

**ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**BURY ST EDMUNDS AREA WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 4 January 2011 at 5.00 pm  
in Conference Chamber West (F1R09), West Suffolk House, Western Way,  
Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor R D Everitt (Chairman)  
Councillors Ereira-Guyer, Farmer, Hale and Jones

BY INVITATION: Mr Watson, Transport Strategy Manager, Suffolk County Council  
(for Minute 47 only)

**43. Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

**44. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Alexander, Oliver and F J Warby.

**45. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**46. Declarations of Interests**

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

**47. Suffolk County Council Local Transport Plan**

The Working Party received a presentation from Mr Watson, Transport Strategy Manager for the Suffolk County Council, who were required by the Government to produce a Local Transport Plan. The current plan covered the period from 2006 to 2011 and work to develop a new plan had begun. Suffolk's third Local Transport Plan would have a 20 year strategy supported by a short, medium and long term implementation plan. The County Council's priorities for transport were focussed on the high level aims of:-

- (a) promoting economic recovery and growth;
- (b) reducing the climate change impacts of transport;
- (c) supporting education and skills; and
- (d) improving health outcomes.

In preparing the new plan the County Council recognised that there were differences in development needs across Suffolk and the new plan would recognise this with local strategies for the main towns. The Working Party noted that the key issues for Bury St Edmunds were:-

- (a) the A14 Junction;
- (b) Moreton Hall link road;
- (c) the Bury St Edmunds Relief Road;
- (d) Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at Great Barton;
- (e) Haverhill to Bury St Edmunds bus services;
- (f) Haverhill to Cambridge bus services;
- (g) Haverhill North West Relief Road;
- (h) Haverhill Cycle Network;
- (i) Rural Footways; and
- (j) Peterborough to Cambridge to Ipswich railway services.

Members asked detailed questions regarding congestion in Bury St Edmunds, improving the railway services and how flexible the Local Transport Plan would be. Following detailed discussion the Working Party thanked Mr Watson for his informative presentation.

#### **48. Bury St Edmunds Visitor Signing**

The Working Party considered Report B400 (previously circulated) which reported on progress in implementing the improved signing in Bury St Edmunds town centre.

On 26 October 2010 the Working Party considered Report B271 to improve signing in Bury St Edmunds town centre. The Report proposed three distinct types of signing all intended to assist visitors who did not know the town:-

- (a) signing from the main arrival points;
- (b) refurbishing and extending the cast-iron finger posts; and
- (c) signing to retail areas.

Signs had been designed for six routes which would guide pedestrians from where they arrived to the town centre, namely:-

- (a) railway station to the town centre via St John's Street;
- (b) railway station to historic town centre along Northgate Street to Angel Hill;
- (c) Ram Meadow car park to town centre via the Fox car park to Eastgate Street and Mustow Street and via the Abbey Gardens to Angel Hill and Abbeygate Street;
- (d) bus station to town centre over St Andrews Street South North, through Sergeants Walk and onto St John's Street;
- (e) multi-storey car park to town centre via Risbygate Street; and
- (f) St Andrew's Street North car park to town centre via bus station and St John's Street or Risbygate Street.

The routes had also been designed to take visitors along secondary shopping streets to increase footfall on those streets and, as the majority of the routes were outside the town centre Conservation Area, all signs were the standard blue and white aluminium signs with a walking figure and an arrow. The signs had been ordered and were currently being manufactured. Individual signs were required for a few specific locations where a standard sign would not be appropriate, such as the welcome sign at the railway station and where Sergeants Walk met St John's Street.

A specification had been drawn up for the refurbishment of the cast-iron fingerposts based on three elements:-

- (a) general painting and refurbishment;
- (b) addition of new circular finials; and
- (c) new fingers.

The new fingers would replace old broken fingers and add extra fingers pointing principally to The Apex, the Theatre Royal, the market, the bus and railway stations and the toilets.

In developing signing routes from the main arrival points into the town centre, the opportunity had been taken to add some signs to secondary shopping areas. Blue and white pedestrian signs, confined to car parks and the bus station, directing shoppers towards Risbygate Street shops and restaurants had been ordered. The Economic Development Officer advised that unnecessary signs would be removed and that the Bury Society were supporting the Civic Voices 'Street Pride' campaign to get rid of clutter and unnecessary signage, which would complement the work undertaken by the Council.

The Economic Development Officer made a presentation outlining proposed designs and materials of new signs and asked for suggestions of which signs could be removed. She sought the Working Party's views.

Members welcomed the proposals outlined in Report B400. During discussions, Members requested that the fencing surrounding the School Yard car park, which blocked the view of Risbygate Street, be removed as soon as possible. The Working Party were advised that the Borough Council were in discussions with Centros regarding the fencing and it was hoped the situation would be resolved as soon as possible. It was also suggested that the orientation of signs needed to be correct for pedestrians.



**RECOMMENDED:- That,**

- (a) the proposals and costings for refurbishing the cast-iron fingerposts as outlined in Report B400 be approved;**
- (b) a design for the retail signs as outlined in Section 5 of Report B400 be approved; and**
- (c) a campaign be launched to remove unnecessary signs.**

#### **49. Engineering Services Work Programme**

The Working Party received and noted Report B401 (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 due to bad weather until 7 March 2011. However, planned gas mains replacement works were scheduled across central Bury St Edmunds and, therefore, the resurfacing would be deferred until mid Summer. The Engineer highlighted that National Grid, which provided the gas supply network, had announced major works to replace much of the supply network in central Bury St Edmunds, which would

commence in April 2011 and continue for 12 to 18 months. Appendix A to Report B401 listed all affected streets.

The Engineer circulated a question and answer sheet from Suffolk County Council regarding school crossing patrols. He advised that the County Council were considering withdrawing all school crossing patrols. A final decision would be made on 17 February 2011 and, if confirmed, the patrols would be withdrawn during the summer term. The Working Party noted the list of schools and stated that the middle school patrols were the major issue as children were of an age to walk to school unattended. The Working Party therefore felt that the patrols were important.

Councillor Ereira-Guyer queried when Phillip Road/Baldwin Avenue would be resurfaced and when the proposed benches for St Olaves Precinct would be designed and installed. He also raised concern at the parking situation in and around the West Suffolk Hospital site. He stated that due to the Hospital's parking policy vehicles were being dispersed to residential areas which had a 'knock-on' effect on the Vinery Road car park near Tesco Express and the slip-road to the front of the store. The Engineer advised that Phillip Road/Baldwin Avenue would be patched and the final painting at the St Olaves Precinct would be undertaken after March 2011 when the weather was more suitable. He explained that the slip road to the front of Tesco Express was private property and, therefore, the Borough Council had no powers.

Councillor Everitt wished to record his thanks to The Engineer for all the hard work undertaken over the years and wished him well for the future.

#### **50. Masterplan for Bury St Edmunds**

The Working Party considered a narrative item which sought approval for the process outlined for preparing the Bury St Edmunds Masterplan and suggestions for engaging local people in the process.

The Working Party received a presentation from the Planning Policy and Specialist Services Manager which set out the context, process and timetable for the preparation of a masterplan vision document for Bury St Edmunds. He explained that the Masterplan would be produced in four stages, namely:-

- (1) issues and visioning stage between February and April 2011;
- (2) the draft vision would be available in June 2011;
- (3) the final vision would be available in early 2012 and may be subject to an independent examination; and
- (4) the final vision, which would become part of the Local Development Framework, would be adopted in late 2012.

The Working Party were advised that public engagement would be undertaken by a launch workshop at The Apex on 2 February 2011, followed by four public drop-in sessions on 5 February, 14 February, 28 February and 9 March 2011 with ongoing neighbourhood drop-ins, events and visitor centre presence, strategic growth planning workshops and representative groups and focus groups. The Planning Policy and Specialist Services Manager requested that the Working Party note the presentation and agree to commence issues and visioning engagement for Bury St Edmunds Vision 2031 in February 2011.

The Working Party asked questions of the Planning Policy and Specialist Services Manager regarding the involvement of the Working Party.

At the point of voting on the process the Working Party was inquorate but the remaining four Members were unanimously in agreement with the process as outlined above.

*(Councillor Ereira-Guyer left the meeting during the consideration of the item and the meeting then became inquorate. Councillor Hale left the meeting at the conclusion of the consideration of this item.)*

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

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

The vacancy rate for Bury St Edmunds town centre had changed from 6.7% to 6.5%, an improvement on the already low level. The Working Party noted that Sahara Womenswear, Ivory Café and Bar and Europa Maxi had all opened recently, with Vanilla Hair Design expanding into the vacant shop next door and Ladbrokes moving into the Market Cross. Mosa Indian Takeaway would soon be opening and Wilkinson's had taken the vacant ex-Roy's unit in Risbygate Street.

The Economic Development Manager advised that, at the request of the Working Party, she had investigated why some units remained vacant. She explained that all four of the main agents marketing the retail units in Bury St Edmunds had reported positively about the level of retail interest in the town. The Working Party noted that the retail agents had stressed the importance of Bury St Edmunds moving into the top 150 retail destinations due to the arc development. Bury St Edmunds was now a more desirable destination for retailers.

The Working Party noted that the agents had submitted confidential information concerning the vacant units to the Economic Development Manager, however, the main points were:-

- (a) some units had existing leasehold interests (despite being vacant);
- (b) leases often prohibited sub-letting at low market rent;
- (c) new leaseholders had to be of sound financial status;
- (d) St John's Street and Abbeygate Street were in high demand;
- (e) agents received circulars from national operators looking to locate in Bury St Edmunds but appropriate units were not always available;
- (f) some rents were unrealistic;
- (g) some units required refurbishment; and
- (h) it took time to negotiate, resolve legal issues and sometimes planning permission if a change of use was required.

Councillor Farmer welcomed the news of the low vacancy rate and the movement into the top 150 retail destinations and requested that this information be put in the Members' Bulletin so that all Members were made aware of the good news.

**52. Dates of Future Meetings**

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

22 February;  
29 March; and  
17 May.

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

The meeting concluded at 6.50 pm.

**R D EVERITT  
CHAIRMAN**