



**Bradford on Avon
Town Council**



Minutes of the Virtual Town Council meeting of
BRADFORD ON AVON TOWN COUNCIL
Held on Tuesday 8th September 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

Attendance – Town Council

Cllr L Brown
Cllr E Franklin
Cllr D Garwood
Cllr A Kay
Cllr T Lomax
Cllr S McNeill-Ritchie (Chairman)
Cllr D Newton (Leader of the Council)
Cllr J Parker
Cllr M Roberts
Cllr D Taylor
Cllr J Parker
Mrs S Bartlett (Town Clerk)
Mr I Brown (Director of Operations)
Ms L Booth (Communications Manager)

Apologies: Cllr J Lynch

Members of the Public: 95 including Jeremy Wire, Rod Johnson, Gail Plant, Andrew Nicolson, Simon Hetzel, Richard White, Paul Haywood, Barney Weston, Suzy Kay, Pat Douglas, and Louise Wiessel.

34. Declarations of interest

Cllr Garwood declared a non-pecuniary interest in the agenda item on the traffic update, as the scheme went past his property.

35. Minutes

After changes were made to the Virtual Extraordinary Full Council minutes from the 26th June 2020 and a change to Virtual Extraordinary Full Council minutes from the 27th July 2020 minutes, it was proposed by Cllr Franklin, seconded by Cllr Kay and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: to accept the minutes from the 26th June 2020, 7th July 2020 and 27th July 2020.

36. Matters arising

(i) Minute number 27 Avoncliff Weir – Cllr Roberts asked what the sandbags were made of. Cllr Kay advised uv polyethylene woven into a membrane mesh. These bags are secured by encasing them in a larger membrane mesh.

(ii) Minute number 30 – West Wilts Radio – Cllr Roberts asked who pays for the electricity used by the radio station at the Youth and Community Centre. Chairman advised that like other groups who used this space the Town Council was paying for the small amount of electric. Cllr Roberts asked about school children being trained in how to use the radio equipment. Chairman advised that training had started with Fitzmaurice and Christchurch pupils.

37. Minutes of the Committees

None to consider.

38. Chairman's Report

Chairman reported on the Avoncliff Weir Emergency Repair Project was progressing well with the help of Serve-On and over 4,000 sandbags being used for a temporary repair. He also reported on the riverside railings at Kingston Mills – he said that he had been in correspondence with the CEO of

Bovis Homes, the new owners of Linden Homes. Construction of new fencing should commence in mid-October 2020.

39. Covid-19 pandemic

Director of Operations explained his report. Talking over the council's governance processes. He explained the operational needs with the impact of Covid 19. The council's communications protocols and campaigns during the Covid 19 period and outlined the estimated financial impact of the Covid 19 Cllr Newton reported that there were over 35,000 hits on the movies.

40. Traffic update

Members of the public spoke first. These notes are at the back of these minutes.

Cllr Gibson explained the history of what had happened to get where we are now. She said that back in March the Town Council requested Wiltshire Council look at social distancing measures. In April, Wiltshire Council had funding for social distancing measures for this type of scheme from the Department of Transport. She wrote to Wiltshire Council, as did Streets Ahead, the local transport focused stakeholder group to reinforce the TC request for something to be looked at in our town centre. In May, we had some useful feedback which included the option of a one way for pedestrians on either side of the bridge. At that time, we were told it was impossible to have a crossing on the north side of the bridge. Wiltshire council's Highways Officers considered it too dangerous. On the 12th May we put this to the Highways and Transport meeting and resolved to support a scheme to be designed by WC. Then at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on the 26th June 2020 it was agreed unanimously to support the scheme to provide social distancing in Bradford on Avon, including the cost of up to £30,000. The original funding had been from the Department of Transport, but they had in the meantime changed their criteria and we no longer qualified for funding. There was a delay implementing the design due to a private road closure on Silver Street which had been delayed for 18 months already.

On the 13th August 2020, Wiltshire Council finally implemented the scheme, but it was not as ordered. The wrong orange colour barriers appeared rather than the conservation black and white bollards. We were the first to complain that the scheme was being implemented piecemeal without the vital traffic flows and air pollution data which are needed to record and compare the changes.

Town Council Officers were on leave and it is unfortunate the Communications from the TC were not as informative as perhaps they should have been. In the following 10 days we had almost daily meetings with the Cabinet member for Highways to try and implement the scheme we had ordered and finally the decision was made by Wiltshire Council to remove the alternate one way over the bridge given mounting concern over delays and pollution.

2 years ago, the Atkins report notes 20/25,000 vehicle movements a day. The SDR data from the Town bridge shows 9000 vehicle movements a day with the alternate one way in place. We understand that Staverton saw a 19% increase in traffic at the same time. This number has risen since the removal of the light as there are now no pinch points in the system to reduce traffic flow. Following a meeting last Friday with Highways at Wiltshire Council and our MP, there are a series of tweaks and improvements being planned.

The cycle route up Mill Lane has gone in already and will have additional signage. The signage will be improved at the top of Massons lane to indicate access to Newtown and Turleigh. Line work on Massons lane to show northbound drivers where it becomes two way will be added. The need loading bays in Silver Street has been looked into and will be ensured. The signage on McKeever bridge and in the car park for pedestrians is to be improved and the Highways team is looking at a courtesy crossing on the north side of the bridge.

In answer to questions from the public Cllr Gibson responded that as far as she knew Rod is going to run the lock up over Heritage Open Days.

She stressed that this is not a trial one way system. She responded that, yes, she has asked for some money back for this scheme.

Data collected by resident of New Road was mentioned as Cllr, Gibson asked if he would forward it, she noted that vehicle numbers were low when the traffic lights were in place. Suzy's point about baseline data, she was assured with the date monitoring would be in place and they would compare this to historic baseline data.

Cllr Newton mentioned that he did not choose to do this to make everyone's life difficult. It was for our community to be safe in this COVID times. He had raised this with the local M.P. With regards to communications he said that the Town Council had put out four or five articles, but a start date was not known then. We quickly became swamped with social media. With regards to emergency services that this was a statutory requirement for Wiltshire Council to consult with them if they had any issues

with the scheme. Cllr Gibson in answer to a question in the chat, Clive, stated that yes, the scheme had been unanimously agreed by the Town Council.

Cllr Roberts, barriers causing delivery problems in Silver St, a Wiltshire Council Officer had a look yesterday. He said that historic data was available in New Road, Frome Road and Bath Road and there is historical data on air quality. This will help us to compare the before and after. He said there was always allegations of speed at New Road. He explained about air quality and that it was difficult to decipher about brake dust and coal fire dust.

Cllr Kay said that if we have the correct bollards there would be room for unloading bays in Market Street.

Chairman said that it was imperative to have all-round data, that having bits and pieces is not enough. There will be debate about which type of crossing will be required on the town bridge during this COVID-19 he hopes a crossing is available at the earliest possibility.

Cllr Newton said about New Road speeding it depends where you collect the data from Highfield, Kingsfield as they are also affected. He has seen a speed of 55pmh at that point. He raised it in the Wiltshire Council's Community Area Transport Group yesterday. Now the traffic lights have gone there is now speeding around the town.

Cllr Gibson said that a new speed limit of 20mph on New Road would need another traffic order as it was not included in this one. The scheme as designed with the alternate one way over the bridge limited vehicle numbers as, so it was not considered at the time. It is not much help to introduce a 20mph limit if it is not enforced.

Cllr Franklin said that whenever you cross the bridge you take your life in your hands, when the traffic lights were on the bridge it did reduce the traffic and made it safer for pedestrians. Look we are trying and not backing down, we are all here as volunteers and your elected members to do what we can very welcome comments from people if they are polite.

Cllr Garwood said that Market Street was always a busy road when the traffic lights were removed the traffic did not increase straight away. Elderly people have said to him it is so much safer to navigate through the centre of the town. He said he had noticed excessive speeding at night by some motorists.

Chairman said that going forward completion of the scheme and implementation of the monitoring and improving communications for the scheme.

Cllr Roberts asked Cllr Gibson about the air quality monitoring She answered that the scheme was to include diffusion tubes and live cameras with real time data which can be put on the website. That is being reconsidered now that the traffic lights have been taken away and the scheme has changed.

Cllr Newton gave the delegated email address of integrated.transport@wiltshire.gov.uk for residents to send their comments to. He said that Wiltshire Council are the highways authority and in charge of the roads.

Cllr Gibson said Cllr Newton, McNeill-Ritchie have spent a lot of time on this. She said to expect tweaks to make it a safer scheme, that we still have concerns over speeding on New Road, concerns about tailbacks along New Road with increased volumes of traffic. Air quality monitoring should be implemented as soon as possible she does not know the lead in time for this.

Chairman said that he was working with John Boyce and Ian Bramley, Peter Hodgkinson on a graphic illustration showing what was needed for the scheme.

Chairman said that he had read in the 'chat' that nothing had been resolved tonight he hoped that people attending this meeting could understand the complexity of the situation and understands their frustration with it. He hoped that we could all learn about our traffic system in a much more informed way. He thanked people for their support and comments and hoped that we can make the changes that we need.

41. Living Green Wall Project

Cllr Kay explained the scheme which had been discussed at Environment and Planning. This was a vertical wall against 37 Silver Street. She explained what the Community Group of people had done to date. The benefits of a living wall are a green heart in an urban part of the town would be good for well-being, reducing pollutants increasing tourism. She said that there is a lot of money pledged for this.

Cllr Newton said he would like to know about the procurement process for this, status over the owners of the wall to fix something to their property in the long term. Director of Operations a lot to do with fundraising and legal agreements formulated with the owners of the wall, to be able to fundraise to take the project forward. Cllr Gibson asked whether the maintenance would be done by Kingston Mills

First Port. Cllr Kay said that Secret Gardens could fund the maintenance going forward. Chairman advised that the Town Wardens could help with this, Director of Operations said that this had to be negotiated yet. Cllr Newton said that he was interested to see that best value had been applied. Cllr Brown we appear to have gone to square two before going to square one, the community group is very loose there are other ways of making it look good, his concern was that we get asked to take responsibility to what extent would the tax payers be involved to fund this. What will the Town Council have to do, no planning permission granted, he does not know all the information in order to make a decision, are we giving a grant but where we take responsibility for capital and revenue costs. Is it the same as the community fridge? He would have liked to have been in at the start. Cllr Newton will take officer advice on the procurement process with regards to our financial regulations, he said that Environment and Planning Committee have been involved with this. Cllr Roberts said you first find out the cost before the planning permission is obtained by the Wiltshire Council.

Cllr Newton proposed and Cllr Gibson second and all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: To extend standing orders to extend the meeting beyond 9.30p.m.

Cllr Gibson said that it was not uncommon to get planning permission before you are ready to proceed, contractor led quotes for this type of living wall.

Cllr Brown said that he would not vote for this because of his concerns.

It was proposed by Cllr Newton, seconded by Cllr Franklin seconded and with 9 in favour and 2 abstentions it was **RESOLVED**: To in principle support the Living Green Wall Project but to review and revisit the procurement process with officer advice to Full Council, proof of community support via fund raising.

42. Management Accounts Reports

Detailed management reports up to 30th June and 31st July 2020. These accounts show detailed balance sheet and income and expenditure by committee. Cllr Kay looked at one lot and Cllr Parker at the other. These were noted.

43. Accounts for payment

Cllr Brown asked some account queries, and these were answered. It was proposed by Cllr Newton, seconded by Cllr Kay and with all in favour it was **RESOLVED**: To approve payroll and direct payments and invoices for 30th June 2020 £59,643.58 and 31st July 2020 £72,364.12.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm

Members of the public who spoke at the meeting on the 8th September 2020

1. Jeremy Wire said that a delayed then rushed and problematic implementation with little or no monitoring brought traffic chaos, angry businesses, an aggrieved town council and a divided town but the social media trolling was completely uncalled for and much of it appeared ignorant of the facts and the process and selfish in its complete disregard for the health and safety of the vulnerable residents of the town. He calls for all responsible drivers, businesses and residents to distance themselves from the denial of science and the vitriol that occurred. He doesn't think a oneway system is the answer to the problems we face. It will increase journey lengths regardless of mode for all those wishing to travel counterclockwise in the central area of the town, will very likely attract every petrolhead racer for miles around to see how fast they can do a lap of town or even West Wiltshire, and attract even more through traffic with its attendant pollution. And implementing Covid safety by asking every pedestrian to restrict their own routes around town will just diminish the town and create further disenchantment. After all, you can't drive a car into a shop. He asks that measures be put in place, based on the science, to ensure public health and public safety of all vulnerable and non-vulnerable residents, be they young, or old, or inbetween, not only from lung damaging pollution but also the consequently deadlier Covid19.

2. Rod Johnson said that our lovely old town will, this month, be enjoying the annual event of Heritage Open Days, a highlight for him and his organising team, our volunteers and the Tourism & Events Officer is Heritage Open Days from the 17th to 20th September 2020 at the Town Bridge lockup. Your social distancing scheme with its traffic lights on the Town Bridge meant that our concerns for visitor's safety would be much reduced and that applying the Pandemic restrictions would be easier. Wider pavement safety barriers and then what happened? Last Thursday morning at dawn I looked out from my apartment in Abbey Mill to see that the safety barriers and the traffic lights had gone. Also gone with them were the wider safer pavements for pedestrians and for the visitors to the Lockup. At our Team Meeting the following day we decided that Heritage Open Days at the Lockup would still go ahead. Safety measures required by the Government, by the Heritage Open Day Organisation, would be applied. I'm here Chairman, not just to promote Heritage Open Days, but in the interest of the Town Bridge Lockup event, to ask a question. How do we cope with the uncomfortable headline in the Wiltshire Times: 'A Victory for common sense', and how will your pedestrian safety project help on our town bridge?

3. Gail Plant said that she understands the one-way system trial was put in place to enable social distancing but can the Town Council assure residents that this is an experimental traffic order to safeguard the public and that there are no plan with Wiltshire Council to make the partial one way system permanent after 18 months. At the EGM in July the Town Council agreed to ask Wiltshire Council to undertake a traffic management scheme which could include a partial one way system once they had completed computer modelling and advanced monitoring can the Town Council explain how the current scheme can be a robust trial if there is no baseline data and emissions analysis to be compared at this trial. She understood the monitoring is to be in New Road it said so in the appendix of the minutes on the 26th June but the monitoring equipment has been installed in Springfield this means it will miss quite a lot of traffic in Mount Pleasant and New Road because vehicles enter and exit at side roads and when traffic is queuing along this route which it still does from time to time, alot of the motorists would exit before the monitor in order to rat run in the narrow streets in Woolley.

4. Andrew Nicolson very impressed by the report on the COVID-19 measures. With regards to the socially distancing highways scheme which you voted unanimously to support the Wiltshire Council scheme on as he does, but support for cyclists such as him things are worse for them now. Wiltshire Council took the traffic lights off the bridge before traffic had settled down before monitoring was in place. Are you still all in favour of keeping this experimental scheme and trialling changes as you when you can as appropriate? As the Wiltshire Council member for Highways said she acted because of the school run can you hold a proper trial with proper bollards and all the monitoring in place over half term and the Christmas holidays when the town centre is busy with traffic and shoppers, or is it just a trial of a one way system for motor traffic. As you agreed to invest at least £30,000 in the scheme have you been offered or asked for any of it back? Are you all still in favour of keeping the scheme, is it a trial of a one-way scheme and does the town get any money back?

5. Simon Hetzel - He understands this trial was requested by the Town Council, (months and months ago when the current COVID-19 situation was very much worse), but designed and implemented only recently by Wiltshire council (in typical dinosaur-fashion). In his view the Town Council was spot on – there is after all:

- (i) A C19 Global Pandemic (with a likely resurgence over the winter months which has started in the last few days)
- (ii) An Obesity Crisis (further fuelling C19 deaths)

- (iii) An Air Quality Crisis (also worsening C19 deaths)
- (iv) A Climate Emergency
- (v) An Environmental Emergency

He believes previous traffic studies have shown that a significant proportion of journey through the town are less than a few miles – there's just no excuse for that anymore. People, especially local able-bodied people, need to be forced out of their cars and into walking and cycling and using public transport and that's going to be uncomfortable for many.

Wiltshire Council appear not only to have taken a great deal of time and failed to fully grasp the above, but they chose to implement the “max version” of a number of possible permutations for the trial first. Then they seem to have measured nothing apart from social media sentiment. What sort of an experiment is that? Finally, they cite the school run by car as a reason from removing the lights in the face of Government and the schools themselves trying to encourage walking and cycling to school “wherever possible”. It's tempting to infer a political conspiracy by certain Wiltshire Councillors, but I suspect is just incompetence (as usual). 8/10 Town Council and 2/10 Wiltshire Council. His questions were: - Is any of the money being paid back? Who is responsible for the public communications on this scheme Wiltshire Council or Bradford on Avon Town Council and why were they so poor?

6. Richard White, well in contrast to the last commentary, I think the new traffic system is entirely disproportionate response to the need for social distancing and to the public risks involved. The single traffic on the bridge as far as he is concerned is an entirely foreseeable disaster which caused long delays and wasted time and frustration. He questions does the council accept the scheme is a failure and why does it attempt to deflect blame for the scheme to Wiltshire Council on its website why was not such a major scheme costing up to £30,000 put to residents for approval. I quote from the Town Council website this is a Wiltshire Council designed and implemented scheme supported by Bradford on Avon Town Council but at the Town Council meeting on the 26th June 2020 it said that Bradford on Avon Town Council has submitted a request to Wiltshire Council for introduction for social distancing measures and it seems to him that the town council had tried to mislead the public through the content on its website..

7. Paul Haywood I think Gail has asked his question where are the historic results and where was the promised monitoring on New Road. He was uncertain Wiltshire Council would do some monitoring, so he did some himself. He monitored the traffic flow every morning in July and August and there were 293 vehicles per hour from 8.30am to 9am since the scheme has started 645 vehicles per hour and yesterday 1,086 per hour and today 1,026 per hour. Please don't forget the impact on New Road the numbers and speed of these vehicles as it speeds up people driving through. There are a lot of parked cars, children can't sleep, pedestrians find it difficult to find a crossing point, New Road is bearing the brunt. He had lots of suggestions on how to improve New Road. The average noise outside his home tonight was 62 decibels. This will not be a temporary scheme. What are you going to do about traffic calming on New Road in the immediate future?

8. Barney Weston said a lot of the New Road issues have been covered, pollution, safety and noise and traffic flow and the speed. We have two children who walk to school every day on a very busy walking route. New Road is a 'b' road inner distribution road, need traffic calming and safety. How many other towns have brought in to make changes on this scale with a one-way system, he is questioning whether the bridge no longer has a wide enough walkway since the traffic lights were removed.

9. Suzy Kay said that if this is a trial there should also be historic base line data on traffic flow and noise levels on Silver Street and New Road to prove if something is successful otherwise the trial was not valid. Where is the report on this baseline data which should be available for public consumption and who is responsible for it?

10. Pat Douglas explained that air quality was the same as Mumbai at Woolley Street. He had to do a 7-point turn in the mornings and suggested that motorists be allowed to turn right by the hardware shop to exit the town without the need to go up Market Street or over the town bridge.

11. Louise Weissell said that with the new one way system as the barriers have been removed from the Town Bridge that the town centre is much less accessible than even it was before, McKeever Bridge has too steep ramps and the footpaths are quite narrow. It is much more difficult to cross the roads at the town bridge. She wanted to know what would be done about widening the footpaths on the town bridge, which was for her the main point of the scheme.