
Bury Area Working Party



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Bury Area Working Party** held on
Tuesday 9 December 2014 at 5.00 pm at the **Conference Chamber, West
Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Robert Everitt

Vice-Chairman Sarah Stamp

Patrick Chung

Bob Cockle

Paul Farmer

David Nettleton

Stefan Oliver

Joanna Rayner

Clive Springett

Patricia Warby

By Invitation:

Sara Mildmay-White

1. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

On Minute 15, Christmas Fayre, Councillor Cockle referred to a problem which had occurred with the temporary stopping up of Lower Baxter Street in connection with the event. Drivers of some vehicles had gained access along this road only to be required to turn around as there was no ability to cross Abbeygate Street which was blocked off. He suggested that a sign be erected for future events at the junction with Looms Lane to advise that there was no through access to Angel Lane.

4. **Abbeygate Street: Review of Pedestrianisation Arrangements: Consultation**

Steve Boor, Suffolk County Council, Highways, present at the meeting and standing in for Simon Curl, explained that in the light of comments made over the years since the pedestrianisation scheme had been introduced the County Council had decided to review the current arrangements. It was proposed to carry out a wide consultation in January 2015 and the preliminary views of the Working Party were being sought at an earlier stage. He recalled that the pedestrianisation scheme had initially been implemented for market days, Wednesdays and Saturdays, with the area being closed between 6.00 am and 6.00 pm. Because of positive responses from the traders in Abbeygate Street and the public generally the scheme had been extended to include the remaining weekdays with closure times of 10.00 am until 4.00 pm. Following further favourable responses the closure had been applied over weekends. The current arrangements had been the subject of comments in the form of letters to the press and copies of these were tabled at the meeting. The County Council were not seeking to dispense with the scheme or to radically change it but would be seeking views on whether the scheme in its present form should be retained or whether minor adjustments or extensions to it were required.

Members in discussing this matter were generally of the view that whilst the differing closure times might be confusing for some people the pedestrian scheme worked well. A concern was, however, expressed that the closure times on weekdays, apart from Wednesday market days, of 10.00 am to 4.00 pm did not allow the use of the pedestrianised area by school children on their way to and from school. Reference was made to vehicular traffic crossing the pedestrianised area from Lower and High Baxter Streets but it was recognised that drivers generally exercised caution and were courteous towards pedestrians at the junctions. It was felt, however, that signage at these junctions should be improved so as to warn drivers they were approaching a pedestrianised area. In response to a Member's question, officers advised that they were not aware of any problems experienced by emergency services vehicles in gaining access to the pedestrianised area.

The Working Party noted that this matter would be the subject of wide consultation early next year. It was of the view the Borough Council's own response should be considered in the light of comments received as a result of this exercise. It was requested that an item be included on the agenda for the meeting on 10 March 2015 in order that a recommendation could be made to Cabinet as to the Council's formal response.

5. **Skinner Street**

Officers reported that the Bury Society had raised a series of concerns about the appearance of this street and had highlighted the following needs:

- (a) improving lighting to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (this related to a County Council function);
- (b) removing or reducing the number of wheeled bins in the street;

- (c) improving the surface of the street; and
- (d) encouraging building owners/occupiers to improve maintenance/visual aspects of their buildings.

Officers gave a presentation on possible options in respect of (b) which were either:

- (i) to stop up the street and create a bin store area in the middle part; or
- (ii) to provide sacks as an alternative to bins with a daily collection; or
- (iii) to use smaller, more uniform, less obtrusive bins; or
- (iv) for bins to become communal or shared.

The advantages and disadvantages of these options were detailed , and it was explained that there were no plans from the Highways Authority to stop up the street permanently, which was an approach also supported by the Bury Society. It was also reported that discussion of these would take place with traders and the Bury Society in the new year.

The Working Party further noted that many of the traders whose premises backed onto this street had entered into national agreements with other waste collection service providers (they were not obligated to use the Borough Council's service) and therefore there was no control over the type of bins to be used. Whilst the traders were tied to such agreements there was little opportunity to effect a universal improvement. While the desirability of making incremental and proportionate improvements was understood, the majority of Members were of the view that since Skinner Street was effectively a service road there was very little that could be done to improve its appearance and any solution was likely to require significant time and resources. Suggestions were made that the Bury in Bloom organisation could be requested to locate hanging baskets in the street or for trellis arrangements to be devised to hide bins as a possible means of providing enhancements albeit minor in scale.

Steve Boor, Suffolk County Council, Highways, advised that the surface of the street was uneven in its entirety and a complete resurfacing would be necessary. With the limited use of Skinner Street as a thoroughfare, the expense of such works could not be justified. A scheme involving the complete relaying of the granite setts would be preferable but he envisaged that this would only be achievable if a regeneration project involving renovation of properties in the street was possible with external funding. He estimated that the cost of relaying the setts was in the region of £200,000.

The Working Party agreed that improved street lighting was justifiable and noted that officers were in discussion with Suffolk County Council regarding this issue.

6. Future Work Programme

The Working Party noted that the following items were included in the Work Programme and would be the subject of reports to future meetings:

- (a) River Linnet (and not the River Lark as stated on the agenda) maintenance and flooding at Gardiner Close – Conclusions of investigative work carried out by the County Council.

In response to questions from members in relation to this item officers advised that:

- (i) responsibility for maintenance of the River Linnet downstream from Friar's Bridge was with the Environment Agency and upstream it rested with the riparian owners of whom the Borough Council was the main owner; and
- (ii) whilst the Probation Service had been used to undertake tidying and clearance work around the Borough because of Health and Safety considerations it could not be asked to carry out maintenance work in and around rivers.
- (b) Christmas Fayre – a review of the 2014 Fayre and early plans for 2015 (10 March 2015 meeting). In relation to this matter Officers were asked to reconsider the alternative parking arrangements for residents in the Honey Hill area.

Members were asked to contact officers if they had any other items to be included in the Work Programme.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Working Party had previously approved Tuesday 10 March 2015 as the date of its next meeting. The meeting to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 6.05 pm

Signed by:

R D EVERITT
Chairman
