

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Haverhill Area Working Party

**Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 12 July 2012 at 4.15 pm
in the Seminar Room, Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College,
Eastern Avenue, Haverhill**

PRESENT: Councillors Ager, Ms Byrne, Mrs Gower, McManus, Redhead, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Rushbrook and A Whittaker

BY INVITATION: Will Austin, Clerk to Haverhill Town Council
Luke Barber, Highways Section, Suffolk County Council
Councillor Pat Hanlon, Haverhill Town Council
Debbie Kemp, Kent Business School, University of Kent

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Cox

1. Substitutes

No substitutions were declared.

2. Election of Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Mrs K D Richardson be elected Chairman for this Working Party.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: -

That Councillor A Whittaker be appointed Vice-Chairman of this Working Party.

4. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Marks.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Declaration of Interests

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

7. 'Destination Haverhill'

The Working Party received and noted a presentation on the 'Destination Haverhill' project.

The vision for the project was *'to ensure that the town centre of Haverhill attracts more visitors, shoppers and investment by providing a high quality **experience** for all and by providing a broad range of desired products and services such that visitors need not travel to other nearby local centres.'*

The project was commissioned following an allocation of £40,000 total funding provided by the Borough Council, Suffolk County Council, and Kent Business School's (KBS) Innovation Fund.

Phase One of the project involved KBS undertaking a Shopper Survey between 24 November 2011 and 2 December 2011. A total of 538 surveys had been received, which was considered an acceptable number for analysis. On 15 March 2012 the Working Party had noted the initial findings of the survey, which had indicated that Haverhill was a town with potential; it had good accessibility; a high number of car parking spaces, partial pedestrianisation and low shop vacancy rates. However, Members had noted that the poor range of shops was the biggest singular issue faced by the town centre. The mix of shops was inadequate with an over domination of takeaways, betting shops and charity shops. National retailers needed a compelling incentive to open new stores in Haverhill.

At this meeting, the Working Party noted the outcome of Phase Two of the project which aimed to improve the performance of the current independent retailers through the conducting of masterclasses and follow-up mentoring sessions. The outcomes of the masterclasses and mentoring sessions in terms of whether the independent retailers taking part in the project had benefited from an upturn in performance would then be reported at the next meeting in September 2012. Phase Three would continue with the mentoring sessions and the undertaking of an evaluation process.

In response to a question, the Working Party was informed that approximately 20% of independent retailers in Haverhill had become engaged and motivated with the project; 40% had felt comfortable with how they were currently trading and did not wish to partake in the masterclasses/mentoring; and it was considered that the remaining 40% had felt intimidated and exposed by the prospect of attending the masterclasses.

(Councillor Mrs Rushbrook arrived during the consideration of this item and Debbie Kemp left the meeting at its conclusion.)

8. Haverhill Vision 2031

The Working Party received and noted a presentation on the key issues emanating from the formal consultation on the first draft of Vision 2031, with particular emphasis on the comments received on the draft Haverhill Vision document.

Consultation on the first draft of the Vision 2031 document for Haverhill took place between 1 March 2012 and 30 April 2012. An extensive consultation programme was organised by the Borough Council and there had been a good level of engagement and response.

Such comments arising from the consultation on the Haverhill Vision 2031 included:-

- (a) an imbalance between jobs and houses;
- (b) development of brownfield sites before greenfield sites;
- (c) development of an action plan about the regeneration of the town rather than extending it;
- (d) transport issues, including provision of a rail link;
- (e) the need for more open space and parks;
- (f) development of the town centre masterplan before new housing development;
- (g) concerns about increased flood risk;
- (h) opposition to the removal of restrictions on the redevelopment of former school sites;
- (i) issues relating to small development sites;
- (j) support for further/higher education provision but question the site identified for such provision;
- (k) cemetery provision; and
- (l) several references to the North-East Haverhill Strategic Site.

The Working Party also noted the planned timetable for taking the Vision 2031 documents through to the Examination and Adoption stages, as contained in the report to the Sustainable Development Working Party meeting held on 3 July 2012 (Report D56 referred).

9. Haverhill High Street Improvement Scheme: Progress Update

The Working Party considered Report D65 (previously circulated), which sought approval for changes to the Haverhill High Street Improvement Scheme.

On 27 April 2011, the Cabinet approved the Terms of Reference for the High Street Improvement Scheme (minute 155 (3) refers), which included delegating authority to the Haverhill Area Working Party for managing the total £750,000 budget for the Scheme and approving the final project design.

Suffolk County Council' Highways Section had been commissioned by the Borough Council to design the Improvement Scheme, which initially included the incorporation of a level block paved surface for the area between Swan Lane and Quakers Lane, with an associated Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This would build upon the current access restrictions to provide a totally traffic free pedestrian environment during the core hours of the day.

The statutory consultation on the proposed TRO during February 2012 resulted in a large volume of objections, primarily on the grounds that the restrictions would prevent Blue Badge Holders from parking within walking distance of the High Street shops, and from the business community who had concerns about business deliveries during the restricted hours.

The level of concern was reported to the Working Party on 15 March 2012. At that meeting Members supported taking the concerns into account and the re-drafting of the TRO to avoid the most contentious issues. Therefore, the TRO as proposed and consulted on had now effectively been abandoned and would not proceed to the Suffolk County Council Rights of Way Committee or any subsequent Public Inquiry.

The Working Party was informed that Haverhill Town Council had undertaken its own survey with the Haverhill community and had ascertained that the majority of respondents still wished to see pedestrianisation in the High Street during core hours of the day. Members therefore, considered it appropriate to withdraw the current proposals in accordance with the outcomes of the statutory consultation, but the issue of pedestrianisation would remain an item for future discussion on the HAWP agenda.

A discussion was also held on maintaining a distinction between the Improvement Scheme and the TROs, and therefore the officers' recommendations were amended by Members to reflect this distinction, particularly as the proposed traffic restrictions detailed in the recommendations could commence independently of the Improvement Scheme. The new TRO could initially be introduced as an Experimental TRO lasting a maximum of 18 months during which time it was anticipated that public acceptance of the scheme would grow. Members accepted this approach.

The proposed 20 mph zone covering the High Street had not received any objections from the original consultations and could be implemented as a stand alone measure; however, Members sought reassurance that the restriction would be enforceable.

The Working Party also considered the preliminary designs for the High Street and Peas Market Square, which were supported, and following the submission and reading out of a written suggestion by Councillor Cox, agreed that further investigations be undertaken into the feasibility of erecting a flag pole in Peas Market Square.

RESOLVED:- That,

- (1) an enforceable 20 mph zone covering the High Street, Haverhill as outlined in Paragraph 1.6 of Report D65, be implemented, ensuring clear and concise signage;
- (2) (i) the revised waiting and loading Traffic Regulation Order be delivered through an Experimental Order, as detailed in Section 4 of Report D65, and lasting a maximum of 18 months; and
(ii) the current proposals be withdrawn but pedestrianisation remains on the Haverhill Area Working Party agenda;
- (3) during the delivery of (2) above, a period of statutory consultation be undertaken with a public exhibition, as appropriate;
- (4) the preliminary design of High Street and Peas Market Square, as detailed in Sections 4.3 and 7.3 of Report D65, be approved; and
- (5) an addition of a flag pole to Peas Market Square be investigated.

(Will Austin and Haverhill Town Councillor Hanlon left the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 6 September 2012, at a yet to be confirmed venue, at 4.15 pm.

Members also confirmed Thursday 15 November 2012 as the date for the next meeting; however the Working Party was advised that a meeting may need to be arranged in October 2012 to accord with the proposed timetable for the next round of consultation on the draft Haverhill Vision 2031 document.

The meeting concluded at 7.25 pm

**MRS K D RICHARDSON
CHAIRMAN**