

**ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**BURY ST EDMUNDS AREA WORKING PARTY**

**Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 9 July 2012 at 5.00 pm  
in Conference Chamber West (F1R09), West Suffolk House, Western Way,  
Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor R D Everitt (Chairman)  
Councillors Buckle (substituting for Mrs P A Warby), Houlder  
(substituting for Farmer), Nettleton, Rout and Mrs Stamp

BY INVITATION: Councillors Beckwith and Clements

**1. Substitutes**

The Working Party was advised of the following substitutions:-

Councillor Buckle substituting for Councillor Mrs P A Warby.  
Councillor Houlder substituting for Councillor Farmer.

Councillor Houlder had been appointed as a temporary substitute under Paragraph 4.1 of the Rules of Procedure as contained within the Council's Constitution.

**2. Election of Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor R D Everitt be elected Chairman of this Working Party.

**3. Election of Vice-Chairman**

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Mrs S Stamp be elected Vice-Chairman of this Working Party.

**4. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Farmer, Hordern, Mrs Mildmay-White, Oliver and Mrs P A Warby.

**5. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to it being noted in Minute 32, Highways Update, the spelling of the surname of the representative from Suffolk County Council should be 'Curl' and not 'Curle'.

## **6. Declarations of Interests**

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

## **7. Town Centre Lettings/Vacancies Update (alternative title needed?)**

The Economic Development Manager gave a presentation on the findings of an independent report from Market Town Benchmarking which had been commissioned by Bid 4 Bury. The report was based on measurements against 12 key indicators:-

The number of commercial units;  
Balance of retail between 'comparison' and 'convenience' outlets;  
The number of Independent Shops;  
Key attractors – presence of multiple national retailers;  
The number of vacant units;  
Presence of street markets;  
Rental rates;  
Footfall survey;  
Car parking provision and usage;  
Survey of businesses;  
Survey of Town Centre users; and  
Postcodes Survey – origin of visitors.

In relation to most of these headings, the scores for Bury St Edmunds were very positive. There was a high percentage (62%) of independent shops and the vacancy rate suggested 9% within the range of 5% - 10% considered healthy by the Association of Market Towns. There were perceptions from those surveyed that the town offered a good range of shops and that its appearance and cleanliness was good. The prosperity and geographical location of the town and range of cultural and leisure facilities offered were considered to be factors which made it attractive to visitors. Negative aspects were that businesses felt that car parking was expensive and survey results had suggested that there was under usage of car parks. There was also a view that there should be a better link between the arc and the historic town centre.

Members questioned the finding in relation to car parking as by observation there appeared to be very little under usage and the Council used an assumed occupation rate of 85%, except for the Christmas shopping period when car parks were likely to be at full capacity. The time of day any survey was carried out had a relevance to its outcome. Officers undertook to examine actual figures in relation to usage to ascertain whether these supported the independent report's finding. The Chairman also sought clarification as to whether for the purposes of benchmarking Bury St Edmunds was categorised as a smaller or larger town as the report appeared to be ambivalent regarding this point.

Officers gave an oral report on action taken by the Council following the devastating fire which had broken out at Cupola House on 16 June 2012 and which had destroyed much of the fabric of the building. The remaining structure of the building was being shored up and rendered safe. Photographs of the site were shown to the Working Party which indicated the extent of the damage and some features which had survived and had been salvaged. Engineers were still on site and a quantity of debris remained which would be removed. Part of The Traverse was still closed off. The effect of the fire had been that 42 businesses had to be closed. Most of these had re-opened and the situation was now that only 4 remained closed although Harriets were still unable to operate the street café aspect of its business. Meetings had been held with businesses to keep them informed of progress and action being taken, and a further meeting had been arranged for the following evening. Temporary signage had been

installed in street locations to advise that specific businesses had re-opened. A member commented that the street information desk had provided positive help. The Council would continue to publicise that The Traverse was open for business. Currently businesses were being advised that action was likely to be taken in three phases:-

- (i) ensuring that the site was structurally safe;
- (ii) removal of plant, a large crane, from the site and moving back hoardings so as to re-open The Traverse fully; and
- (iii) in the long term to redevelop the site in whatever form this takes.

The Working Party noted both reports.

### **8. Amendments to the boundaries of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre and Victoria Street Conservation Areas**

The Working Party considered Report D61 (previously circulated) which sought approval for a recommendation to be made to Council to formally adopt amended boundaries for Bury St Edmunds Town Centre and Victoria Street Conservation Areas.

On 24 January 2012, the Working Party recommended approval of the proposed amended boundaries for consultation (Report C296 refers). This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet on 1 February 2012. Consultation took place between 29 February and 30 April 2012 inclusive.

There was no statutory requirement to carry out any public consultation before designating a conservation area or amending its boundary. Officers considered it 'good practice' however, and a means of raising public awareness of the conservation areas. Extensive public consultation, in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, therefore had taken place so as to coincide with the consultation period for the Vision 2031 documents.

All written replies received were included in the summaries of responses.

The Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area boundary had been amended after consultation to follow the west side of St Andrew's Street South and part of St Andrew's Street North to include the Town Ditch.

The Bury St Edmunds Victoria Street Conservation Area boundary had been amended after consultation to include St Peter's Pit in Out Risbygate and remove the whole garden of 2 Westbury Avenue.

The following appendices were attached to Report D61:-

- Appendix 1: map showing the amended boundary for the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area;
- Appendix 2: summary of the responses received during the consultation and the changes made to the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Conservation Area boundary;
- Appendix 3: map showing the amended boundary for the Bury St Edmunds Victoria Street Conservation Area; and

Appendix 4: summary of the responses received during the consultation and the changes made to the Bury St Edmunds Victoria Street Conservation Area boundary.



***RECOMMENDED:- That Council be recommended to:-***

- (1) formally adopt the amended conservation area boundaries for the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre and Victoria Street Conservation Areas, as shown in Appendices 1 and 3 of Report D61; and***
- (2) authorise the Interim Head of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, to amend any minor mapping errors prior to formal adoption.***

## **9. Highways - Update**

The Working Party received and noted Report D62 (previously circulated) which provided information on Drainage, Neighbourhood Parking Schemes and a review of Traffic Regulation Orders in relation to parking issues.

It was noted that drainage issues were being dealt with as a matter of priority in the following locations:-

- (a) Fornham Road, north of the A14 flyover;
- (b) Oswyn Close; and
- (c) Salisbury Green.

Reference was made by Councillor Beckwith to the situation that growths in gutters/gullies were inhibiting drainage. It was also pointed out that mechanical sweepers were not always able to clear away accumulations of detritus along highways. Officers explained that the weedkiller which was used was prescribed by regulations and it was not as effective as that used in previous years. Officers also advised that in both instances the highways authority would deal with problems in specific locations by manual means if reports were received. The County Council was now the lead organisation for dealing with surface water flooding problems. It was currently consulting on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy document and reports of known localised flooding problems would be welcomed to enable a database to be built up.

In relation to the Neighbourhood Parking Schemes currently being investigated and referred to in Appendix A of the report, officers confirmed that the whole of Corsbie Close and Windmill Close was included in the Hospital Road Investigation Area. It was agreed that the Grove Road/Springfield Road Investigation Area scheme would be beneficial to residents as it would address the issue of all day parking by students at West Suffolk College. Councillor Nettleton referred to the situation that a scheme for Vinery Road Car Park had been approved by the Cabinet on 16 March 2011 and asked why it had not yet been implemented. Officers responded by advising that difficulties had arisen and further consultation with local residents was required. Councillor Nettleton also suggested that Challice Road be included in the Grove Road/Springfield Road Investigation Area.

A revised Appendix B listing locations where parking issues were being investigated was tabled. Councillor Nettleton suggested that an area of Springfield Road between Tayfen Road and Spring Lane should be included in this list.

The Chairman asked whether the County Council had made any progress towards the decriminalisation of car parking offences. Mr L. Barber for the County Council advised that a detailed report had been considered by the County Council but the matter had not been pursued actively as an £800,000 funding cost had been identified. The introduction of decriminalisation of car parking offences in Ipswich some years ago had been found to be costly to operate. The Chairman pointed out that the County Council derived income from car parking in St Edmundsbury and therefore he urged the County Council to re-address the issue of illegal car parking.

#### **10. Improvements to St Andrew's Street South**

The Working Party received and noted Report D63 (previously circulated) which included working drawings of proposed improvements to St Andrew's Street South. The plans were intended to provide information to members in a preliminary form and were not in the format normally presented to the Working Party.

Mr L Barber for Suffolk County Council explained the various elements of the scheme, the intention of which was to make St Andrew's Street South less attractive as a through route for general traffic, slow down vehicular movements and create a more pleasant area for pedestrians and cyclists. The elements of the scheme which currently had funding of £45,000, plus a contingency sum, and thus forming a first phase were:-

- (a) junction with Woolhall Street – narrowing of carriageway to form threshold to the street and render route less inviting; and
- (b) centre part of the street to have build outs to slow traffic by introducing priority giveways.

Further proposed works to the junction of Risbygate Street and Brentgovel Street had been included in the plans for completeness and would be the subject of future bids and, if successful, later phases for implementation.

Allowing for the design and consultation stages and avoidance of carrying out works during the Christmas period it was envisaged that the first phase would be commenced in late January 2013. There would be liaison with affected businesses and bus companies regarding the scheme. The build outs would provide linkages to and from the new and historic town centres. Provision of public art and tree planting had been included in the scheme and officers advised that details of these would be presented to the meeting of the Working Party on 28 August 2012.

Members discussed the proposals and accepted that the current arrangements at these junctions posed difficulties for pedestrians. It was suggested that the areas of the proposed build out should be marked out with traffic cones for an experimental period to assess effectiveness in slowing traffic movements. It was important that lines of sight for pedestrians/cyclists should be taken into consideration.

#### **11. Car Parking: Lawson Place and Southgate Community Centre**

The Working Party considered Report D64 (previously circulated) which drew attention to the situation that Ward Members, together with the Southgate Community Partnership, had raised concerns over shortage of parking at Lawson Place and Southgate Community Centre. The report put forward proposals to address the issue of long stay parking occurring to the detriment of other users:-

### **(i) Lawson Place**

There was a well used car park immediately in front of the retail development, and despite the recent improvements in linking up both sections of the car park and creating 10 additional spaces, there were frequent occasions when there was insufficient space available. Similar issues also were occurring on the adjoining Community Centre car parking area.

It was believed that a number of cars were being parked free for long periods to enable owners to save money by sharing car journeys or commuting by bus into town or to the hospital.

### **(ii) Southgate Community Centre**

Blair Estates, owners of the Hardwick Shopping Centre, had introduced a maximum 3 hour free stay for parking in the area within their control, which was immediately in front of the shopping parade. This had displaced long stay parking to the car park in front of Southgate Community Centre to the point when it was regularly full, thus denying users of the Centre the ability to park nearby. Inspections had revealed a number of vehicles had hospital workers' passes on the windscreens.

It was important that an element of control was introduced to both these areas in order to free up space for legitimate users of both the retail area at Lawson Place and Southgate Community Centre. This proposal was not viewed as a revenue generator.

The ideal scenario would be to allow for free short term parking (up to 3 hours) for users and to introduce punitive charges (£10 as per Hardwick Car Park) to discourage long stay parking beyond that period. The parking regime would operate between 8.00 am and 5.00 pm on weekdays, reflecting the periods of high use.

Two possible alternatives of implementing this were considered by the Working Party:-

#### **Option 1: Pay and Display**

This would be as for all other car parks managed by the Council. In order to prevent abuse of the machines, i.e. frivolous issuing of tickets, there would need to be a token charge for up to 3 hours. However, the initial capital cost would be approximately £3,500 per site.

#### **Option 2: Pay and Phone**

Similar to Option 1, but, instead of displaying tickets, all payments would be made through 'Ringo' (mobile phone) who was the Borough Council's current cashless parking partner. This was a low cost option of approximately £250 per site for signage.

Specifically in relation to the Southgate Car Park, numbered permits would be made available to the Southgate Community Partnership to pass to visitors who stay longer than 3 hours. Additionally, there were a small number of local residents who parked in this area as there were no other parking facilities near their properties, and these would be issued permits.

Staff working in the retail units at Lawson Place would be encouraged to park across the road on the former Moreton Hall Community Centre site. Additionally, there would be liaison with the Community Association and an offer of services and solutions to address the issues in its car park.

Discussions would also be held with retailers at Lawson Place to examine if a landline phone could be made available for those who did not have a mobile or found them difficult to use. In addition, attendants from the Car Parking Service would visit the sites and enforce on a regular basis.

The cost of Option 1 would be £7,000 plus consumables, and for Option 2 it would be £250. In addition, for both options there would be the cost of a Traffic Regulation Order which amounted to £1,000. These would be funded from the Car Park Operating Account.

Neither Options 1 or 2 were agreed by the Working Party in their present form. However, the principle of introducing control over parking for these car parks was agreed. The view was that parking should be free for the first three hours and that the regulated hours for the car parks should be from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm. For parking over 3 hours the excess charge should be applied.



***RECOMMENDED:- That***

***(1) subject to consultation with Stakeholders, a Car Parking Scheme be adopted and implemented for the Lawson Place and Southgate Community Centre Car Parks which is based on:-***

***(i) days and hours of operation - Mondays to Fridays 8.00 am to 6.00 pm;***

***(ii) free parking for up to 3 hours, Mondays to Fridays;***

***(iii) for parking beyond 3 hours an excess charge be applied at a level as set by the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order; and***

***(iv) numbered parking permits for residents and the Southgate Community Partnership to be issued.***

***and the costs of this be met from the Car Park Operating Account; and***

***(2) the operation of the Scheme be reviewed after the period of one year, to include an assessment of whether there has been dispersal of parking to the surrounding residential areas.***

**12. Dates of Future Meetings**

The Working Party approved the following dates:-

28 August 2012;  
13 November 2012;  
5 February 2013;  
19 March; and  
7 May 2013.

All dates are Tuesdays and each meeting to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 6.55 pm.

**R D EVERITT  
CHAIRMAN**