

The meeting was preceded by a Public Forum, the subject of which was the A31 Improvement Scheme (*see separate notes*).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 26th July 2017 at 8.10pm

PRESENT: Cllr Tim Ward, Town Mayor
Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andrew Briers
Cllr Jeremy Heron
Cllr Anne Murphy
Cllr Gloria O'Reilly
Cllr Tony Ring
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine
Cllr Christopher Treleaven
Cllr Angela Wiseman

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Terry Simpson, Interim Town Clerk
Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk
Student Advisor Oscar Poules

C/6022 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Ford, Cllr Loose and Cllr Thierry.

C/6023 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared at this time.

C/6024 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Meeting held on 28th June 2017, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

C/6025 PRESENTATION OF STUDENT ADVISOR CERTIFICATES

The Town Mayor presented a Certificate to Oscar Poules in recognition of his contribution to Council meetings as a Student Advisor. He thanked Oscar for his invaluable input during the past year and wished him luck for the future.

C/6026 PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Treleaven presented the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 7th July 2017.

P/5418 – following the discussion in the Public Forum, the Council's response to Highways England in respect of the A31 Improvement Scheme was amended.

P/5421 – Cllr Treleaven explained that a coherent business plan was needed for town centre improvements, in order to bring all projects under one banner and to assist with funding bids. It was noted that a representative of the Church should be invited to attend meetings.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the minutes of the Planning, Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 7th July 2017 be received, and that the recommendation at P/5421 be approved.
- 2) That the Council's response to the public consultation, in respect of the A31 Improvement Scheme be as follows;

The Town Council:

- 1) Approves of the A31 Improvement Scheme, to widen the westbound carriageway to 3 lanes, in order to reduce congestion for users of the A31, reduce congestion for local people, improve journey times and reduce pollution;
- 2) Supports the proposed closure of West Street on safety grounds, with a caveat that there needs to be emergency access onto the A31 from the Market Place, with the operation of a barrier/smart card system;
- 3) Recommends that there be no direct access to or from the A31 for the petrol station, in the interests of safety. This proposal has overwhelming public support;
- 4) Proposes that, in the event that 3 above is rejected, the slip road at the petrol station be extended the full length to the Verwood turnoff and investigations be made into alternative solutions for entry/exit to the petrol station, possibly from the Verwood road;
- 5) Requires that there be a robust implementation plan in place to minimise the impact on residents during the construction period, due to the effects of contraflows, overnight closures and diversion routes for its expected 18 months duration. In addition, Highways England must ensure that the works do not coincide with planned works on the A338 (between the Blackwater and Cooper Dean junctions);
- 6) Requires that specific noise and vibration abatement measures be implemented for residents along the route and for the Parish Church;
- 7) Requires an assurance that traffic re-modelling takes into account the new Local Plan and future projections for traffic with the possible development of Sites P, Q and R, including volume of traffic at peak times;
- 8) Requires that the re-modelling statistics be made available to the Town Council's own traffic consultants;
- 9) Requires Town Centre access improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and believes that it is the duty of Highways England to provide this. Ringwood is unique in that it has a trunk road through the town and improvements are needed to compensate for this and to help the community to prosper. In this respect, it will be necessary to work with Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council.
- 10) That signage and lane management be improved from Picket Post in order to keep traffic on the A31 and to make it clear that there is no re-access to the A31 through the town;
- 11) That consideration be given to the introduction of a 50mph speed limit from Picket Post.

C/6026

RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 5th July 2017.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 5th July 2017 be received.

C/6027
POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 19th July 2017.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 19th July 2017 be received and the recommendation therein be approved.

C/6028
ARMED FORCES DAY 2018

Cllr Day reported that, together with Cllrs Ford and Murphy, he had met with Reverend Terry Roberts to discuss the First World War Centenary. It was proposed to hold Armed Forces Day on 30 June 2018, between 1pm and 5pm and ending with an open air service, and a service would be held in the Parish Church on 1 July 2018. For the Remembrance Service on 11 November 2018, it was hoped to be able to accommodate everyone in one place, possibly with a marquee on The Bickerley, with a capacity for 1,000 people. Although in the early stages of planning, the Working Party was determined to make the events in 2018 memorable. Cllr Day encouraged anyone interested in helping with the organisation of events to get in touch.

RESOLVED: That the update be received.

C/6029
RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR

The Town Mayor reported that following the resignation of Jacqui Terry, 10 electors had requested an election to fill the vacancy in the North Ward. This would be held on 7 September 2017.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

C/6030
COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

The Town Mayor reported the following:

- 1) The County Council had made a commitment that all outstanding works around the town, such as the replacement of pavers, would be carried out after 1 August when new contractors Skanska took over from Amey;
- 2) A French Market had been provisionally booked for 3 & 4 November 2017;
- 3) Renovation works were underway at Ringwood Health and Leisure;
- 4) Wessex Water would be commencing drainage works on The Bickerley the following week, and it was hoped that the area would be back in use for events next year;
- 5) A service was to be held in the Parish Church at 2pm on Saturday 29 July for the Royal British Legion Standards.

C/6031
REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS

Cllr Day was assisting Mr Chris Wood, the owner of the building housing Friday's Cross Clock, in trying to bring it back into use, and reported that Mr Wood was very grateful for the Council's continued support.

He was working with Cllr Ring and members of the Ringwood Events Committee on a Fireworks event to be held on 5 November 2017, and a Christmas Lights Switch-On event to

be held on 2 December 2017. Any offer of assistance in organising these events would be much appreciated.

Cllr Murphy had attended the New Forest Association of Local Councils meeting, and recommended that the Police & Crime Commissioner Michael Lane be invited to address the Council.

Cllr Wiseman had attended a meeting of Ringwood Society, which supported the restoration of the Friday's Cross Clock and a representative would attend the next District Council Planning Development Control Committee when this was to be discussed. She had also reported an incident of flooding in Christchurch Road.

Cllr Ring reported that a member of the public was organising a petition in support of the restoration of the Friday's Cross Clock. A copy of the petition would be made available in Ringwood Gateway for signing. He commented on footpath maintenance in New Street. He also asked Members to keep in mind, when considering town centre improvements, that traders in the Friday's Cross area were concerned about being forgotten.

C/6032

REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

District Councillor Heron was concerned that he had read in the paper that Hampshire Police was recruiting extra officers to address the rise in crime, despite being told at the last Council meeting by Sergeant Mitchley that there would be no increase in resource. Cabinet would be held on 2 August, when the District Council's response to the A31 consultation would be agreed.

District Councillor Rippon-Swaine reported on the Planning Development Control Committee meeting when the Friday's Cross Clock had been discussed. A decision on the application had been deferred and officers were keen to find a resolution to bring the clock back in to use.

C/6033

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 6 th September 2017
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 4 th August & 1 st September 2017
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 20 th September 2017
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 27 th September 2017

Prior to the end of the meeting, Members expressed their sincere thanks to Terry Simpson who had held the position of Interim Town Clerk since February. Mr Chris Wilkins would take over as the new Town Clerk on Monday 31 July.

Oscar Poules, Student Advisor, thanked the Council for the opportunity, which he said had been a great experience.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

APPROVED
27th September 2017

TOWN MAYOR

NOTES OF PUBLIC FORUM

7.00pm, 26th July 2017 (prior to Full Council)

A31 Improvement Scheme

There were approximately 35 members of public present.

Cllr Treleaven summarised the proposals by Highways England to widen a section of the A31 westbound between the main Ringwood junction and the Verwood off-slip, in order to improve safety, reduce congestion and improve journey times. The scheme includes widening the carriageway to 3 lanes, closing the West Street access to the A31 and improving facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

A 2-day public exhibition had been held on 30 June and 1 July, following which the Council's Planning, Town & Environment Committee had agreed a recommended response to Highways England. This draft response would be considered by Full Council immediately after the Public Forum, taking into account the views of residents.

West Street

Residents living in the vicinity of West Street were concerned that their journey times would be lengthened if the closure was implemented. They also had concerns about the design of the closure point and location of the turning circle.

It was noted that currently 84% of traffic using West Street to access the A31 is not stopping in town and using it as a short cut to avoid congestion.

With the closure of West Street, more buses would need to exit via the High Street and delivery lorries would need to turn around and go back through town. With the existing parking in the narrow High Street, some residents were of the opinion that this could cause chaos and would be an unsafe environment for pedestrians.

One resident questioned whether parking could be removed from the High Street. It was suggested that improved enforcement of waiting restrictions was required and the use of disabled spaces in the Market Place and Furlong Car Park should be encouraged.

It was noted that an additional 12 buses per week would need to use the High Street to exit the depot, but 9 of these would be before 8am.

As part of the scheme, Highways England would be contributing to improvements for pedestrians and cyclists in the town centre, and the possibility of reversing the direction of Meeting House Lane would also be considered.

It was hoped that, if West Street were to be closed, this would create a more pedestrian friendly and improved environment in the Market Place. However, there was some concern that town centre businesses may suffer from the loss of passing trade. One resident suggested that pedestrianisation of the High Street should be investigated.

Residents were asked if they supported the closure of West Street; 14 were in favour and 11 against, while the remainder had no strong view either way.

Speed Limit

The majority of residents present were in favour of a reduction in speed limit to 50mph from Picket Post to join up with the existing 50mph at St Leonards. It was however noted that the

Police had not previously supported a reduction in speed as 95% of accidents on this stretch of road were slow speed shunts. Improved signage and driver awareness would assist in this respect.

Petrol Station

The overwhelming majority of those present supported the closure of the petrol station as it was felt that this would still encourage traffic to cross lanes and vehicles would still need to exit from a standing start. If the petrol station remained open, it was felt that the scheme would not be safe. It was however noted that Highways England had ruled this option out prior to the public consultation due to the costs involved.

Some felt that if the petrol station was closed, there would be no need to close West Street.

There is a need to prevent HGVs from parking on the slip road adjacent to the petrol station, as this obscures visibility for drivers exiting the garage and limits space available for drivers to make decisions.

Construction

Residents were concerned about the estimated 18 month construction period and the impact this would have on local people and businesses. There was concern that more traffic would try to divert through the town centre during the construction period. The Council was encouraged to be involved in production of the construction and traffic management plans to ensure disruption was kept to a minimum. It is vital that Highways England liaise with Dorset County Council/Bournemouth Borough Council to ensure that the works don't coincide with planned works on the A338 (between the Blackwater and Cooper Dean junctions).

Other Issues

One resident asked about the impact on the A338 Salisbury Road, as there are long queues on this road when the A31 is congested. It was noted that Highways England had been asked this question, and it was expected that these queues would reduce when the scheme is implemented.

All agreed that there was a need to improve signage on the A31, and to start this east of Ringwood, to ensure vehicles were in the right lanes and had sufficient space to manoeuvre.

A representative of The Lantern Community expressed concern about the state of the footpath into town and the apparent temporary closure during construction of the scheme. It was noted that there were plans to improve this footpath and make it safer, and Highways England had given an assurance that the footpath would not be closed.

The Town Mayor thanked residents for attending and closed the open forum at 8.05pm.