

Minutes of a meeting of Warwick Area Committee held on 10 January 2012

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillor Martyn Ashford (Chair)
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Les Caborn
Councillor Jose Compton
Councillor Chris Davis
Councillor Mike Doody
Councillor Clare Hopkinson
Councillor Bernard Kirton
Councillor Dave Shilton
Councillor Angela Warner
Councillor John Whitehouse

Officers

Dave Abbott, Democratic Services Officer
Jo Edwards, Senior Road Safety Engineer
John Parmiter, Head of the ICT Development Service
Philippa Young, Senior Traffic Projects Engineer
Alison Williams, Community Partnership Team

14 members of the public attended the meeting.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Penny Bould, Alan Cockburn, Eithne Goode, and Tim Naylor.

(2) Members Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Petitions

A safe crossing for Stratford Road

Fiona Cadock, parent at Newburgh Primary School, presented the petition and the following points were noted:

- Parents with young children attending local schools have to cross the road up to six times per day.
- To cross the road you have to go half way and stand in the middle of a very busy road to wait for a gap in the traffic.
- The crossing is very unsafe, young children are unpredictable and there are concerns that this is an accident waiting to happen.
- The need for the crossing is illustrated by the nearly 500 people who have taken the time to sign the petition.

Councillor John Holland, Warwick Town Councillor and Governor of Newburgh Primary School addressed the Committee and the following points were noted:

- Pupils at Newburgh Primary School have to cross the road every day.
- When building work for the school was approved it was noted that the 'safer routes to school' plan needed work, but nothing was done.
- Twenty teenagers from Warwick attend school in Stratford and have to cross the road to get their bus to school.
- We believe a traffic crossing immediately south of Shakespeare Avenue, with associated warning signs and flashing signs would be the ideal combination to make this road a safer place to cross.

Councillor Clare Hopkinson, local member, agreed that there was a need for some provision and made the following points:

- There is fast moving traffic on the road all day long.
- Because very young children are so unpredictable, the responsibility for crossing the road has to fall solely to the parent.
- There is a need for a road crossing with traffic lights and officers should be asked to carry out further investigation.

Councillor Angela Warner, local member, noted that although no suitable place was found for a crossing when the road was assessed about two years ago, she would be happy for this to be revisited.

The petition was sent to the Strategic Director for Communities and a response will be made by the appropriate officers.

Public Questions Time

The Chair noted that two public questions had been received. The Chair proposed, and Councillors agreed, that because the public questions related directly to Item 4 'Warwick Traffic Management Scheme Phase 2 - Consideration of Objections' - they be asked during the item.

3. Local Broadband Plan

John Parmiter, Head of the ICT Development Service, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- It is the Government's aspiration to improve broadband connectivity to all homes in the UK.
- There are around 260 business in the Warwick area that would benefit from greater Internet connectivity and speed.
- Senior officers have met with all Districts and Boroughs to inform them about the plan and get their support.
- The funding is focused on areas that the private sector won't reach.
- The increased coverage and speed will stimulate both the rural economy and the Warwickshire economy as a whole.

Councillor Shilton, seconded by Councillor Mike Doody, moved and was unanimously resolved as set out below.

Resolved

That:

1. The Committee supports the proposed actions to improve broadband across Warwickshire in accordance with the Government's targets for 2015.
2. Committee members undertake to inform their residents about the projects and if further information is requested to refer them to the project team at broadband@warwickshire.gov.uk

4. Warwick Traffic Management Scheme Phase 2 - Consideration of Objections

Two public questions directly related to this item were taken before the presentation of the report.

Dennis Crips, local resident, asked the Committee, 'to consider the validity of the scheme's geometry and the likelihood of increased pollution' and made the following points:

- I dispute the accuracy of the scheme's geometry and believe there will be an increase in levels of pollution.
- Support for the proposals is based on inaccurate materials.
- A leaflet was produced that included a simplistic sketch of Brook Street that was patently incorrect.
- Long, wide vehicles would have difficulty navigating the proposed chicane on Brook Street.
- The clearances are minuscule. It is a hazard we don't need.
- There is an increased likelihood of congestion and hazards if large vehicles stop next to the Warwick Arms, which has happened in the past.
- I have spoken to the head of a major coach company who agreed that the scheme would cause problems in the town centre.
- Professor Goodwin cites traffic reductions averaging less than 6% on similar schemes - pollution is likely to increase over time.
- There should be further investigation.

Gavin Ashe, local resident, asked the Committee, 'is it right that a small number of objections could stop development of a scheme that the overwhelming majority of residents support?' and made the following points:

- I would like to express support for the scheme.
- There will always be conflicting needs but a consensus was reached.
- Opposition to the scheme is ill-informed with regard to parking, selfish with regard to the closure of Brook Street and the danger this currently poses to elderly residents and tourists that put money into every business in Warwick, and naive with regard to the zebra crossing at which vehicles regularly fail to stop.
- The plan is designed to discourage the use of Warwick as a rat-run and should be welcomed.

Philippa Young, Senior Traffic Projects Engineer, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- A formal consultation took place and a total of 63 responses were received.
- 47 of the responses were letters of support, including one from Warwickshire police.
- There were five letters of minor concern.
- The scheme has been designed using industry standard design software and the planners used a vehicle larger than the one Mr Crips is suggesting wouldn't fit.
- The coach company that Mr Crips referred to, Johnsons Coaches, has since seen a copy of the scheme drawings and they are now happy with the plans. They have also kindly offered the use of a bus for the purposes of testing.

Councillor Clare Hopkinson, local member, addressed the Committee and the following points were noted:

- There are two important points to the scheme - traffic calming, and the reduction of emissions to protect Warwick's historic buildings.
- The combination of chicanes will encourage slower, better flowing traffic.
- At the moment Jury Street can become gridlocked during busy times.
- Officers have done a great job putting the proposals together.
- The removal of the zebra crossing on Jury Street is the one snag, but the proposed six new pedestrian crossings are ultimately a better solution.

Councillor Angela Warner, local member, thanked everyone that had showed an interest and attended the meeting. She expressed support for the scheme and the following points were noted:

- Pedestrians don't use the crossing where it is at the moment, they cross at 'desire lines' by the junction.
- Shared space has been a proven benefit elsewhere.
- The only reservation is how the scheme fits in with the joint study group review.

Philippa Young, Senior Traffic Project Engineer, explained that the joint transport study group was set up to look at broader strategic options and added that they would likely be more focused on keeping through traffic out of the town centre entirely. She advised that there is no one solution for Warwick, the scheme before Committee today and the review will work side by side.

Councillors discussed the report and the following comments were noted:

- The High Street / Jury Street is a real barrier for businesses.
- The pedestrian crossing is not being used, people cross where it is most convenient.
- Admiration for the way local people and the County Council have come together to get involved in developing an excellent proposal.

The Chair congratulated officers for their time and effort putting this scheme together.

Councillor Dave Shilton, seconded by Councillor Mike Doody, moved and it was unanimously resolved as set out below.

Resolved

That:

1. Committee approves the implementation of Phase 2 of the traffic management and environmental enhancements as advertised.
2. The following orders be implemented as advertised;
 - (i) The Warwickshire County Council (Warwick Town Centre) (One Way Traffic and Prohibition of Vehicle Movements) (Variation No. 1) Order 2011.
 - (ii) The Warwickshire County Council (Brook Street, Warwick) (Prohibition Of Vehicle Movements) Order 2011.
 - (iii) The Warwickshire County Council (High Street, Warwick) (Zebra Crossing Removal) Order 2011.
 - (iv) The Warwickshire County Council (Jury Street and High Street, Warwick) (Traffic Calming) Order 2011.
 - (v) The Warwickshire County Council (District Of Warwick) (Permitted Parking Area and Special Parking Area) (Waiting Restrictions, On Street Parking Places and Residents' Parking) Consolidation) (Variation No. 16) Order 2011.
3. The Warwick Area Committee notes the progress made in developing the scheme and the proposal for the next phase.

5. Proposed Speed Limits - Consideration of Objections

Jo Edwards, Senior Road Safety Engineer, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The proposed changes will bring these roads in line with the rest of the County following the A and B roads review, which was about achieving consistency of speed limits throughout Warwickshire.
- A short section of the road is in Rugby and the proposed changes have been approved by Rugby Area Committee.
- The recommendation from officers is to approve the proposed speed limits.

Councillors discussed the report and the following points were noted:

- The new limit of 50mph will protect road users.
- Concerns about the Leicester Lane proposal, the road already has a stretch with a 50mph limit. A lot of that road is wide and clear. The proposal seems like overkill.
- Concerns that people will use an alternative, faster route that is less safe because of the limit.
- It is an extremely dangerous road. There are sharp bends and dangerous crossings.
- Not surprised by the objection from the Police, during the last review they objected to every single proposal. Their objection in this case is misinformed - the Glasshouse Lane route doesn't end at Birches lane.

- The objection from the Police is not supported by the safer neighbourhoods team.
- The police have a history of objecting to speed limits - often due to enforcement issues.

Councillor Dave Shilton, seconded by Councillor Jose Compton, moved the recommendations and a vote was taken:

Vote

For - 9 WON
Against - 2 LOST

Resolved

That the following reduced speed limits be approved:

1. A445 Leicester Lane, Nr Bubbenhall - reduction from 60mph to 50mph
2. Glasshouse Lane, Kenilworth - reduction from 60mph to 50mph (part) and reduction from 60mph to 30mph (part)

6. Warwick Area Fund 2011/12

Alison Williams presented the report and advised that agreement was sought for the use of a small amount of underspend left unallocated following the October 2011 meeting of the Committee. She explained that it was proposed that a sum of £4,127 be shared between the Sikh Cultural and Community Centre and a joint project between Whitnash Youth Club and Heartbreak Productions.

Alison Williams further clarified that the Sikh Cultural and Community Centre had identified funding for Punjabi classes as it's immediate priority and noted that as the centre had failed to secure funding from the Big Society Fund for this ongoing work there was a risk that these classes may have to cease.

Councillors discussed the report and the following points were noted:

- At the last meeting of the Committee it had been agreed that the underspend be used to develop projects identified through cross-working between four unsuccessful bids for funding relating to projects working with young people.
- This is a community development fund and Punjabi classes are important for addressing cross-generation issues in their community and are, therefore, an appropriate project to be supporting.
- The need for Punjabi classes was recognised, but it would be unfair to other community groups, who applied for the Warwick Area Fund and the Big Society Fund, to introduce the bid at this stage.
- The decision should be delegated to the funding sub-group.
- The remaining money should be put back in the pot.

Councillor Les Caborn, seconded by Councillor John Whitehouse, proposed that funding be split between the two projects outlined in 2.2 - i & ii of the report - a joint project between Whitnash Youth Club and Heartbreak Productions, and a Disability Youth project run between the Sikh Community Centre and Heartbreak Productions.

A vote was taken on the new proposals:

For - 6 WON
Against - 2 LOST

Resolved

That Warwick Area Committee allocate the underspend in the Warwick Area Fund of just over £4000 to the following two projects (2.2 - i & ii of the report):

1. A joint project between Whitnash Youth Club and Heartbreak Productions involving film and theatre.
2. A Disability Youth project at the Sikh Community Centre run in partnership with Heartbreak Productions.

7. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2012 and matters arising

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Councillor Jose Compton advised that the issue of passenger assistants on school transport that was brought to the attention of the Committee in October 2011 had still not been resolved. She explained that there had been an extension to February half term, and that the parents affected were not being kept informed by the County Council.

The Chair agreed to write to the Strategic Director for Communities and the Leader of Warwickshire County Council for information about the decision.

8. Any Other Items

None.

The Committee rose at 7.48pm

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Chair