

**HIGHWAYS PANEL held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 6pm on 19 JANUARY 2016**

Present: Councillor S Walsh (Chairman – Essex County Council)
Councillors R Gooding and J Lodge (Essex County Council)
Councillors R Chambers, J Freeman and A Mills (Uttlesford District Council)
Councillors J Davey and A Townsend (Uttlesford Association of Local Councils).

Officers in attendance: R Long (Highways Liaison Officer – Essex Highways)
and A Rees (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer – UDC).

Also present: Brian Martin (Stebbing Parish Council) and Valerie Stokes.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chairman invited Brian Martin to speak. Mr Martin said that Stebbing Parish Council had asked for an update on a number of schemes which it had submitted, and had now received a detailed response from the Highways Liaison Officer. Although he was pleased with the detail of response he had now received, the Parish Council felt as though once schemes were submitted, they disappeared and parish councils did not receive updates on applications which they had submitted. A process needed to be implemented to keep parish councils better informed on schemes throughout their area.

Councillor Walsh thanked Mr Martin for his statement and then invited the Highways Liaison Officer to respond. The Highways Liaison Officer said that requests are included on the list of potential schemes which appeared before the Highways Panel. Due to the volume of applications, it had not been possible to respond to parish councils with regard to every scheme. Instead, responses were only sent in instances where there were specific questions or where it looked as though they could be issues with the scheme. She was looking to implement a system which allowed for better communication with parish councils.

The Chairman invited Valerie Stokes to speak. Mrs Stokes said she had lived adjacent to byway 31 since 2001. The condition of the byway had deteriorated since then as no money had been spent to ensure the byway was fit for purpose. In 2008 she had received a letter which indicated that funding for works on the byway had been ring-fenced, however, no works had ever taken place.

As the byway was not fit for purpose, people had begun driving on it with 4x4 vehicles for fun, which had caused further deterioration of the byway. Furthermore, it was no longer safe to use for general use. She requested that the byway was closed immediately in order to prevent further degradation of the byway surface.

In response the Highways Liaison Officer said there was a legal process which needed to be completed in order to secure the closure of a byway. An Essex wide trial on winter closures for byways had taken place, and the results had proven inconclusive. Another trial was taking place which would conclude in the March. The outcome of the new trial should be understood by the end of the summer

Councillor Walsh agreed to walk down byway 31 so he could examine it and gave his contact details to Mrs Stokes.

HP17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Barker (ECC) and A Taylor (Assistant Director Planning and Building Control – UDC).

HP18 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

HP19 MATTERS ARISING

(i) HP12 – Business Arising

In response to a question by Councillor Lodge, the Highways Liaison Officer said the Wenden Road Cycle Path was no longer a Highways Panel function. Members would now receive updates on the scheme from Essex Highways.

HP20 UPDATE ON CAPITAL AND REVENUE SCHEMES APPROVED

The Highways Liaison Officer highlighted the following schemes:

(i) The Street, Takeley – Traffic Calming

Following the agreement of Highways Panel to transfer £80,000 of funding from a scheme which would not be completed within the financial year, the traffic calming measures had now been completed.

(ii) High Street, Hempstead – New Footway

It had initially been hoped that the scheme would be completed in the current financial year. However, there had been some legal issues which had prevented the middle part of the footpath being completed. The cost of the scheme would now exceed the original allocation of funding for the scheme and the remainder of the scheme would have to be considered as a separate scheme for the 2016/17 financial year.

(iii) A1060 j/w B183, Hatfield Heath – Implementation of a Mini-roundabout

There had been issues related to the Common Land element of the scheme which had caused delays. Hatfield Heath Parish Council had been notified of the delay.

Councillor Gooding said he had been contacted by both Newport and Ugley parish council about progressing schemes to prevent lorries from striking their bridges. In response to a point by the Highways Liaison Officer he agreed the signage to the south of the Newport bridge was better than to the north, so it seemed counter-intuitive that most collisions with the bridge came from the south. In response, the Highways Liaison Officer said the study on signage leading up to the bridge had almost been completed, and it was possible that the signs would be moved back to the M11.

Councillor Lodge asked when work on installing the 20mph roundel on Castle Street, Saffron Walden would commence. In response the Highways Liaison Officer said work would commence, weather permitting, in the next few weeks

In response to a question by Councillor Freeman about the feasibility study for possible junction realignment on Margaret Street, Thaxted, the Highways Liaison Officer said she had met the engineer assigned to the scheme and would provide information with the parish council shortly.

HP21

POTENTIAL SCHEME LIST

The Highways Liaison Officer informed Members that it was not yet known how much funding the County Council would provide for schemes in the 2016/17 financial year, although the amount was unlikely to be the same as in previous years. Members would need to prioritise schemes as it was unlikely the budget would be big enough to fund all the potential schemes.

Councillor Chambers commented on the request for passing places to be installed on Rookery Lane, Wendens Ambo. Given the condition of the road, passing places were not appropriate and alternative means of reducing traffic should instead be pursued. In response, the Highways Liaison Officer said that following validation of the request it was more likely that signage would be installed to discourage use of the road.

The Highways Liaison then responded to questions about the a request for a 20mph speed limit and the re-evaluation of existing traffic calming measures on Bardfield Road, Thaxted. She said a study would be conducted which would look at how the existing measures could be improved.

In response to a question by Councillor Mills about the request for a second VAS sign on Main Road, Felsted, the Highways Liaison Officer said she believed that she had already contacted the parish council about progress on the scheme. However, she would re-send her email to ensure the parish council had been notified.

Councillor Davey raised concerns about a weight limit scheme in Dunmow. The scheme was currently unenforceable as some roads into Dunmow did not have signs which indicated there was a weight limit. This meant that heavy vehicles could enter the town without knowing that a weight limit was in force. In response, the Highways Liaison Officer said she would raise the issue with colleagues.

Councillor Lodge asked whether the land ownership issues at Catons Lane, Saffron were likely to be solved in order to allow the footpath to be built. The Highways Liaison Officer agreed with Councillor Lodge that the scheme was likely to prove complicated owing to the ownership of land needed for the footpath and due to housing developments on the road.

In response to Councillor Gooding, the Highways Liaison Officer said she would check her emails and see what applications had been received from Elsenham Parish Council. If a scheme had been omitted from the report she would ensure it was included on the agenda for the meeting in March.

The Highways Liaison Officer then responded to points made by Councillor Gooding about the two potential schemes to either widen the footpath on Belmont Hill, Newport, or to install a footpath on Bury Water Land and School Lane. She said that an assessment had been carried out on Belmont Hill and due to the flint wall it would not be possible to widen the footpath. It was therefore proposed that the feasibility of a footpath with access from Gaces Acre was explored.

In response to Councillor Freeman, the Highways Liaison Officer explained that it was possible that Section 106 funding could be used to install a footpath on Cinders Alley, Thaxted.

HP22

HIGHWAY RANGERS AND REVENUE EXPENDITURE

The Highways Liaison presented the report and began by drawing attention to the table which highlighted the number of jobs completed by the Rangers, as well as the number of outstanding jobs. She explained that the Rangers had prioritised the completion of vegetation works, which took longer to complete, over painting jobs. This had led to an increase in the number of outstanding jobs. She would be emailing parish councils shortly, in order to ask for their help in identifying any road side grips which the Rangers could help to fix.

Both Councillor Freeman and Councillor Gooding asked whether the Rangers could incorporate repeat works in their schedule, in order to avoid parish councils having to request follow up work on an ad-hoc basis. Councillor Gooding also asked whether the unblocking of ditches fell within the remit of the Rangers.

In response, the Highways Liaison Officer re-iterated her comments from the previous meeting that the Rangers had been set up to work on an ad-hoc basis and separate requests were needed if follow up work was required. The

clearing of ditches fell within the responsibility of whoever was the land owner. If the landowner was Essex Highways it was possible that in some instances the Rangers could undertake the work, however it was often the case that road closures were required, and in these instances it was more suitable for Highways to complete the necessary works.

HP23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to questions by Members, the Highways Liaison Officer outlined how parish councils could send applications for schemes to Essex Highways. She then explained that the Highways Rangers were funded through a grant by the County Council and the funding for an extra van for the Rangers would have to be found through the grant.

HP24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed the next meeting would be held on 21 March 2016 at 7pm.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm.