

WEST LUTON AREA COMMITTEE

24th January, 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Shaw (Chair); Councillors Mead, Patten, Roden, Rutstein, Simmons, Stewart and Strange

1 MINUTES (REF: 2.1)

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th October 2004 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2 FEEDBACK FROM MINI WARD FORUMS (REF: 6)

The Committee were informed of the main issues raised at the Mini Ward Forums:-

Challney Ward

- Junction 11 (M1) – Drains
- Litter outside Challney School
- Hospital – Parking issues Faringdon Road North, one-way system
- Traffic calming issues
- Stanton Road – Council letters not received
- Hospital staff parking in residential areas
- Cycling on pavements
- Road swept before bins collected
- Homedale Drive – pavement parking

Councillor Rutstein informed the Committee that parking around the hospital was an ongoing issue, and that the Chair of the Hospital Trust had been invited to attend the next meeting of the West Luton Area Committee to be held on 30th March 2005.

Leagrave Ward

- Feedback from previous meetings
- Telecom masts
- Potholes – Bramble Close, Bramble Drive, Torquay Drive
- Traffic calming/speeding
- Pirton Hill School
- Parking outside of schools/Toddington Road – increase in parking attendants
- Electrolux Site
- Grange Avenue junction with Oakley Road

Lewsey Ward

- Cycle path
- Lewsey Muslim Association
- Hospital parking – Lewsey Road
- M1 widening – implications
- Police issues- burglaries, nuisance youths, reopening of Leagrave station
- Parking around schools –Moorlands School

All the issues raised would be followed up and reported back to the next meeting of the Area Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

3 PETITION – INSTALLATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS MAST, ACWORTH (REF: 8.1)

The Development Control Manager reported on the receipt of a petition from residents objecting to the installation of one 12-metre high slim line monopole mast and ancillary cabinet in Ackworth Crescent.

The Committee were advised that the mast would be located on Highway land not owned by the Borough and therefore there were no planning grounds for challenging the operator's proposals.

A member of the public condemned Luton Borough Council for not opposing the application.

Councillor Roden responded that the Council could only object to the installation of a phone mast if it were on Council owned land. She added that in this instance, the location was on highways land and that the Council were bound by Government legislation. She went on to say that all three-ward councillors for Leagrave were against the application and were lobbying the MP for Luton North to lobby the Government for a change in law in respect of telecommunications masts.

A member of the public commented that residents had a right to object to the installations of a telecommunications mast, and added that laws needed to be changed.

Resolved: That receipt of the petition be noted.

4 PETITION – REQUEST FROM LEWSEY MUSLIM CULTURAL SOCIETY FOR LAND (REF: 8.2)

The Head of Capital and Asset Management submitted a report on the receipt of a petition for the allocation of a plot of land for the Lewsey Muslim Cultural Society in Lewsey Park.

A member of the Lewsey Muslim Cultural Society informed the Committee that the Society had been looking for a piece of land for several years to premises for worship and cultural use.

Councillor Rutstein suggested that the Executive identify a piece of land in Lewsey Park to be leased to the Lewsey Muslim Cultural Society for religious and cultural use and to encourage the development and continuation of the Society.

Resolved: (i) That receipt of the petition be noted.

(ii) That the Executive be requested to identify a piece of land in Lewsey Park to be leased to the Lewsey Muslim Cultural Society for religious and cultural use and to encourage the development and continuation of the Society, subject to appropriate caveats being placed on the development.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (INCLUDING POYNTERS ROAD CYCLE PATH (REF: 9))

A local resident informed the Committee, that residents of Poynters Road had received a leaflet from Bedfordshire County Council in regard to the introduction of a cycle path advising them not to park outside of their own home. He added that residents had raised objection, as it would encroach on Luton residents.

The Engineering Services Manager responded that the boundary between Luton and South Beds District Council ran down the middle of Poynters Road. He added that Bedfordshire County Council who had proposed the scheme, had not informed Luton Borough Council of the proposed cycle path until after consultation with local residents had started.

Councillor Strange commented that although the Council were keen to promote cycle paths, Poynters Road was not a suitable location for one. He added that Bedfordshire County Council could not proceed without the authority of Luton Borough Council.

Councillor Shaw suggested that a representative from Bedfordshire County Council be invited to the next meeting of the West Luton Area Committee on 30th March 2005 to discuss the proposed cycle path in Poynters Road

Resolved: (i) That the questions be noted.

(ii) That the Area Committee Support Officer be instructed to invite a representative from Bedfordshire County Council to the next meeting of the West Luton Area Committee on 30th March 2005 to discuss the proposed cycle path in Poynters Road.

6 REPLACEMENT SWIMMING POOL (REF: 10)

The Head of Leisure, Libraries and Culture submitted a report in regard to two potential sites for the proposed new swimming pool for Luton.

The Strategic Manager for Physical Education and Sport gave a presentation entitled 'A New Pool for Luton'. The Committee were informed that two potential sites had been identified; these were Addington Road (the former Electrolux site off Oakley Road) and Stockwood Park (near to the pavilion).

Affordability would be a major factor in the decision making process for the new site, as would be capital costs and on going operational costs. She added that the income from the sale of High Town Recreation Centre and Wardown Swimming Pool were essential to the affordability of the project, also revenue savings from their operation costs could be used to enable Prudential borrowing to occur.

The advantages and disadvantages for relocation to Stockwood Park were:-

Advantages:

- Ground conditions were good
- Local plan says that the land was available
- Good local access and access from motorway
- Compatible with other leisure and sporting facilities in the park

Disadvantages:

- Some highways improvements would be needed
- Edge of town location might mean access difficulties for people in other parts of Luton
- Some loss of open space
- Would require changes to the golf course and closure of the golf pavilion during the building process

The advantages and disadvantages for relocation to Addington Way were:-

Advantages:

- Large catchments within walking distance; an area of new housing development
- Good access by public transport and close to motorway junction
- Not on public parkland
- Would enhance playing pitch provision with changing facilities
- More schools within 3 mile catchment area

Disadvantages:

- Costs of lifting covenants would have to be taken into account (Section 106 agreements)
- Some loss of open space
- A traffic impact assessment would be required

The Strategic Manager for Physical Education and Sport requested members of the public to complete the consultation forms, which would be analysed for reasons of preference. Findings would then be reported to the Executive in March, 2005 to ratify the decision on the site. She concluded that building of the new swimming pool would commence during 2006.

Members of the public commented that Bath Road should be updated. It was also felt that if a new pool were to be built it should be to Olympic standard, and that the pool needed to be accessible, affordable and usable to all members of public.

The Strategic Manager for PE and Sport responded that it would not be practical to refurbish Bath Road. She added that if adequate funds were available, an Olympic sized pool would be favoured sized pool, as this would attract people to Luton. If adequate funds were not available, an eight lane 25 metre competition pool would be built. It was believed that this would not affect other 25 metre pools in Luton.

Residents raised concern at the costs of lifting covenants of Section 106 agreements held over Addington Way were not known.

Councillor Shaw suggested that a report in respect of the cost of lifting the covenants on Section 106 agreements on Addington Way be submitted to the next meeting of the Area Committee

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Head of Leisure, Libraries and Culture be requested to submit a report in respect of the costs of lifting covenants on Section 106 agreements (Addington Way) to the next meeting of West Luton Area Committee.

7 STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL (REF: 11)

The Head of Housing (Landlord) submitted a report in regard to the housing stock options appraisal, which was an initiative required of a local authority by the Government to review the best way to keep its homes in good condition and provide new social housing. He informed the Committee that a steering group, which comprised Members, officers, tenants, leaseholders and Trade Union representatives met monthly to discuss the appraisal.

As part of the consultation process, newsletters and staff briefings had been held at various locations around Luton. Also, newsletters had been sent to

tenants and articles placed in the local press. The independent tenants advisor had also provided information to tenants.

He went on to inform the Committee that progress on data collected included:

- Stock Condition survey complete – findings had been verified by independent surveyors before release to Luton Borough Council and would be available shortly.
- The Housing Need survey was underway – an initial report was anticipated to be available by mid February 2005.
- The Tenants Aspiration survey had been completed – a report on its findings was awaited.
- The financial appraisal was still awaited from Price Waterhouse Consultants – this was dependant on stock condition and the HRA Business Plan.

Options that remained were:

- To retain ownership and management of housing stock – no additional funding available.
- Transfer to Housing Association (a ballot of tenants required).
- Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) – the Council retained ownership but management by separate body. It was not yet clear if additional funding would be available.
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) – it was unlikely that this would be a whole stock solution.

The Committee were informed that initial feedback to the steering group, Members and Tenants Consultative Committee was expected on 25th January, followed by staff briefing sessions on 26th January. A report would then be submitted to Executive on 14th February, 2005.

He concluded that the Council would need to consult widely once the financial appraisal had been completed and the options most suitable for Luton known.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

The Head of Planning reported in regard to the East of England Plan (RSS14) public consultation. The Committee were advised that on 8th December, 2004, the 'East of England Plan' or Regional Spatial Strategy 14 (RSS14) had been launched for a 14 week public consultation, which would close on 16th March 2005.

The Plan set out a draft strategy to guide the planning and development of the East of England to 2021 and set out the policies for how many jobs, people and houses should be accommodated in the communities, where and how people should live and travel to work, improvements in roads, rail and bus services, culture, sport and recreation facilities. It also made proposals for implementing those plans.

The key features of the Plan included:-

- plans for 421,500 new jobs across the East of England up to 2021 to meet future economic growth needs and regeneration needs of less prosperous areas;
- provision for 478,000 new homes by 2021. Nearly 60,000 have already been built since 2001 and, of the balance, more than half already have planning permission or are allocated in existing development plans;
- a major increase – more than doubling – of the supply of social rented, key worker and other forms of affordable housing to address housing shortages and the widening gap between house prices and incomes in the region. At least 30% of all new dwellings should be in the social rented sector.
- proposals for more sustainable forms of transport which seek to reduce the rate of growth in car and lorry traffic and promote public transport, walking and cycling;
- an extensive package of proposals for environmental and social measures such as more energy/water efficient development, investment in education, skills training and health services and cultural and recreation development.

The Plan rejected:-

- proposals for a second runway at Stansted Airport
- Government's request that a further 18,000 homes be built, on top of those already proposed in the Plan in the Cambridge/Peterborough area.

Members of the public raised concern that residents of Luton were not aware of the Plan and how it would affect them.

A member of the public commented that an improved road network would be needed before any growth of the town could begin.

The Structure Plan Team Leader replied that growth would not be allowed until an adequate road infrastructure was in place.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ADULT EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICE (REF: 14)

The Area Community Development Officer updated the Committee on the current activities and developments in the Challney, Leagrave and Lewsey Wards.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

10 AREA REPORT (REF: 15)

The Area Committee Support Officer updated the Committee on issues that were raised following the last meeting.

The Area Committee Support Officer advised of the receipt of four applications to the Area Project Grant Scheme:

Scheme	Ref	Ward	Cost	Amount Requested	Decision
ELPIDA Foundation Trust 'Angels Voice'	LW152	Lewsey	£7,500.00	£7,500	Refused
Leagrave Prom	LE 154	Leagrave	£2,500	£2,260	Granted
Open Doors Training Development Trust	LW 156	Lewsey	£1,000	£1,000	Granted
Lewsey Farm Café Project	LW 157	Leagrave	£1,000	£1,000	Granted

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11 AGENDA PLANNING (REF: 17)

Resolved: That the following items be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the West Luton Area Committee:-

- Poynters Road Cycle Path

- Hospital Parking Scheme
- M1 Widening
- Street Services Presentation
- Costs of lifting covenants on Section 106 agreements (Addington Way)

(Note: (i) In the Absence of the Head of Street Services, Agenda Item 12 be postponed until the next meeting

(ii) Councillors Simmons and Shaw disclosed a personal and prejudicial interest in Area Project Grant Schemes LW 156 and LW 157 insofar as that they were affiliated to both projects and left the meeting during the consideration of the items.

(iii) The meeting concluded at 9.35 p.m.)