

High Wycombe Town Committee Minutes

Date: 3 October 2017

Time: 7.00 - 9.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A R Green
(in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M Asif, Ms A Baughan, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, M Clarke, R Farmer, S Graham, M A Hashmi, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, M E Knight, B E Pearce, R Raja, S K Raja, N J B Teesdale and Ms J D Wassell.

ALSO PRESENT:

Steven Bown
Ben Fletcher

Bucks County Council
Bucks County Council

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed the new clerk for the Committee to the meeting and asked Members to introduce themselves.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mohammed Hanif and Mahboob Hussain.

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 13 June 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

14 PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - CONSULTATION UPDATE

The Committee welcomed Sarah McBrearty, Community Services Team Leader, to the meeting who explained that following reports of anti-social behaviour and crime, a public consultation was undertaken in relation to implementing a PSPO to close footpath HWU/80/1. It was noted that the report detailed the results of the consultation and asked that the Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Community the making of the PSPO.

It was noted that an estimate of approximately £3,500 had been obtained for the gates, a firm quotation would be needed. The Community Services Team Leader

explained that the footpath would need to be monitored to ensure it did not become overgrown or that the gates were not damaged. A plan of the proposed alternative route could be found on page 12 of the agenda.

The report outlined who the consultation letters had been sent to and Members were informed that during the consultation period letters / emails of support were received from 8 local residents and 1 local business. It was reported that letters / emails of objection to closing the footpath were received from the Ramblers Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area, Open Spaces Society, Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum, Chiltern Society, a resident in Marlow, a resident of Desborough Road and a resident from an unknown location. The Community Services Team Leader explained that the responses given to concerns raised could be found on page 10 of the agenda.

It was reported that other options included CCTV which would cost a significant amount of money, would cause collateral intrusion and the offenders would be unknown to those viewing the CCTV. It was noted that the footpath was within an existing PSPO area which prohibited alcohol related anti-social behaviour but that the Council was reliant on the Police patrolling the area which could be a slower solution.

In relation to paragraph 10 of the report, specifically relating to Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum (LAF), Members noted a slight amendment to the text set out in that there were 11 out of 14 members present at the LAF meeting and they had voted unanimously against the proposal.

Main issues arising from closing the footpath included that some residents used the footpath to access parking spaces in rear of their gardens, which they were legally able to do, hence using an access code would be the preferred option to allow resident access. In discussion Members raised concerns that the access code could end up in the wrong hands – it was suggested that this code be changed every 6-8 weeks although the Community Services Team Leader explained that a lot of external agencies such as the Fire Service would need to be updated of the new codes which would be very time consuming but would be considered.

Concern was also raised by Members about the possibility of simply displacing the ASB to another nearby area and that closing the footpath could set a precedent for other footpaths affected by ASB.

Members stated their sympathy to the residents who had experienced the ASB – one Member felt that the pedestrians should be prioritised and that the residents should be encouraged to spruce up the alleyway, help maintain it and challenge the issues. Other Members felt the closure of the footpath was the only option for local residents as it was being used for unsavoury activities / being abused rather than for what the footpath was originally meant for.

Members also raised the ASB issues experienced in the Frogmore area and explained that the bigger picture needed to be addressed. The Community Services Team Leader explained that she would be calling a multi-agency meeting in the next month or so to discuss the Frogmore area.

Members urged the Community Services Team Leader to ensure that Bucks County Council were keeping the footpaths in the Borough clear of rubbish, vegetation and generally clean.

One Member felt the £3,500 would be better spent on support services (e.g. on helping street drinkers, etc) rather than on gates.

The Community Services Team Leader assured Members that if the gates were installed she would work with the Neighbourhood Policing Team to see if ASB levels in nearby areas had increased.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET MEMBER: To agree to make a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to restrict public access to footpath HWU/80/1 by way of lockable gates at each end.

15 TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN CONSULTATION

The Chairman welcomed Steven Bown (HIP Lead Project Officer – Bucks County Council), Ben Fletcher (Bucks County Council) and Rebecca Hart (Urban Design Officer, WDC) to the meeting and invited them to give Members an update on the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan.

The presentation covered the Phase Plan, Phase 5 – Queen Victoria Road / Easton Street, Queen Victoria Road Junction Option Comparisons, Library gardens proposal and the Abbey Way Gyratory preliminary design.

The Committee heard that Phase 4 was about to start and that comments would be welcomed at the meeting on Phase 5 which looked at the Queen Victoria Road, Easton Street and Crendon Street junction. Councillor Lesley Clarke stated her disappointment that she had not seen sight of the presentation before the meeting given it was in her area and that she not been consulted on the proposed changes. Councillor Hill too stated that this was the first he had heard of the proposed changes.

In discussion Members stated that they felt the location of the taxi rank on the High Street needed to be looked at and included at this stage (including disabled access - side and rear into taxis). The Urban Design Officer stated that this was unfortunately outside the scope of this phase and that there was no funding available for it. Members felt that returning the traffic flow to a two-way system in Easton Street could potentially be a good thing and suggested that a reduced speed limit could be considered.

Members questioned when the improvement works to the High Street would be undertaken by Bucks County Council as it needed to be brought back into a good condition in order to help attract investors to the area. The HIP Lead Project Officer explained that the issues in the High Street were considered very complex and whilst she agreed the improvement work needed to be done she did not believe it would be done anytime soon. Members were asked to help put the pressure on to see if the improvement works could be pushed through quicker.

It was noted that the Congestion Manager, Dave Roberts, was currently working on getting the faulty bollards in the High Street fixed / replaced.

Members were informed that Bucks County Council were suggesting installing an informal uncontrolled crossing by the Police Station with the potential for an alternative footpath through the Library gardens. Members stated their concern at the thought of the Library gardens being reduced in size to make way for wider road lanes and a footpath running through the gardens as it could encourage misuse of the area. It was noted that whilst the Wycombe District Council was the sole trustee for the Library gardens it should be remembered that there was a covenant on this garden. Members were assured that the existing flower beds and service memorial would be retained and also suggested that it might be worth speaking to the utility companies to see if they might help fund parts of the Masterplan.

Members suggested that the informal crossing needed to be moved up Queen Victoria Road to outside the Council Offices car park (north access) which was an area often used by theatre goers. It was suggested that Bucks County Council might want to wait for a year before installing an informal crossing so that they could see where it might be best placed. It was noted that a bus lay-by was being proposed outside the Baptist Church on Easton Street to help assist with the multiple vehicles attending funerals. The Urban Design Officer informed Members that the grey bubble on the slides was currently being looked into as to what options might work best.

It was explained that slide 3 showed the Queen Victoria Road junction option comparisons. It was noted that only option 4b-3 did include a right hand turn from Queen Victoria Road into Easton Street which was considered by Bucks County Council to be the least favourable option. Members were informed that none of the options provided allowed for a right hand turn from Crendon Street onto the High Street. Members felt that the two lanes merging into one option (4b-4) would not work well. It was highlighted that the Wycombe Police Station had a custody suite and that its custody vans would need the right hand turn as shown on option 4b-3. The HIP Lead Project Officer explained that they were due to meet with the Police to discuss this area and different parts of the Masterplan and assured Members that the custody vans point would be raised with the Police. Members were informed that the traffic signals proposed would be linked to the Train Station traffic signals so the traffic flow would not be adversely affected.

The Chairman thanked the officers, on behalf of the Committee, for their informative presentation.

(Any member wishing to receive a copy of the detailed presentation should contact Democratic Services.)

16 INFORMATION SHEETS

RESOLVED: That Information Sheet 05/2017 Q1 Monitoring Report be noted.

17 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's draft work programme looking ahead to June 2018 was presented for review.

Members requested the following items be added to the draft work programme:

- That the 'Revive the River Wye' recommendations be presented to the Committee before they were presented to Cabinet.
- That Bucks County Council be asked to provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee on their future plans for the old Library building.
- That a report on the community facilities in the town comes before the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the forward work programme be noted and updated as above.

18 SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS (IF ANY)

None submitted.

19 URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None submitted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

T Brown	Democratic Services Officer
R Hart	Urban Design Officer
S McBrearty	Community Services Team Leader