

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 1 October 2013

Present

Councillor William Huntington-Thresher (Chairman)
Councillor Samaris Huntington-Thresher (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors John Getgood, Julian Grainger, David Jefferys,
Nick Milner, Catherine Rideout and Harry Stranger

Also Present

Councillor Colin Smith and Councillor Ruth Bennett

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Reg Adams, Judi Ellis and Catherine Rideout. Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP attended as alternative for Councillor Rideout and Councillor Harry Stranger attended as alternate for Councillor Ellis.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP and Councillor Ruth Bennett both declared an interest in item 8b by virtue of living some 0.5 miles from Plaistow Lane Car Park.

13 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

There were no questions to the Committee.

14 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25TH JUNE 2013

In considering the Minutes and with reference to Minute 6D) (*Access Road to Development adjacent top site of 2 Station Cottages, Chelsfield – Proposed lighting under Private Street Works Procedure*), Councillor Grainger asked that reference be made in the minute to:

- the passing bay being contrary to crossover policy, grass amenity land being sacrificed for a passing bay; and
- street lighting causing an unacceptable public nuisance in view of its impact on the homes of residents.

15 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

Three questions were received for oral reply from Alison Stammers representing the Chislehurst Society and the Chislehurst Town Team.

Two questions were also received from Mr Colin Willetts for written reply.

Details of the questions and responses are at **Appendix A**.

16 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF REPORTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A) MANOR PARK CLOSE - PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS

Report ES13085

Manor Park Close, a small residential close off Manor Park Road, West Wickham (close to the High Street), was experiencing a high level of demand for on street parking.

In 2009, residents had petitioned about the level and manner of parking in the area, the main concern being vehicles parked at the junction of Manor Park Close and Manor Park Road and along Manor Park Close. A consultation was carried out on the proposal for “*At any time*” waiting restrictions at the Close. Some objections were received and the proposal was not taken forward. Residents were informed that the site would be monitored and that it might be necessary to re-investigate if concerns continued and access problems persisted.

The site was further investigated in early 2013 following requests from residents. On street parking on both sides of the road was creating an issue for larger vehicles. Restrictions to one side of the road were suggested to ensure that access is maintained. Parking close to the junction and turning area of the cul-de-sac could create further issues. All residents had a form of off-street parking and it was thought appropriate to consult residents on adding some restrictions to the close.

Following informal consultations with Ward Members, a formal consultation was carried out in June 2013. A letter to residents included the proposed plan (ESD 10561-1) with 16 households being informed of the proposal. Two letters were received in support and two in objection. Specific objections and officer comments were outlined in Report ES13085. The West Wickham Residents Association also objected to the proposal.

Officers concluded that the proposed changes would benefit road safety, would help improve sightlines at the Manor Park Road junction and ensure that access could be gained at all times.

Councillor Bennett advised that residents did not support restrictions along the whole length of the Close. He therefore advocated restrictions around the turning area of the Close but none along the side. He also suggested a warning sign on approach to the junction advising of the Close being a cul-de-sac. He also recommended a zebra crossing across Manor Park Road close to the nearby school.

The Head of Traffic and Road Safety advised that a crossing can be looked at. He also saw no difficulty in the approach to waiting restrictions proposed by Councillor Bennett.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree that waiting restrictions for Manor Park Close be installed around the turning area at the end of the Close as shown in consultation plan ESD 10561-1, but not along the length of the Close.

B) BUDGET MONITORING 2013/14

Report ES13108

Members considered the latest budget position for the Environment Portfolio.

Based on expenditure and activity levels to 31st July 2013, the 2013/14 controllable budget for the Environment Portfolio was projected to overspend by £546k.

Report ES13108 also highlighted expenditure and progress against Environment Portfolio projects within the Member Priority Initiatives programme.

Details were provided of variations leading to the projected overspend. This included a £546k net shortfall of income resulting from closure of the Westmoreland car park. It appeared that parkers had not migrated to other LBB car parks within Bromley town centre – very little additional income had been received for the other car parks in the first four months of the year. An amount had been set aside within central contingency to cover the estimated shortfall and Councillor Jefferys suggested a footnote on the budget monitoring summary to reflect this (the car park sale had not completed at the time of preparing the off street parking income budgets). Report ES13108 recommended that the Portfolio Holder seek Executive approval to draw-down the amount.

Concerning a projected £60k deficit within waste disposable tonnages and an end of year variation of 750 tonnes, Councillor Jefferys enquired of what action was being taken to address this such as promoting waste minimisation to residents. Highlighting reduced paper tonnages from households and a projected £50k deficit, he also enquired whether this might be due to wet weather last winter having a negative effect on paper collected.

Members were advised that a large proportion of the waste tonnage variation resulted from increased waste at the transfer stations rather than residents putting more waste out for collection. Officers were working to find markets for as much of this waste as possible.

Regarding paper, officers were negotiating with the contractor and there was an expectation that the price for paper would be adhered to. With successive weeks of wet weather, it was acknowledged that a significant amount of paper would turn to pulp. This would be difficult for paper mills to process but was a problem for the contractor (pulp is part of treatment but it was understood that pulp produced from paper in wet weather is unacceptable for treatment processes).

The Chairman highlighted the Waste Minimisation Working Group and for a future initiative, suggested a publicity campaign on recycling paper.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

(1) endorse the latest 2013/14 budget projection for the Environment Portfolio;

(2) note progress in implementing the Environment projects within the Member Priority Initiatives programme; and

(3) agree that the Executive be asked to approve the draw-down of £546k from central contingency for the net loss of income from Westmoreland Car Park, pursuant to its sale in April 2013.

C) CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 1ST QUARTER 2013/14

Report RES13177

At its meeting on 24th July 2013, the Executive agreed a revised Capital Programme for 2013/14 to 2016/17. Changes in respect of the Capital Programme for the Environment Portfolio were outlined and a revised programme for the Portfolio was presented. Details on the 2012/13 Capital Programme outturn for the Portfolio were also provided as were comments on the progress of schemes at the end of the first quarter of 2013/14 (including spend against budget).

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to confirm the changes agreed by the Executive in July.

D) TFL FUNDED WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15 - 2016/17

Report ES13090

TfL's formula allocation for L B Bromley, 2014/15, would be £2.418m with funding eligibility validated through an approved Local Implementation Plan (LIP).

London Boroughs were now required to (i) update their LIP to include a new Delivery Plan for 2014/15 – 2016/17, and (ii) update their Performance Monitoring Plan with milestones achieved to date and revised interim targets. The two updated parts of the LIP for L B Bromley were appended to Report ES13090.

Ring-fenced funding would additionally be available to support other programmes, including local transport priorities, principal road maintenance, bridges and structures, and Bromley North Village. Boroughs would also be able to bid for a new funding stream to support the Mayor's Cycling Vision for London (*The Borough Cycling Programme*). A separate programme of bus stop accessibility has also been made available to boroughs and officers were currently investigating this opportunity.

Report ES13090 summarised the confirmed funding allocation for 2014/15, along with indicative funding allocations for 2015/16 and 2016/17. It also outlined a recommended programme of projects 2014/15 to 2016/17. If necessary, changing the list of schemes following submission was not expected to be difficult. Approving the recommended list of projects would not imply approval of a particular scheme for implementation; all the schemes would be subject to consultation and Member approval.

Councillor Bennett felt that TfL should have a dedicated cycle lane policy. Although this was a matter for TfL on priority routes such as the A21, officers supported an improvement to the provision for cyclists on such routes. Councillor Grainger advocated cycle improvements at junctions but preferred current road space provision without dedicated cycle lanes. Considering the interaction between cyclists and other road users, the Chairman felt that having a good reliable surface was one of the best ways to encourage cycling.

Supporting the need to consult relevant ward members on proposals for individual bus stop improvements (Recommendation 2.3 of Report ES13090), Councillor Grainger highlighted that some elderly residents had expressed concern over a loss of hail and ride sections for certain bus routes and he advocated their reintroduction. Members were advised that this was a separate policy decision for London Buses.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree that:

- (1) the programme of formula-funded schemes for 2014/15 and the indicative programme for 2015/16 to 2016/17, contained in Enclosure 1, be approved for submission to TfL;**
- (2) the new Delivery Plan and updated Performance Monitoring Plan contained within Enclosure 2 be approved for submission to TfL;**
- (3) Officers secure ring-fenced funding from TfL for bus stop improvements, with identified stops consulted upon with local ward members; and**

(4) the Executive Director of Environment and Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make post-submission changes to the programme to reflect necessary changes to priority, potential delays to implementation following detailed design and consultation, or other unforeseen events.

E) CONGESTION RELIEF SCHEME: HEATHFIELD ROAD / WESTERHAM ROAD, PROPOSED ROUNDABOUT

Report ES13094

In 2008 the Congestion Working Group identified the junction of Heathfield Road and Westerham Road as a congestion “pinch point”. Report ES13094 highlighted traffic count data for vehicles passing through the junction between 1st and 7th July 2013 and also provided accident data for both the junction and wider area, including ‘*chicken farm bend*’.

A scheme was proposed to assist traffic flow through the junction, particularly vehicles travelling south from Heathfield Road to Westerham Road. It was suggested that a formal three-arm roundabout could have a positive impact by reducing vehicle speeds on the approach to and exit from the junction, and in particular the speed of vehicles travelling south towards ‘*chicken farm bend*’ (between Heathfield Road and Downe Road). Reduced vehicle speeds would also assist pedestrians travelling between the three bus stops at the location, as well as the car park on Heathfield Road. A dedicated tactile crossing was also proposed to further assist pedestrians crossing Heathfield Road.

Councillor Ruth Bennett as a Ward Member for Bromley Common and Keston addressed the Committee. Although the report was headed “Congestion Relief Scheme”, she felt there was a lot in the report about reducing speeds. She presumed that consultation on the scheme would include local residents associations e.g. Keston Village Residents Association. She also advocated a wider consultation in view of the green and wooded nature of the area.

Councillor Bennett indicated that Resident Associations and others in the Keston area were concerned that the proposed scheme would increase traffic, much of which was related to the school in the area. She felt that motorists should be encouraged to remain on the A223 (rather than travel along Heathfield Road to reach the A232). It was necessary to look at the broader area.

Councillor Bennett was not convinced the scheme would assist in reducing traffic speeds other than at the approach to the proposed roundabout. She hoped that concerns would be taken into account when deciding on the scheme; it was necessary to look at the impact on a broader area rather than the junction. It was unlikely the scheme would be supported in a consultation.

Councillor Carr, as a ward Member, had also emailed the Chairman with concerns for the scheme, including an increase in traffic through Keston village.

The Head of Traffic and Road Safety explained that a roundabout design was the best way for slowing traffic and relieving traffic queues. The junction was listed for congestion relief and the opportunity could be taken to deal with safety issues. Best value was obtained by reducing accidents and congestion at the same time.

Officers had looked at traffic flows and most cars travelling along Heathfield Road from the West Wickham area do not turn right on to Westerham Road towards Biggin Hill. There was already a lot of congestion caused by the junction at Keston Mark and with less traffic through Keston village there would be more traffic on the A232. The Head of Traffic and Road Safety felt that traffic through Keston village would not increase as a result of the scheme. He agreed that speeds would only reduce on approach to the roundabout but that was probably all that could be achieved along Heathfield Road to reduce speeds.

Councillor Grainger suggested that the main congestion was from southbound traffic along Heathfield Road to Westerham Road. For an improvement in safety and amenity, he suggested a reduction in traffic having to travel along Fishponds Road. He also considered the bends along Westerham Road to be a significant issue, suggesting attention to the camber of the bends. Councillor Grainger broadly supported the scheme but felt that it should proceed with care and attention. He was unclear why it could be expected that the amount of traffic would increase (through Keston village).

Councillor Ruth Bennett indicated that there was little residential development along Fishponds Road. As it is narrow, traffic travels slowly; she did not see Fishponds Road as an issue.

The Vice-Chairman felt that careful consideration should be given to who should be consulted. She suggested that it was necessary to go further afield and take account of those travelling through Keston village e.g. those travelling to Hayes or West Wickham from Orpington. It was necessary to ensure that consultation and data is as effective as possible. Councillor Grainger supported the Vice-Chairman's views; the scheme had some merits and he supported it going to consultation provided it was thorough. Councillor Jefferys also supported a wider consultation.

Councillor Ruth Bennett was content to support consultation but doubted it would show public support from ward residents. The general feeling was to dissuade traffic from travelling along Heathfield Road and to keep it to the main road. Councillor Grainger suggested some research on why it was felt there would be more traffic through the village. For consultation, he suggested that residents be asked to indicate where extra traffic might be coming from rather than provide a tick box response. Councillor Ruth Bennett supported residents providing comments.

In conclusion, it was agreed to support recommendation 2.1 of Report ES13094 but not recommendation 2.2. Instead, it was agreed to proceed with consultation and bring the outcome back to Committee before taking the scheme forward in view of wider interests.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to approve for consultation the proposed congestion relief scheme set out at paragraph 3.9 of Report ES13094, and as shown on drawing number 11473-01, with the outcome reported back in view of the wider interests across the area.

F) JUNCTION IMPROVEMENT SOUTHEND ROAD / RECTORY ROAD / ALBEMARLE ROAD

Report ES13089

Report ES13089 outlined proposals to realign the carriageway of Southend Road (A2015) on its southbound approach to the junction with Albemarle Road, in order to improve traffic flow and the safety of pedestrians.

Concerns had been expressed about larger vehicles struggling to make the left turn from Rectory Road into Southend Road. The proposed alterations would make this turn easier for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). It would also encourage HGV drivers to use Rectory Road instead of the High Street.

Alterations to the pedestrian refuge islands and tactile paving would also help to improve pedestrian safety.

Overall, the proposals would improve the capacity of the junction, thereby reducing congestion, improving safety and reducing damage to the adjacent footway.

The project could also be seen as a step towards removing some of the larger vehicles from the High Street aligning with aspirations for its further redevelopment. The junction was identified as a pinch point by the 2008 Congestion Working Group.

In discussion it was suggested that consideration be given to banning right turns from Rectory Road into the High Street to further relieve congestion (with information obtained on the number of right turn movements currently made). Alternatively, a dedicated right turn lane on Rectory Road might assist, but it would first be necessary to remove a Virgin Media utility installation.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

(1) agree alterations to the carriageway on Southend Road shown in diagram number 11408-01, as well as the amendments to the pedestrian refuge islands and tactile paving (also shown in diagram 11408-01);

(2) consider (at the detailed design stage) banning right turns into the High Street from Rectory Road; and

(3) agree that authority to make any minor modifications which might arise as a result of the detailed design of the scheme be delegated to the Executive Director of Environment and Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Ward Members.

G) PRIVATE STREET WORKS - THE FAIRWAY / SOUTHBOROUGH LANE, BROMLEY: SECOND RESOLUTION

Report ES13071

Report ES13071 sought a Resolution of Approval under the Private Street Works (PSW) Code, in respect of two sections of unadopted highway at The Fairway / Southborough Lane, Bromley. The Resolution would enable the street footways to be made-up and adopted, and thereafter maintained at the public expense.

An earlier decision was made to:

- progress schemes concerning the use and condition of the two unmade and unadopted sections of footway in front of numbers 187-211, Southborough Lane to the west of The Fairway and numbers 213a-239 Southborough Lane, to the east of The Fairway; and
- prepare a further report to obtain Resolutions of Approval for the two separate schemes under the PSW Code (both schemes would join the existing adopted highway, known as 'The Fairway').

As the Council was only empowered to adopt the footways (enabling them to be highway maintainable at public expense) following improvement works carried out under the provisions of the PSW Code, it was necessary to make two distinct Resolutions to enable this:

- a First Resolution to execute the necessary works giving details of those aspects of the street with which it is dissatisfied, and
- a second Resolution, a "*Resolution of Approval*" approving plans and sections of the proposed works, a specification of the works required to bring the street up to a suitable standard, an estimate of the cost of such works, and a provisional apportionment of these costs amongst the owners of the land fronting the works.

A First Resolution was made under s. 205(1) of the Highways Act 1980, on 16 April 2013 (ES13036). The appropriate documents had now been prepared to enable a Resolution of Approval to be made enabling the Provisional Apportionment, containing details of property ownerships, to be as up to date as possible.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

(1) approve without modification the specification design details shown on Plan No. 11324-02-1, sections, estimate and provisional apportionment;

(2) approve without modification the specification design details shown on Plan No. 11324-02-2, sections, estimate and provisional apportionment; and

(3) further resolve that the Council bears the whole of the cost of the street works, which will be met from funding provided by Transport for London under the provisions of s. 236(1) of the Highways Act 1980.

17 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF REPORT TO THE RESOURCES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

A) PRIORY GARDENS AND ADJOINING FORMER PUBLIC TOILET BLOCK

Report ES13084

The Committee was informed that it was proposed to suspend the marketing of the former Priory Gardens public toilets to provide an opportunity for the Friends of Priory Gardens (gardeners) to use the building as a base from which to operate a horticultural gardening volunteer programme.

RESOLVED that the Resources Portfolio Holder be recommended to suspend the sale or demolition of the former toilets adjacent to the Priory Gardens, whilst officers investigate external funding opportunities to permit the Friends of Priory Gardens (gardeners) to have use of the building for volunteer gardening related activities.

**18 REPORTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER NOT REQUIRING PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY
(Appendix 3 to the Executive Procedure Rules of the L B Bromley Constitution)**

A) CONGESTION RELIEF SCHEME: WENDOVER ROAD / MASONS HILL, BROMLEY - JUNCTION IMPROVEMENTS

Report ES12023

At the junction of Wendover Road with Masons Hill (A21), traffic can either turn left towards Hayes Lane or right towards Bromley High Street. There is currently only a single lane exit and long queues can result at peak times with a vehicle waiting to turn right.

With a widening of the carriageway in Wendover Road by slightly reducing the width of the footways, two exit lanes can be provided. Drawing number

11371-01 showed a junction layout indicating reduced footway widths and 3m vehicle exit lanes.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

(1) approve consultation on a highway scheme to improve traffic flows out of Wendover Road; and

(2) delegate decisions regarding details of any design to the Executive Director of Environment and Community Services, in consultation with Ward Members and the Portfolio Holder, and having regard to the outcome of public consultation.

B) PARKING CHARGES: PLAISTOW LANE CAR PARK

Report ES13044

The introduction of charges at Plaistow Car Park in 2011 had resulted in a migration of commuter parking from Plaistow Car Park to on-street locations in the immediate vicinity. Congestion and parking difficulties had resulted for local residents and income from car park charges only just met the cost of cash-collection.

Residents favoured a return to free parking at the car park rather than introduce new parking restrictions. A reduction in daily charge to £1 met with only limited success in encouraging commuters back to the car park.

By charging at the car park a cost of £4.3k p.a. is incurred (to cover enforcement, cash collections, ticket supply, machine maintenance, surface maintenance, minor works, signs and lines). There would be no additional costs if the car park was returned to free use other than a one-off sum of about £500 for removing the Pay and Display machine and associated signs.

Income from charges currently exceeded the cash collection fee by about £300 p.a., taking account of mobile phone payments. With NNDR costs also having to be met, the facility incurred a loss of about £6k p.a., along with the opportunity cost of not using the land for other purposes.

Although the NNDR costs of about £6.7k p.a would remain on return to free parking, it was proposed to remove the car park charge with immediate effect taking into consideration:

- the views of residents;
- the increase in street parking caused by charging; and
- the marginal income generated from charging.

The Chairman preferred to see the recommendation at 2.1 of Report ES13044 shortened to read *“that Plaistow Lane Car Park should revert to being a free car park”*.

The Vice-Chairman noted that there was already free parking at the car park for the first two hours. Prior to charging for the car park, Members were advised that it was well used with no blocking of parking spaces in nearby roads. When charges were introduced, commuters parked in nearby roads. The NNDR costs were highlighted as were the management costs and substantial parking in nearby roads; commuters had been attracted to nearby streets offering free parking.

Councillor Nicholas Bennett supported the recommendation advocating that the car park be free to use, thereby relieving local roads of parked vehicles. However, the Vice Chairman was concerned that a precedent might be set. Noting that NNDR costs were not insignificant, she indicated that waiting restrictions had previously been introduced in the vicinity of other car parks where the cost of all day parking was less than £3 per day. The Chairman highlighted that if the car park was to become free and costing almost £7k per annum in business rates, with additional street cleaning costs, it might be subject to an asset review and become surplus to requirements, the result of which might lead to it being sold.

A vote was taken and it was agreed by a majority that the Portfolio Holder should be recommended to agree the recommendation as edited earlier by the Chairman. It was also suggested that the long term future of the car park be referred to the strategic asset review.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree that the Plaistow Lane Car Park should revert to being a free car park.

19 PARKING IN CHISLEHURST

Report ES13051

To attract more usage of the car parks in Chislehurst town centre, Report ES13051 recommended a reduction in the all day charge at the car parks. It also recommended an increase in the hourly rate for on-street parking charges to ensure sufficient turn-over of spaces to meet demand and reduce congestion.

Price increases in the Chislehurst town centre car parks arising from the 2012 borough-wide review of parking charges appeared to have had an impact on use of the High Street and Red Hill car parks, with some displacement to Hornbrook House car park. The Chislehurst Society and the Chislehurst Town Team had expressed concern that the increases might have impacted on local businesses and visitors, and might have led to an increase in on-street parking where no charge is made.

Consultation was undertaken with local traders and businesses on options for a further limited review of Chislehurst parking charges, with the aim of encouraging longer stay motorists to use car park facilities, so contributing to a higher turnover and availability of pay and display bays on-street. Local High Street traders were consulted and it appeared that the majority of traders

would support a decrease in the all-day parking charge at car parks in combination with a small increase in on-street charges.

It was therefore recommended that on-street charges be increased to 70p per hour. Also that all-day charges in the High Street and Hornbrook House car parks be reduced from £3.50 to £2.00 (Red Hill car park is not directly affected as it has a four hour maximum stay), with a new charging structure as follows:

0 – 1 hour	£0.40
1 – 2 hours	£0.80
2 – 3 hours	£1.20
3 – 4 hours	£1.60
Over 4 hours	£2.00

The proposed tariff changes were consistent with the principles of the 2012 Parking Charges strategy; on-street charges in Chislehurst would in effect move into the charging band shared by Orpington and Beckenham town centres. Charges within all three Chislehurst car parks would remain consistent with each other. Taking all factors into account, it was also considered that the proposed changes would be cost neutral.

Councillor Nicholas Bennett asked that future reports concerning parking facilities include a map to assist Members.

Concerning an intention to advertise the availability of parking season tickets, the Vice-Chairman highlighted comments from Councillor Boughey in Report ES13051, encouraging a wider publicity of savings that could be obtained from using a season ticket, including display of the cost of a season ticket on new signs in the car parks highlighting the reduced charges.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:

(1) reduce the maximum all day charge at the Hornbrook House and High Street car parks, Chislehurst from the current £3.50 charge to £2.00 as set out at paragraphs 3.15 and 3.16 of Report ES13051; and

(2) increase the hourly charge for on-street parking in Chislehurst by 10p per hour, i.e. from 60p to 70p per hour.

20 DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES INVOLVING UTILITY COMPANIES

Report ES13106

Members considered a report requested by Councillor Nicolas Bennett concerning a water main burst at Corkscrew Hill, West Wickham on Sunday 28th July 2013, near the junction with Bencurtis Park. The incident resulted in a substantial flow of water along Corkscrew Hill, causing significant damage to the surrounding road surface and pavements.

Some 251 residential properties were directly affected by the incident, including vulnerable elderly residents at Bencurtis Court - the properties either having very low water pressure or in some cases no water.

Thames Water was not aware of vulnerable residents at Bencurtis Court until advised by their staff. Thames Water delivered 40 bottles of water, considered inadequate for the residents by Glebe Housings Association's Chief Executive. Had Bencurtis Court been registered with Thames Water as premises needing special requirements, a supply of bottled water would have been delivered without prompting.

L B Bromley was notified of the incident via the Council's out-of-hours provider - this in respect of damage to the highway and the need for temporary diversions. The Council was not made aware of the impact on residential housing. The Emergency Planning Unit was not informed of the full circumstances until the following Tuesday, by which time the incident had been dealt with.

Although the Council's Street Works team were made aware of the incident on Monday 30th July, there was nothing to indicate the scale or extent of the impact upon residents. As such no information was passed to the Emergency Planning Unit.

Councillor Nicholas Bennett was concerned that the Council's Emergency Planning Office was not made aware of the incident until the following Tuesday. Also, Report ES13016 had not considered any possible changes in procedure. Councillor Bennett felt that standard operating procedures should highlight a need for street works officers to ask searching questions on notification of an incident in order to gauge the nature of an emergency and its implications. A judgement could then be made on whether to advise Emergency Planning.

A key issue was that Thames Water had not advised the Council. It was necessary for utility companies to notify the Council of such incidents within two hours. Without such notification officers would have no information on the extent of an incident for vulnerable users. Thames Water and other utilities maintained a register of local service users. Information with officers and a utility company within two hours of an incident would not necessarily provide an indication of the extent of an emergency. Officers were in the hands of utility companies to provide information. It was also highlighted that Glebe Housing Association had not advised Thames Water of vulnerable service users at Bencurtis Court. If a utility company were to advise of an incident being escalated, the Council would pass on necessary information. The Street Works team were now more aware of the potential need to notify Emergency Planning of an incident.

Aware that the Council would have an active interest in the effect of such an incident on the borough's roads, Councillor Grainger felt it important that officers enquire of the scale of an incident.

Members were advised officers had a system for reacting. When site information was obtained, officers would get a feel for the sense of an incident and officers could then react.

The Chairman suggested that procedures should be updated so that officers seek as much information as possible when incidents are reported. He also suggested that the Council write to groups with vulnerable service users alerting them of the need to notify utility companies.

Councillor Bennett suggested that a review of Standard Operating Procedures be undertaken along with questions that should be asked prior to assessing whether to refer incident details to Emergency Planning. This was agreed, and the issue would be followed up under matters arising.

RESOLVED that:

(1) the details on the incident be noted along with the current arrangements in place when dealing with utility companies; and

(2) a review of Standard Operating Procedures be undertaken, along with questions asked by officers before referring incidents to Emergency Planning.

21 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME, MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS, AND CONTRACTS REGISTER

Report ES13079

In noting the Committee's work programme, the Chairman highlighted that a meeting of the Parking Working Group had been convened for 9th October 2013.

RESOLVED that:

(1) the work programme be noted;

(2) progress related to previous Committee requests be noted; and

(3) a summary of contracts related to the Environment Portfolio be noted.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ORAL REPLY FROM ALISON STAMMERS, REPRESENTING THE CHISLEHURST SOCIETY AND THE CHISLEHURST TOWN TEAM

1. Can you please confirm that the price of Season Tickets will be reduced in line with the reduction in the all day parking charges proposed tonight, and that their availability will be advertised widely so as to ensure wider take-up, such as with signage in the car parks?

Reply

Yes, that is correct; and advertising the availability of season tickets is referred to in paragraph 3.16 of the Chislehurst report on this evening's agenda.

2. Can you also confirm that Season Tickets will be able to be used from Monday to Saturday - at present they are limited to 5 days a week, which is no good to people who work on Saturdays, as many High Street employees have to do?

Reply

Consideration is being given to replacing 5 day season tickets with a 6 day permit borough-wide to address exactly this issue. It is not expected that there would be a significant financial impact resulting from this change, but this does need to be assessed before implementation can be agreed.

Supplementary Question

Alison Stammers welcomed consideration of a 6 day permit borough-wide and asked for an indication of the timescale for its introduction, if agreed.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would forward on details.

3. We also ask why season ticket holders are not allowed refunds if the holder has no further use for them. Why would anyone buy an annual Season Ticket in today's uncertain times? This discourages take-up and the council should surely follow the more usual practice of a partial refund?

Reply

We do not as a rule offer a refund for season tickets once purchased; that is part of the formal conditions of use. For motorists facing uncertainty, season tickets of shorter duration, such as monthly or quarterly, are available albeit at a slightly lower rate of discount. However, we would consider a refund based on the merits of an individual case, if for instance a holder were to lose their job, move away from the area or suffer a long term serious illness, subject to a commensurate administration charge.

Supplementary Question

Alison Stammers referred to the shared service with L B Bexley, including parking enforcement matters, and asked why L B Bexley was able to offer refunds but L B Bromley was not.

Reply

The Portfolio Holder indicated that the shared service was around administration of the service rather than policy.

**QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MR COLIN WILLETTS
FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

1, With regard to Olleys Posh Wash in Sevenoaks Way, could the Portfolio Holder remove their advertising van, a red Renault FD51(PCN X3), and remove their illegally painted hatch markings on the LBB frontage?

Reply

There is no need for me to become involved. The red van was removed to store during week commencing 9th September 2013.

The hatch marking is scheduled for removal with those responsible being charged for the works.

2. As a Kemnal school governor I passed on a complaint from parents to Councillor Ince requesting that faded mini roundabout at The Avenue junction Valley Road be remarked. I received a quick response '*its in the pipeline*', however, three months down the line we still await remarking. Could the Portfolio Holder/Leader assist in chasing this work up for completion?

Reply

There is no need for me to become involved. I can confirm that the roundabout at the junction of The Avenue and Valley Road has been remarked as of 12 September 2013 in line with instructions received from Cllr John Ince.

The Meeting ended at 9.44 pm

Chairman