

THE "CALL-IN" PERIOD FOR THIS SET OF MINUTES ENDS AT 12 NOON ON THURSDAY 16 SEPTEMBER, 2010. MINUTE NOS. 57, 59, 60 (1), 61(5), 62 AND 63 ARE NOT SUBJECT TO "CALL-IN".

SOUTHPORT AREA COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SOUTHPORT ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor Hands (in the Chair),
Councillor B. Rimmer (Vice Chair)
Councillors Booth, Byrom, Dodd, Glover, Jones,
McGuire, Porter, Preece, Preston, B Rimmer,
D Rimmer, Shaw, Sumner, Tattersall and
Sir Ron Watson.

Local Advisory Group Members:
Mr J Fairhurst, Mr I Goley, Mrs M Pointon and Mr S
Sugden.

ALSO PRESENT: Inspectors J. Atherton, G. Fairbrother and T. Jones,
Merseyside Police and 23 members of the public.

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brodie-Browne,
Lord Fearn, Pearson and Weavers.

51. WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated that following requests from Members and members of the public and also to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, the Council was trialling a new Public Address system at Southport Town Hall. He briefly explained how to use the system and indicated that feedback on its effectiveness would be welcome.

The Chair indicated that this was the last meeting at which Mr. Ian Goley, Advisory Group Member would be in attendance. He thanked Mr. Goley for his valuable contribution at Area Committee meetings over the past two years and wished him all the best for the future. A round of applause ensued.

The Chair informed the Area Committee of the sad news that Mr. Stan Mercer, who had been the Mayors' Attendant for many years, had passed away following long illness.

Member stood in silence for one minute in memory of Stan.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

SOUTHPORT AREA COMMITTEE- WEDNESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2010

The following declarations of interest were received:

Member	Minute No.	Interest	Action
Councillor Byrom	55 - Consultation on Proposals to close Southport (North Sefton) Magistrates' Court and Southport County Court.	Personal – His wife is a Magistrate at the Magistrates' Court.	Stayed in the room, took part in consideration of the item and voted thereon.
Councillor Porter	55 - Consultation on Proposals to close Southport (North Sefton) Magistrates' Court and Southport County Court.	Personal – Her daughter is a local solicitor	Stayed in the room, took part in consideration of the item and voted thereon
Councillor Sir Ron Watson	55 - Consultation on Proposals to close Southport (North Sefton) Magistrates' Court and Southport County Court.	Personal – Board Member of the Solicitors Regulation Authority	Stayed in the room, took part in consideration of the item and voted thereon

53. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

54. PRESENTATION - WELD ROAD BEACH

The Committee received a presentation from Dr. Phil Smith (formerly a Lecturer in Ecology at Liverpool John Moores University), who had been undergoing research into the formation of Southport's 'green beach', located between Weld Road, Birkdale and Pontin's, Ainsdale.

Mr. Smith provided the following information:

- The term 'green beach' - 'Groene Strand' - originated in the Wadden Sea area of the Netherlands. Similar beaches were found in the Rhine Delta region.
- The Birkdale green beach, which had been designated as an area of Special Scientific Interest because of the richness and rareness of its wildlife and habitat, was a linear stretch of recently formed salt-marsh and sand-dune habitat on the foreshore between Weld Road roundabout, Birkdale in the north, to the Ainsdale Beach Barrier in the south and its outstanding ecological interest had been apparent for some years
- The green beach began to form 24 years as scattered patches of common salt marsh grass which colonised the open shore. These patches soon accumulated silt and blown sand to form low hummocks, the outermost of which have grown more rapidly to form a line of embryo dunes about 100m west of the original dune frontage.
- Another green beach which had formed at Ainsdale in the early 1930s had also been studied in detail but had been subsequently washed away by winter storms.
- The present Birkdale green beach was about 4km long and up to 2km wide. Growth had taken place westwards by the development of a series of parallel embryo dune ridges, between which were areas of salt-marsh and 2 freshwater marshes, the latter being fed by three surface-water drains. Extensive flooding took place from autumn to spring but the lagoons (dune slacks) usually dried up during the summer.
- Birkdale lies on the southern shore of the Ribble Estuary which has been silting up since the last ice age. The long-term survival of the green beach was attributable to accretion of sand and silt on the foreshore which, as a result, had become progressively wider over recent decades. Thus, wave-energy was largely dissipated as the tide flooded and was insufficient, even in winter storms, to erode away the hummocks and, later, the embryo dunes.
- Over the years alder seedlings had grown in parallel lines of wet woodland – now approximately 12-13 years old. They had grown in parallel because the seeds had washed up in the sand lines along the beach.
- By 2008 the woodland was well established forming an area of approximately 4½ acres and was now approximately 4km long and 2 km wide. All of this was new land reclaimed from the sea – for Sefton!
- The beach at Formby Point was narrower and steeper than at Birkdale due to coastal erosion.

- Rapid coastal change, although giving rise for concern, was a natural process – normal on a ‘soft coast’. The term coastline implied a fixed line but this was not the case, because coastlines are constantly moving and changing.
- Most of the Sefton sand dunes were fairly recent in origin – the dune system at Formby Point having only developed during the past 300 years.
- Removal of the green beach would be extremely difficult and costly – it was tried in the 1970s when bulldozers were brought in to remove all the vegetation to ‘save the beach’, but the constant influx of seeds and sediment brought in by the tide led to a rapid re-growth of the green beach.
- The green beach was an effective natural barrier to rising sea levels – sea walls and other coastal barriers were expensive to erect and maintain.
- Pioneer habitats had formed on the unique Sefton coastline, attracting a wide biodiversity of plants and animals. For example, Birkdale beach provided an ideal habitat for the natterjack toad and the Sefton coastline boasted the largest colony in the UK. Another rare amphibian – the sand lizard was also present.
- A variety of invertebrates were in evidence, for example, the tiger beetle, requiring a temperature of 36°C being found on the northern dunes – one of only two areas in the UK; dragonflies, which were steadily spreading north (probably due to climate change); and crickets – which can’t fly and were believed to have been transported from Anglesey as eggs in the sea.
- The area provided the perfect habitat for a number of birds, including the ringed plover, lapwing, skylark and a wide variety of wading birds (e.g. snipe, sanderling, etc) and gulls.
- The number of new plant species in the area had now reached the 300 mark and of these 50 were regionally and nationally rare, for example, the marsh orchid and the Parnassus grass.
- The position of Sefton, on the coast, half way between the south and north of the country, meant that it attracted coastal plants and creatures from both ends of the country.

In response to questions arising from the presentation, the following points were made:

- It was unlikely that mud on Southport Beach had emanated from the gas rig in the Irish Sea.

- Despite fears surrounding climate change there had been no recorded increases in tide levels in the last 30 years.
- The beach at Birkdale had grown in height over the years, due to the formation of the green beach, as opposed to the coastline in South East England where the coastline was lowering and falling into the sea.
- Studies of the drainage outlets running through the green beach to the sea (e.g. 'the Nile' at the northern end), had found that they did not pose any risk. The purpose of the outlets was to take surface water drainage from the streets and golf course behind the beach. Sewage had not been found in the channels, although high levels of nitrogen (from the roads) and phosphorous (fertiliser) were in evidence. However, the bulrushes which had grown in the channels naturally absorbed these nutrients.

RESOLVED:

That Dr. Smith be thanked for his extremely informative, interesting and reassuring presentation and that all best wishes be extended for his continued invaluable research into Sefton's green beach.

55. CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO CLOSE SOUTHPORT (NORTH SEFTON) MAGISTRATES' COURT AND SOUTHPORT COUNTY COURT

Further to Minute No. 48 (2) of 28 July 2010, the Committee considered the report of the Head of Corporate Legal Services on the proposed closure of North Sefton (Southport) Magistrates' Court and Southport County Court.

The report indicated that on 23 June 2010, the Secretary of State for Justice had produced a written ministerial statement announcing a consultation on the most strategic locations for Magistrates' and County Courts in England and Wales, as detailed in Annexes A and C. The consultation, which was to run until 15 September 2010, invited comments on the closure of the courts.

The proposals were:

- (a) to continue to operate a Magistrates' Court in Bootle (South Sefton) but to close Southport (North Sefton) Magistrates' Court and to merge the North and South Sefton Local Justice areas to create a single Sefton Local Justice area; and
- (b) to close Southport County Court and to transfer the bulk of its workload to the Civil and Family Justice Centre in Liverpool, with work in relation to some parishes to the north of Southport being transferred to Preston County Court.

The detailed proposals contained in Consultation Paper CP03/10, attached at Annex B to the report, invited views on the proposals and stated that the Secretary of State would "Take all views expressed into account before making any decision on whether or which courts ought to be closed as part of the rationalisation".

The report concluded by indicating that the Council was a regular user of both North and South Sefton Magistrates' Courts but rarely, if ever, used Southport County Court; that the Council was allocated one half day per week at South Sefton Magistrates' Court and one half day every other week at North Sefton (Southport), these being the miscellaneous or non-Crown Prosecution Service Courts.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be recommended to forward the following response to Her Majesty's Court Service (HMCS):

- (1) 'The Council is strongly of the view that it is in the Community's interest to maintain a viable Magistrates' and County Court presence in Southport.
- (2) The Council understands the issues regarding the case for the Court Service vacating the current building in Hoghton Street, but the Council believes that there is a strong case for the County Court to be relocated to the Magistrates' Court, which would still save the £160,000 in premises-related costs referred to in the consultation document. The Council request that this be further investigated and provided as a response to the consultation.
- (3) North Sefton Magistrates' Court is situated in an art deco building located between Southport's Police and Fire Service Stations. The Council requires confirmation that consideration has been given to the ongoing use of the building should the Magistrates' Court be relocated.
- (4) The Council is of the opinion that before any decision is made, HMCS be requested to provide a detailed analysis of the on-going financial implications of maintaining an empty building, including security, heating, lighting and maintenance costs.
- (5) In the event that HMCS make a decision to relocate the court buildings from Southport, this Council would prefer that the County Court be relocated to Liverpool rather than Preston'.

56. POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Fairbrother indicated that the Police had supplied information about the costs of policing the recent Orange Parade in the town. In addition, 23 seizures of alcohol had been made on the day, wherever the possession of alcohol contravened the appropriate byelaw in the designated town centre area. This roughly equated to the number of such seizures of the average weekend. However, the Police were unable to use their powers of seizure where the individuals concerned were located in pavement café licensed areas, where, he conceded, trouble was rare. He confirmed that any difficulties arising from the abuse of such licensed areas would be referred to the Council. In answer to a question about whether the Police would prefer a complete ban on the drinking of alcohol outside during the Orange Parade, Inspector Fairbrother stated that this hadn't been a particular problem for the Police locally, but the Area Commander might have a view on this.

Members of the public raised the following issues:

- Whether the Police undertook campaigns to deter motorists from 'illegally using mobile phones whilst driving vehicles'?

Inspector Jones confirmed that the Police organised such campaigns at regular intervals and that offenders were prosecuted.

- Whether the Police had any concerns about the proposed closure of Courts in Southport?

The Police representatives indicated that the Officers locally would have to adapt to whatever changes were introduced.

57. OPEN FORUM

During the Open forum, the following questions/comments/petitions were submitted:

- (a) Mr. R. Taylor submitted a question about the proposed 'all abilities highway' across the Birkdale SSSI.

It was agreed that the Traffic Services Manager be requested to forward a written response to Mr. Taylor.

- (b) Mr. J. Culshaw referred to Item No. 7 on the Committee's agenda (Objections to Proposed Hackney Carriage Stands – Coronation Walk and Lord Street, Southport) and asked if the proposal to employ taxi marshals on the Lord Street taxi rank was successful, whether there would be any positioned on Coronation Walk, and if

so, until what time?

Ms R. Appleby, Committee Administrator indicated that the Head of Safer, Stronger Communities had been asked to forward a written response to Mr. Culshaw.

- (c) Mr. M. Nelson referred to a recent newspaper article in which a Councillor was quoted as claiming that the new plastic road through the dunes would reduce carbon emissions. Mr. Nelson believed that there was already a safe and direct north/south route alongside the Coast Road and there was also an east/west link via Selworthy Road to the Coast Road. Bearing in mind that this planned route would create a significant detour to a rider travelling north/south or vice versa and was therefore likely to discourage commuting by bike, (especially as the route would not apparently be suitable for a road bike, he asked if the claimed carbon reduction could be quantified and the methodology used to substantiate it explained, quoting the appropriate research. Mr. Nelson also asked when the outcome of the consultation on the proposal would be announced.

The Committee Administrator indicated that she would request the Traffic Services Manager to forward a written response to Mr. Nelson.

- (d) Mr. R. Bailey indicated that he had attended a recent consultation meeting at which he was given to understand that £110,000 had been spent widening the track on the Coast Road. He asked why this work had been completed and the money spent, (which residents had always been advised was for a new cycle path only), prior to any public consultation and even prior to planning permission being discussed for the dunes highway.

It was agreed that the Traffic Services manager be requested to forward a written response to Mr. Bailey.

58. WINTER SERVICE

Further to Minute No. 132 of 3 February 2010, The Committee considered the report of the Environmental and Technical Services Director on the possibility of gritting roads and pavements on approaches to schools.

The report indicated that the Legal Department had advised that as the fundamental basis of the Winter Service Policy and Operational Plan related to clearly identified priorities for the whole Borough, consequently if the policy was to be revised to include specific additions then revisions should be consistently applied across the Borough.

The Acting Assistant Director, Environmental and Technical Services presented the report and indicated that Officers had undertaken a detailed analysis of schools across the Borough, existing gritting routes, gritting vehicles, and the possible of addition of roads past schools which were currently not gritted. The report indicated that the inclusion of all schools on existing gritting routes would cost in the region of £220,000, including the purchase of 2 additional carriageway gritters and 4 footway gritters (approx. £150,000); the cost of salt (approx. £16,000) and additional costs to cover standby, call out, repairs, servicing and maintenance; and that due to these costs, and in the current financial climate, implementation of additional gritting for schools was presently unachievable.

Discussion took place and the following matters were raised:

- the possibility of grit bins being provided to schools
- that schools had previously been asked if they wished to have grit bins in July 2009, but that there had been no take up at that time
- the possibility of schools being approached again about the possibility of contributing toward the provision of grit bins
- that those Councillors who were also School Governors could perhaps take the matter up with appropriate Head Teachers
- a suggestion that allocations from Ward Budgets could fund the provision of school grit bins
- concern about the lack of financial information in the report
- that the Winter Service policy was reviewed annually
- a Severe Weather Working Group had been formed to consider adjustments to the policy according to weather conditions
- the Environmental and Technical Services Department continued to investigate alternative methods/products for de-icing roads and footways and the Council was presently monitoring the trials being undertaken by a company called 'Safethaw'
- the department also consulted and share 'best practice' with other Authorities

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Acting Assistant Director, Environmental and Technical Services be requested to submit a further report providing a detailed breakdown of the cost of providing grit bins outside schools with a view to the consideration of funding from Ward budgets;
- (2) the Acting Assistant Director, Environmental and Technical Services be requested to investigate alternative methods of gritting roads leading to and around schools; and
- (3) the Acting Assistant Director, Environmental and Technical Services be requested to liaise with the Strategic Director, Children, Schools and Families to again offer to provide grit bins outside schools at the schools' expense.

59. OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE STANDS - CORONATION WALK AND LORD STREET , SOUTHPORT

Further to Minute No. 12 of 26 May 2010, the Committee considered the report of the Planning and Economic Development Director on the receipt of a number of objections to the proposed introduction of two new Hackney Carriage Stands in Coronation Walk and Lord Street, Southport.

The report indicated that following the statutory advertising of the Traffic Regulation Orders for the proposed hackney carriage stands, which had a closing date of 4 August 2010, a total of four objections had been received in respect of potential noise and anti-social behaviour and the possible disruption to the loading and parking requirements of a local shop owner. Copies of the objection letters were shown as Annexes B, C, D, and E of the report.

The report concluded that whilst the problems of noise and anti-social behaviour in the early hours of the morning were recognised, it was considered that the provision of feeder hackney ranks would allow these issues to be more easily addressed. Disruptive revellers would be transported home more easily and traffic congestion caused by large numbers of cabs trying to access their fares would be reduced.

The problems highlighted by the shop owner in relation to his loading requirements were accepted and it was recommended that the proposed reduction in length of the existing loading bay on the south west side of Coronation Walk should not take place. This would maintain a 25m loading bay which his suppliers could utilise.

The issue with staff of the shop in question not being able to park outside the premises was noted but it was felt that, given the increase in Pay and Display spaces in Coronation Walk, adequate parking facilities existed within an acceptable distance from the shop.

A plan showing the revised proposals was shown in Annex F of the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Traffic Regulation Orders referred to in paragraphs 3.2. and 3.3, and set out in the plan at Annex F of the report be approved for implementation as soon as possible; and
- (2) the objectors be advised of the Committee's decision accordingly.

60. SOUTHPORT CYCLE TOWN, WENNINGTON ROAD PROPOSALS - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

Further to Minute No. 77 of 1 October 2008, the Committee considered the report of the Planning and Economic Development Director on the results of the consultation exercise undertaken and the proposed way forward in respect of the proposed cycle link along Wennington Road, Southport and the proposed 20 mph zone on Wennington Road and Bispham Road.

The report indicated that the main principle of the scheme was to extend the existing cycle route running from Kew along Wennington Road to Bispham Road, which would link the area to the north of the town to the existing cycle network around Kew. To extend this route further, it was proposed to reduce the volume and speed of traffic on Wennington Road and the surrounding area in order to create an environment more conducive to cycling.

An example of one of the consultation documents was shown in Annex B of the report and the consultation was also available on the Council's website: www.sefton.gov.uk. The results of the consultation were detailed in paragraph 4.0 of the report and summarised in the table at paragraph 4.4.

The report indicated that the majority of comments made had been in relation to the proposed closure to traffic of Wennington Road; the main points being:

- that traffic would be diverted to other side roads within the area;
- the closure would increase traffic on Norwood Road, Old Park Lane and Bispham Road;
- the road closure would be inconvenient for local residents; and
- the closure would cause extra delay at the Roe Lane/ Norwood Road lights.

The report indicated that in the light of opposition to the proposed road closure on Wennington Road, it was proposed to omit this element from the proposed scheme. An alternative arrangement was proposed with a slight narrowing of Wennington Road to accommodate a Zebra crossing on Roe Lane between the junctions of Wennington Road and Hesketh Drive, which would allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross Roe Lane at this location more safely, whilst maintaining all the existing turning movements at this junction. A plan of this revised layout was attached as Annex D, and the report indicated that a further local consultation with those residents directly affected would be reported back to the next Area Committee meeting.

Discussion took place and the following concerns were raised:

- the 'limited' consultation undertaken and the feeling that consultation regarding busy traffic routes should incorporate people from a wider area;

- the proposed position of the Zebra crossing and the potential for increased accidents; and
- the lack of any financial information in the report

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the scheme be approved in principle, pending a site visit by the Councillors for Cambridge, Meols and Norwood Wards in respect of the proposed siting of the Zebra crossing on Roe Lane and possible further refinements; and
- (2) all Officers be requested to ensure that all future reports submitted which involve capital expenditure, also include details of the appropriate revenue consequences.

61. SOUTHPORT INDOOR MARKET - TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS RELATING TO PUBLIC REALM WORKS

Further to Minute No. 14 of 26 May 2010, the Committee considered the report of the Planning and Economic Development Director setting out a number of changes to Traffic Regulation Orders which were required as a result of the public realm works being undertaken as part of the refurbishment of the Southport Indoor Market. The report outlined the outcome of the consultation on the refurbishment proposals and indicated that the proposed removal of 12 pay and display spaces on Market Street would lead to a potential reduction in parking revenue of £20,000 per year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the fact that the £3m Southport Market redevelopment was approved by the Labour/Conservative majority on the Cabinet at its meeting on 5 August 2010, despite opposition from Liberal Democrat Members, be noted;
- (2) this Committee considers that the loss of another 12 town centre parking spaces is likely to adversely affect Southport's retail trade;
- (3) this Committee is concerned that the estimated financial loss of £20,000 per annum arising from the loss of those 12 parking spaces does not appear to have been allowed for in the financial projections for the Market redevelopment project;
- (4) this Committee believes that it is placed in a difficult position in the light of the majority decision referred to in (1) above; and
- (5) accordingly, with reluctance, the Traffic Regulation Orders as set out on the plan in Annex C and as detailed in the report, be approved and the necessary legal procedures, including those of

public consultation and advertising the Council's intention to implement the Orders, be approved.

62. PROPOSED AREA COMMITTEE CHANGES

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods on the proposed changes to Area Committees as part of the Council's area management agenda.

The report indicated that, following agreement for area management to be taken forward as part of the Council's corporate agenda and further to the last meeting of Party Leaders and Area Committee Chairs in November 2009, the Neighbourhoods Division had drafted proposals to change the Area Committee structure to include more of an area management focus. Consultation with Area Committee Chairs had recently taken place and a meeting of Party Leaders and Area Committee Chairs had taken place on 15 July 2010 and although feedback had been positive, it had been clear that whilst Area Committees could adopt a similar approach, some variations would be needed to cater for the needs of individual Area Committees (for example the differing start time for Police Issues and Open Forum questions for Southport Area Committee).

Mr. Steve Honess, the Southport Area Co-ordinator, presented the report and answered questions thereon.

Feedback was given in respect of the optimum number of meetings to be held this year, and in future, and the holding of pre-meetings prior to the Area Committee and Members indicated that they would like to leave the number of meetings as already scheduled for this year and for the foreseeable future; and that the calling of pre-meetings should be left at the discretion of the political groups as was currently the case. It was also suggested that consideration might be given to a requirement for Open Forum questions being submitted at least 2 days in advance to enable consultation with relevant Officers prior to the Area Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Assistant Director – Neighbourhoods be informed that this Committee wishes to retain existing custom and practice in respect of the number of meetings held per year and the holding of pre-meetings, namely that:

- (1) the number of Area Committee meetings to be held per year should remain the same for this year and for the foreseeable future; and
- (2) the holding of pre-meetings should be left to the discretion of the

political groups.

63. BUDGET MONITORING

Further to Minute No. 35 of 28 July 2010, the Committee considered the report of the Neighbourhoods and Investment Programmes Director indicating that the balance of the budget available for allocation during 2010/11, including sums set aside for the provision of litterbins and street signs, was as follows:

Ward	Available Funds £
Ainsdale	12,325.83
Birkdale	19,551.98
Cambridge	8,602.08
Dukes	19,678.53
Kew	9,404.54
Meols	10,716.50
Norwood	24,568.09
Town-wide	15,088.75
Total	119,936.30

Details of the allocations made by each ward against the general provision in the current year were set out in the report.

There had been no requests for funding from Ward budgets since the previous meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the remaining balance of £119,936.30 of the budget available for further allocation for the rest of the year be noted; and
- (2) allocations from the 2010/11 Ward budgets agreed to date and indicated in paragraph 2.1 of the report, be noted.

64. PREVIOUS QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE OPEN FORUM

The Committee considered correspondence relating to the above.

RESOLVED:

That the correspondence be noted.

65. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

No future agenda items were submitted.

66. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with the agreed programme of meetings for this Area Committee, the next meeting be held on **Wednesday, 6 October 2010, at the Town Hall, Southport, commencing at 6.30 p.m.**