

**Minutes of the Transport Committee Meeting held
virtually (online) via Zoom on Tuesday 13th October 2020 at 7.30pm**

A video-recording of this meeting has been posted on BrutonTown Council's Youtube channel and can be seen by clicking on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyHXocBZYOI>

Present: Councillors Anderton, Karen Baker, Brownlow, Jones (after item 3), Hood and Skinner
In the Chair: Councillor Hood
In Attendance: The Assistant Clerk
One member of the public

- 1. Apologies** – Apologies were received from Councillor Pickering
- 2. Declarations of interest** – Councillors Anderton and Brownlow each declared a personal interest in item 8 as occupants of properties on Quaperlake Street.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting:**
It was RESOLVED 5-0-0 [for-against-abstain] that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th August 2020 be confirmed as correct.

At this point Councillor Jones joined the meeting.

4. Matters raised by residents - pedestrian safety in Shute Lane

A member of the public who was in attendance accepted an invitation to outline the main points of a document (attached) she had submitted detailing the dangers of this road:

- There is no footway (pavement).
- The many pedestrians who use the road - including children on their way to and from school - have to walk in the carriageway.
- The road carries a great deal of motor traffic, particularly during the current pandemic when there has been a move from public transport to private cars.
- A majority of vehicles travel faster than the designated 20mph speed limit.
- Visibility is poor because of extensive tree cover and a bend in the road.
- Some changes in the road markings could mitigate the dangers, for instance removing the central white line, adding white-line edge markings, and adding more 20[mph] road-marking roundels.
- A speed indicator device (SID) could also help.
- The road is too narrow and bendy to accommodate Speedwatch or police-operated speed cameras.
- Possibly a footway could be installed over the leat, or else an alternative pedestrian route provided, but this would be expensive and far from straightforward.

Councillors added some further observations:

- Somerset Country Council Highways Department (Highways) had agreed previously to remove the central white line but it was repainted in error when the road was resurfaced.
- At one time Highways had recommended a 'virtual pavement' (i.e. a strip along the edge of the carriageway separated from the main carriageway by a thick white line and designated as a footway) but this practice is now considered dangerous.

It was RESOLVED 6-0-0 to ask Highways to remove the central white line, paint on more 20[mph] road-marking roundels, install white lines along the road edges, and discuss possible longer-term measures to improve pedestrian safety.

5. Current transport projects – Fingerposts

Councillor Pickering who is leading on this matter was unavoidably absent so it was agreed to defer it until the next meeting of the Committee.

6. Speeding and volume of traffic in town:

Members noted the recent increase in expressions of public concern about speeding and the volume of traffic in town and discussed whether it was appropriate for the Town Council or a Council Committee to devote time and resources to matters over which they have no control. Among the points made were the following:

- Successful Town Council initiatives to combat speeding include the statutory 20mph speed limit, a SID and Speedwatch. A new SID will come into service in the coming months and we are still looking for a volunteer to run Speedwatch.
- Highways and the Police are in charge of regulation and enforcement. The Town Council cannot force them to do what they are unable or unwilling to do and there is little point wasting time and effort trying to achieve the unachievable.
- Contrary to some reports, Satnavs do not encourage users to drive through Bruton when there are viable alternatives.
- It is possible that the massive reduction of traffic in the early months of lockdown has altered perceptions of speed and it may be that an apparent increase in speeding may actually represent a return to normality.
- There are reports of more congestion, maybe because there are more parcel deliveries and more cars per household resulting in more street parking.
- Congestion slows traffic but also frustrates drivers, leading to increased risk taking and speeding on release.
- A traffic census could confirm this impressionistic and anecdotal data with hard evidence, including traffic volume and speed evidence gathered via a SID.
- We can do nothing to reduce shopping habits, car ownership or traffic volume, and little to reduce speeding, so there is little value in discussing them further.
- In the light of our declaration of a Climate Emergency we should focus on lobbying the authorities to make more and better provision for cycling and walking.

Members agreed to maintain the Committee's policy of concentrating on what can be achieved rather than on what would be ideal.

- 7. Access to proposed development on land north of Brewham Road** - Members reviewed a draft letter to Highways concerning planning application 20/02297/OUT. Committee members and Bruton's Safer Walking and Cycling Group had drawn up a 'Walking and Cycling Assessment' which cast doubts on the viability and legality of the proposed access arrangements. Members of the Committee commended the draft to Council, for consideration at the Full Council meeting on 27th October.
- 8. Quaperlake Street footway (pavement) and pedestrian safety** – Members discussed pedestrian safety in Quaperlake Street and made the following points:
- This is a perennial problem because heavy traffic on the busy A358 is confined to a narrow carriageway with a narrow pavement beside it; there is no room to widen either the carriageway or the pavement.
 - The problem has been exacerbated by recent housing developments on the eastern side of the town; further housing developments there will make things even worse.
 - Given the size of modern heavy goods vehicles the carriageway is simply not wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic, especially with cars and vans loading and unloading or parked in the street.
 - One solution would be to turn the carriageway into a single one-way lane controlled by traffic lights, as on the A371 in Ansford (by the Ansford Road junction), or on the A351 at Templecombe. This would allow the pavement on Quaperlake Street (and Coombe Street) to be widened.
 - This traffic-light solution would not be compatible with the needs of delivery drivers, recycling and waste collection and householders whose vehicles need to stop in the carriageway for deliveries, collections, loading and unloading. And prohibiting street parking on Quaperlake Street would exacerbate Bruton's parking problems.
 - The installation of temporary traffic lights on Quaperlake Street a few years ago caused long queues and great congestion, though these problems might be less serious in the case of a permanent installation with optimised intelligent controls.

Members agreed that a preferable solution would be to develop an alternative pedestrian route linking the town centre to the housing on the east side of the town. The Burrowfield Steps are not accessible for wheelchair users or those with buggies, and it is questionable whether they can ever be made so. The committee agreed that other alternatives should be explored including the possibility of a route across County Fields.

9. Fishponds Field Working Group

It was RESOLVED 6-0-0 to agree the draft Terms of Reference and to refer a decision on whether to rename the Working Group *Abbey Ponds Working Group* or *Abbey Fishponds Working Group* to the Full Council after consulting Bruton Conservation Trust.

10. The Somerset Walking and Cycling Manifesto – The County Council has not yet issued a formal response to the Manifesto but the Portfolio Holder for Transport appears to have a strong personal sympathy with its aims.

11. Funding priorities for 2020/21 – Members discussed funding and ring-fenced reserves for current and future Transport projects.

The Council currently holds the following ring-fenced reserves:

- £3k. for the Plox road-crossing.
- £2.5k. for the Library junction.
- Smaller sums for the St Catherine’s Hill project, SID management and fingerposts.
- In addition Bruton Community Partnership will return the major (unused) portion of a £2k. grant it received from the Town Council for work on footpaths.

It was RESOLVED 6-0-0 to ask the Full Council to carry forward existing unspent earmarked reserves for current Transport projects into 2021/22.

It was RESOLVED 6-0-0 to ask the Full Council to allocate £5k. towards improving walking and cycling arrangements in the town.

It was RESOLVED 6-0-0 to ask the Finance and Resources Committee to move forward on the acquisition of County Fields and make any requisite budgetary provision accordingly.

12. For information:

- i. Speed Indicator Device locations** – the locations we proposed have been agreed by SCC Highways with one amendment. The agreed locations will be posted on the website once the SID has been purchased and its activation is imminent.
- ii. St Catherine’s Hill** – Highways have marked the road for installation of bollards on a trial basis.
- iii. Disabled parking bay outside pharmacy** – Highways have marked the road for the installation of a parking bay outside the pharmacy.

13. Next meeting – the Transport Committee is scheduled to meet on 12th January 2021.

Patrick Pender-Cudlip

Assistant Clerk