury St Edmunds has over neighbouring towns. Councillor Mrs Alexander stated that the car park by Tesco Express in Horringer Road had been investigated with the possibility of an extension; however she was unaware of the current situation regarding the proposals. The Engineer advised that investigations had been undertaken and a report would be brought to the Working Party with proposals.

Members raised concern that car parking charges should be more than the cheapest price for bus travel; however this was not the case for Ram Meadow car park as a return ticket from the Mildenhall Estate would cost more than the proposed parking charge for Ram Meadow. Support was received for the discounted season tickets, however, a view was expressed that there should be a higher discount and the tickets should be for a longer period of time.

The Working Party was in overall support of the proposed charges, however the effectiveness of a new 30 minute tariff in the St Andrews car park was questioned and the introduction of an overnight car park charge in the Cattle Market/arc car park. Concern was expressed that the overnight parking activities could not be enforced and if an officer was appointed to keep parking under review it would not be financially viable.

The Market and Car Parks Manager stated that the Borough Council only had powers to enforce car parks when a parking tariff was in force and, therefore, at present, when parking tariff ceased at 6.00 pm the enforcement role was lost. He added that with increased performances at The Apex the additional charge and subsequent enforcement would be advantageous to the Council.

Members raised concern that confusion had occurred regarding the underground car park at the Cattle Market/arc car park as signs stated that the doors would be locked. The Market and Car Parks Manager stated that when a performance was held at The Apex a sign would be displayed to state that the car park would close one hour after the end of the performance, however, digital scrolling signs were currently being investigated.

The Working Party's recommendations would be included in a composite report to Cabinet on 19 January 2011 along with the recommendations of the other two Area Working Parties, Haverhill and the Rural Area.



**RECOMMENDED:-**

***That, the proposals to alter the parking charges for 2011/2012 as contained in paragraphs 3.5, 4 and 5 of Report B330 be supported.***

*(Councillors Ereira-Guyer, Hale, F J Warby and Mrs P A Warby left the meeting at 6.30 pm.)*

### **39. St Andrews Street South Review of Access Arrangements**

The Working Party considered Report B331 (previously circulated) which proposed options to change the motor traffic use of St Andrews Street South between Woolhall Street and Risbygate Street, Bury St Edmunds following concerns.

The section of St Andrews Street South between Woolhall Street and Risbygate Street had increased in importance as a pedestrian area with the opening of arc as it acted as an interface between the original and extended retail areas of the town centre. In addition to carrying high pedestrian crossing flows, the section of road was also used as the main pick up/drop off location for the town bus services. The access arrangements had been in place for over 10 years and were reviewed prior to the completion of arc development, but no change was made.

Concerns had been raised about the use of the street; namely, the number of vehicles accessing the street illegally and the dominance of the motor vehicle in a street intended primarily for pedestrian use. In early 2010 a survey suggested that out of 650 motor vehicles using the street between 9.00 am and 5.30 pm nearly 30% were doing so illegally. An updated vehicle movement survey, undertaken on 29 November 2010, was circulated. The updated survey indicated a decrease in the total number of vehicles accessing the street, but the percentage of those doing so illegally remained much the same. The number of private cars using the street illegally showed a significant drop, with the main increase in illegal access by delivery vehicles. The figures indicated that the opening of Tesco Express had not had an impact on the number of vehicles accessing the street illegally.

There were a number of general approaches that could be taken to address concerns in the street:-

- (a) physical closure of the street;
- (b) part-time closure of the street;
- (c) physical access control; and
- (d) change the classes of vehicles that could use the street.

In March 2010 the Working Party considered a report on the section of St Andrews Street South (Report A578 referred) which set out a number of options for possible changes to the management of traffic. At this meeting Members had requested that the following options be further developed:-

- (1) simplify access arrangements;
- (2) allow unrestricted vehicular access;
- (3) entry features;
- (4) bus stop build-outs;
- (5) redesign layout; and
- (6) traffic lights.

Councillor Farmer enquired whether it was possible to ascertain the number of Fixed Penalty Notices which had been served on drivers accessing the road illegally and whether restricting deliveries in early morning or late afternoon would make a difference. The Engineer stated that the police were unable to narrow all Fixed Penalty Notices to the area as some drivers were given a warning and some drivers were dealt with for more serious offences. The pattern of deliveries was varied and, therefore, restricting early morning or late afternoon would make no difference to the movements on the street.



**RECOMMENDED:- That**

- (1) a workshop to consider the traffic management of St Andrews Street South be undertaken; and**
- (2) the outcome of the workshop be reported to a future meeting of the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party.**

*(Councillor Mrs Mildmay-White left the meeting at 6.40 pm.)*

#### **40. Adoption of Highway/Footway, Cobb Close, Bury St Edmunds**

The Working Party considered Report B332 (previously circulated) which sought approval to adopt a section of highway/footway on Cobb Close, off Tassel Road, Bury St Edmunds.

The highway and footways of Cobb Close, off Tassel Road, Bury St Edmunds were built by the Borough Council. The Highway Authority had agreed that the route should be adopted as public highway maintainable at the public expense, and to achieve this the Borough Council was required to resolve to dedicate the section of road and footpaths shown between points A and B on Appendix A to Report B332 as public highway. Using the powers contained within the Highways Agency Agreement with Suffolk County Council, the Borough Council was able to adopt the route as maintainable at the public expense.



**RECOMMENDED:-**

***That the section of road and footpaths between points A and B, as detailed in Appendix A to Report B332, be dedicated as public highway and adopted as maintainable at the public expense.***

#### **41. Engineering Services Works Programme**

The Working Party received and noted Report B333 (previously circulated) which provided an update on progress for key matters within the work programme of the Engineering Services Section of the Borough Council relating to highway maintenance work, traffic management and integrated transport.

The Engineer advised that the resurfacing of Glastonbury Road, Cannon Street and Orchard Street, programmed for the week commencing 29 November 2010, had been deferred until early 2011 due to bad weather.

Councillor Nettleton stated that the proposed toucan crossing in Tollgate Lane, Bury St Edmunds, was unnecessary as there was traffic lights near the petrol station and a pedestrian refuge opposite the school which he considered to be sufficient in helping parents cross the road.

Councillor Everitt enquired whether the school and parents had been consulted on the proposed crossing. The Engineer stated that it was an ongoing issue and had been considered by the school and parents and Suffolk County Council was currently consulting the wider community with the possibility of implementation during the February 2011 half-term.

#### **42. Dates of Future Meetings**

The Working Party noted the following dates for future meetings in 2011:-

4 January;  
22 February;  
29 March; and  
17 May.

All dates were Tuesdays and meetings to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 6.52 pm.

**R D EVERITT  
CHAIRMAN**