

Runnymede Borough Council

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

11 November 2004 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J.R. Furey (Chairman), M.J. Brown, Ms D.V. Clarke, Mrs E. Gill, C. Knight, C.J. Norman, R.J. Ray, B.J. Relph, Mrs M. Roberts, and C.J. Ruane

Members of the Committee absent: None

Councillors R.K. Habgood, R. Pate, Ms C.M. Simmons and P.J. Waddell also attended for all or part of the meeting.

326. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Groups mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of their wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be re-appointed.

Group Requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor J.E. Haas	Councillor C.J. Norman
Conservative	Councillor Mrs Y.P. Lay	Councillor Ms D.V. Clarke
Independent	Councillor A. Alderson	Councillor B.J. Relph

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to these wishes in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

327. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 September 2004 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

328. FREE CAR PARKS - AMENDMENT TO WAITING LIMIT

The Committee gave preliminary consideration to proposals to amend the parking restrictions in the free car parks at Victoria Street and St Jude's Road, Englefield Green and Murray Road, Ottershaw.

Members noted that the car parks presently had a maximum waiting limit of 17 hours, with no return within 7 hours. This was, however, both difficult to enforce and incompatible with the primary purpose of the car parks, namely to provide short stay facilities for local shoppers. Vehicle repair and car sales premises in the immediate vicinity of all three car parks used them as holding areas for cars awaiting repair or sale and the staff of local businesses parked in the car parks all day while at work. The situation was particularly acute at the St Judes Road car park which was monopolised by a local garage. The garage had not co-operated with repeated requests to desist from its use of the car park for business purposes. A recent parking study conducted in Englefield Green had confirmed the validity of complaints that the long stay parking sometimes meant there were no spaces available for the general public. The demand for the car parks was likely to increase with the enhanced parking enforcement regime that had been introduced earlier in the week.

The Committee noted that one possible solution would be to introduce a maximum waiting limit of two hours, with no return within three hours, between 0800 and 1800 hours, Monday to Saturday. The removal of long term parking would free spaces for shoppers as well as parents of pupils at St Jude's and St Cuthbert's schools who used the respective car parks when delivering and collecting their children. This would, in turn, alleviate congestion on the streets and clear the roads of unnecessary vehicle parking around the school entrances. Members recognised, however, that a restricted waiting period would adversely affect local employees and other regular patrons of the car parks, including, in the case of Murray Road, users of the Brook Memorial Hall. A number of

representations had been received from local businesses regarding the potential loss of employee parking while the Ottershaw Society, the Chairman and Administrator of Brook Hall and user groups had expressed concern at the impact on activities held at the facility. The car parks were not of sufficient size to provide reserved bays for permit holders.

The Committee, mindful that it would be difficult to reconcile the conflicting needs of the various groups of motorists, felt that it was necessary to clearly establish the fundamental purpose for which the car parks were maintained. Members agreed that consultation should be undertaken with the interested parties, not only on potential changes to the waiting limits but also, perhaps as an alternative means of control, the option of introducing Pay and Display charges. The process in respect of Murray Road would also take account of a community plan being developed for the local area by the Ottershaw Society.

RESOLVED that –

Officers be instructed to carry out consultation with local users on potential changes to waiting limits and the option of introducing parking charges in the Victoria Street and St. Jude's Road car parks in Englefield Green and Murray Road, Ottershaw and report back to this Committee.

329. SERVICE PLAN 2004/05 - HALF YEARLY PERFORMANCE

(Ref: Minutes of Economic Development Committee, September 2004, page 241, para. 178)

Members received details of progress with the Economic Development Service Plan in the second quarter of 2004/05. The plan served as a basis for monitoring and review of the Committee's objectives as drawn from a variety of sources and set out details of timescales, potential barriers and additional resource requirements as well as corrective action where it was required to improve performance.

The Committee noted that the improvements scheme in Station Road, Addlestone was due to be completed the following week. The official opening, to which Members were invited, would take place on 27 November, at the same time as the Christmas lights were switched on.

330. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT - RUNNYMEDE TRAVEL INITIATIVE

(Ref: Minutes of Economic Development Committee, May 2004, page 1576, para. 892)

The Committee received details of the preparations for the possible introduction of a Business Improvement District (BID) to assist with the funding of the Runnymede School Travel Initiative.

Members recalled that BIDs were a new means of promoting partnerships between local authorities and businesses in order to provide additional services or improvements funded by a time limited levy to be added to the non domestic rate. The business community, or other relevant sector, identified the project to be supported following a ballot amongst those companies likely to benefit from the scheme, although implementation would be in consultation with the Council.

The Travel Initiative operated in conjunction with the Runnymede Business Partnership and sought to reduce the number of school and business journeys made by car. A key feature was the provision of American style yellow buses, which currently served Magna Carta, Fullbrook, Jubilee High and Salesian schools. The scheme had been well received by pupils, parents and schools and had achieved significant modal shift away from the car on the school run. The £228,000 annual cost for a six bus service was met from fares, business sponsorship and, increasingly, Section 106 developer contributions. While this was likely to be sufficient to sustain existing levels of service, Section 106 monies could not be relied upon to support the further growth of the scheme. A BID would provide the opportunity to build on the success of the pilot project and maximise modal shift by funding an expansion to 12 buses. The net cost for a 12 bus scheme supported by a BID (excluding school contributions and sponsorship) was estimated at £350,000 per annum.

The Committee noted that significant progress had been made following the publication in September of the formal regulations setting out the procedure to be followed for the establishment of a BID. The original proposal had been for the 100 largest companies within the Borough, based upon number of employees, to be the subject of the BID ballot. However, now that the logistical issues had been clarified by detailed guidance it appeared more appropriate to operate the BID on

the basis of those employers that benefited most from significant traffic reduction and whose premises had the highest rateable value. Members therefore concurred with the view of the Business Partnership - which was formally promoting the initiative - that it should apply to all non domestic ratepayers whose premises had a rateable value of over £350,000. This would include about 50 major non domestic ratepayers, including the Council itself, which would be liable to pay an annual non domestic levy of £7,500 each for a period of 5 years if there was a positive outcome to the ballot. The Council, as one of the qualifying organisations, would be entitled to vote in the ballot.

Members welcomed the application of the BID concept to such a successful and valued scheme. In accordance with the preliminary advice of Counsel, comprehensive details of the proposal would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, in January, for approval. In the interim, the qualifying organisations would be formally advised of the BID process, and provided with the detailed supporting information. The ballot papers would be issued a fortnight after the January Committee meeting. Subject to the outcome of the ballot, the collection of the additional levy could then commence on 1 April 2005 with additional buses being introduced on a phased basis from September 2005 onwards.

In considering the operation of the Yellow Bus Scheme itself, the Committee noted that the vehicles were not adapted to accommodate disabled children because the Education Authority was responsible for their travel arrangements. The project was intended to complement rather than duplicate the County Council's services, but it was agreed that the participating schools should be contacted in order to confirm that satisfactory alternative provision was indeed made for children with disabilities.

RESOLVED that -

subject to the receipt of the formal proposals in due course:

- i) a ballot be held on the Business Improvement District proposals;**
- ii) the Council's vote be cast in favour of the Business Improvement District proposals;**
- iii) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the proposals following receipt of Counsel's further opinion; and**
- iv) the Corporate Management Committee be requested to note the financial implications for future years.**

331. CAR PARKING IN ADDLESTONE

(Ref: Minutes of Review Board, September 2003, page 409, para. 252 and Economic Development Committee, September 2003, page 635, para. 295)

At its meeting in September 2003 the Committee had instructed Officers to examine a variety of means by which additional car parking spaces might be created in Addlestone in order to compensate for the construction of the new community centre on part of the Garfield Road car park. Members now received details of the progress to date and considered the way forward.

The Committee noted that a substantial amount of public parking was still available in Addlestone, principally at the Tesco Superstore, which had over 400 spaces. The residual Garfield Road Car Park itself, although well used, usually still had several spare places. Nevertheless, a feasibility study had been undertaken into the possible decking of the Garfield Road Car Park as part of the community centre scheme. Discussions had also taken place with various developers about the potential for a multi-storey car park on the former Safeways site in Station Road. In both cases it had been established that the proposals would be uneconomic and visually intrusive. Consideration would, however, be given to the provision of decked or multi-storey parking as part of the scheme for a new Civic Offices. The determining factors would be the likely demand for spaces by staff, visitors and the public generally, the cost, whether the expenditure could be funded from the sale of part of the site and the impact on adjoining residents.

Efforts had also been made to establish whether the public might be permitted to access the private parking areas in the town centre. None of the owners of the largest private car parks attached to office and retail premises had responded to approaches from Officers, neither had it proved possible to gauge the Post Office's long term plans for parking and access at the Addlestone Sorting Office. However, a five year lease had recently been secured on the former Safeways car park, enabling it to be utilised for public parking. An additional 277 spaces would be provided by this means with effect from 15 November. Expenditure to bring the car park up to standard would be recovered from Pay and Display income. The Committee welcomed the additional provision, although it was recognised that the location of the car park on the periphery of the town centre was not likely to encourage widespread use by shoppers.

Members noted that 25 on street parking bays had also been incorporated within the Station Road improvements scheme, which was now nearing completion. This included two spaces for disabled drivers, with an additional four such bays being provided in the reconfigured Garfield Road car park or due to be provided at the new community centre. Use of all of the spaces for disabled drivers would be monitored to ensure that provision remained adequate. Arrangements to permit vehicular access into the community centre construction site through the Garfield Road car park had operated successfully to date, with most of the heavier vehicle movements already completed. The Civic Offices rear staff car park had been made available for use by the public, free of charge, on Saturdays, but usage had generally been very modest.

The Council had, meanwhile, been working in conjunction with the Runnymede Business Partnership and Surrey County Council to promote sustainable forms of transport which would, amongst other benefits, relieve pressure on parking spaces. Although this had principally concentrated on travel to schools with the Yellow Bus service, cycle shelters and 'walking buses', the local rail service to Waterloo had also been enhanced and the stations refurbished. Improved quality trains were to be provided shortly and the on-Station CCTV linked to Safer Runnymede. The Council had established a Company Transport Plan which encouraged staff to use other methods of transport to work rather than single occupancy cars. Occupiers of large new commercial developments were required, through the development control process, to put in place similar schemes, although it had not proved to be possible to institute a local area travel plan for smaller businesses and traders since it would involve considerable staff resources. As previous experience suggested that small employers were unlikely to participate in such a scheme without compulsion, Members felt that it would not represent the best use of staff time to pursue the option further.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the provision of decked or multi-storey parking be considered as part of the Civic Offices re-provision; and**
- ii) the adequacy of disabled persons parking spaces continue to be monitored.**

332. EGHAM FARMERS' MARKET

The Committee gave consideration to a request from the organiser of the Egham Farmers Market to run a weekday market.

The Farmers Market had operated in Egham High Street on the fourth Saturday each month for more than three years. Contrary to original expectations, the market had remained relatively small, generally consisting of no more than 9 to 11 stalls. The organiser had identified a number of reasons for this, including the success of the newly located Tesco store, some empty premises in the High Street, the lack of anything substantial in Egham to draw people away from alternative centres on a Saturday, some lack of awareness about the market and the loss of original stallholders due to illness and personal circumstances. While the Egham Chamber of Commerce had expressed the view that a larger market was required to draw people into the town centre, the market organiser contended that the basic level of footfall was insufficient to sustain a larger operation.

The organiser therefore wished to hold an additional market, on the 2nd Thursday of each month. It was hoped that this would attract new custom during the working week when more people were in Egham and could visit the market during breaks. The improved awareness of the market could also enhance its performance on Saturdays, thereby giving more incentive for the producers to attend.

The market producers themselves were keen on the initiative and extensive consultation had established that there was also widespread support for the proposal amongst local Ward Members, the Egham Residents Association and town centre traders - although opinion amongst the latter was divided over whether it would be more successful than the Saturday operation. The Chamber of Commerce had retracted initial reservations about the principle of a trial and the Highway Authority had no objection, subject to agreement on points of detail.

The Committee recognised that the existing market operation was smaller than hoped and there could be no guarantee that the Thursday venture would be any more successful. It was, nevertheless, felt that the experiment should be tried for a period of 12 months in order to expose the market to a different, weekday, customer base.

The Committee did not, however, support an associated request by a local Ward Member and the Egham Residents Association for free car parking to be provided on the new market days. Not only would it entail the loss of Pay and Display income, but the uncertainty it was likely to generate as to the applicability of the charges would be detrimental to the control regime.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to issue a new Street Trading Licence for Egham Farmers' Market allowing trading on the second Thursday of each month, subject to satisfactory modification of Traffic Orders, and other arrangements being made to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority and other interested agencies; and**
- ii) a further report be brought towards the end of a year of operation of the Thursday market to decide whether the weekday venture should continue.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.50pm)