

129 **PROPOSALS TO CLOSE LITTLE GERPINS LANE, RAINHAM**

The report before the Committee detailed responses to a statutory consultation for the closure of Little Gerpins Lane, Rainham between its junction with Berwick Pond Road in the west and Gerpins Lane in the east.

The report outlined that Little Gerpins Lane was sometimes closed to traffic due to fly-tipping which was taking place with increasing regularity of both house hold and commercial levels. The matter was of great concern to the Council on the following grounds:

- It costs a considerable amount of unjustified expenditure to clear the dumped rubbish. Sometimes specialists contractors have to be engaged to clear contaminated items,*
- The rubbish being dumped is detrimental and could have a catastrophic impact on the environment if left over for extended period of time,*
- Fly-tipping blocks the road, creating a blockage in the local highway network with the result that local occupiers and visitors to the woodlands have to detour.*

The Committee noted that to deal with the problem, the Council had carried out a joint operation in conjunction with the Police and the Council's Enforcement officers in carrying out the enforcement. There were some positive results achieved during this operation resulting in four successful prosecutions.

The proposal before the Committee was to permanently close Little Gerpins Lane at its junction with Berwick Pond Road on the west side. The closed section of the road would only be accessible by local occupiers, cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.

A second closure was proposed on the east side of Little Gerpins Lane. When designing the closures, consideration was given in maintaining safe access and meeting the requirements of the local occupiers, for example, minimum widths required to permit their machinery.

By the close of consultation, nine responses were received, comments were attached to the report as appendix 2. In general, from the summary table the indication was that most respondents agreed with the problems associated with fly tipping was unacceptable in Little Gerpins Lane but have objected to the proposals with the exception of the Metropolitan Police.

In accordance with the public speaking arrangements the Committee was addressed by a representative of a Land owner (Ingrebourne Valley Ltd) who spoke against the proposed scheme.

The representative stated that the Ingrebourne Valley site was part of a larger restoration and public access project which was being managed by the

Forestry Commission. It was agreed that fly-tipping was an issue and so current proposal would still leave a spur within which people could still fly-tip. The speaker acknowledged that that CCTV was problematic as it could be vandalised and people often used false number plates when fly-tipping. The representative considered the closure should be at Gerpins Lane.

During a brief debate, a Member stated that the high costs associated with waste disposal resulted in people fly-tipping. The member warned that the proposed road closure could push the issue elsewhere. The Member raised concerns over the principle of closing roads and questioned whether the scheme could be implemented on an experimental basis to assess the effect.

In response, the Principal Engineer informed the Committee that closing the road at the junction would be dangerous as it would mean those requiring access would have to stop on Gerpins Lane to open gates blocking the highway. Officers confirmed that the costs associated with the implementation of an experimental closure would be equivalent to implementation of the permanent scheme as proposed.

A Member said that as the funding was not yet in place, there was time to give further consideration to implementation on an experimental and the position of the closure. The Member stated that the scheme should be deferred.

Following a motion to defer the scheme, the Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety that the proposal be deferred to enable consideration of implementation on an experimental basis and further consideration on the position of the closure.

The voting to defer the scheme was carried by nine votes to two.