

Notes of an informal consultative meeting of the Transport Committee held virtually (online) via Zoom on 13th July 2021 at 7.30pm

A video-recording of this meeting has been posted on Bruton Town Council's Youtube channel and can be seen via this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nn1gOLiki0>

Present: Councillors Anderton, Karen Baker, Brownlow, Hood, and (from part-way through the discussion of Item 5i) Jones, Pickering and Skinner

In the Chair: Councillor Hood

In Attendance: Patrick Pender-Cudlip, Assistant Town Clerk
Two members of the public

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman thanked Councillors and members for attending the informal meeting, held via Zoom and live-streamed via YouTube so as to reconcile the Council's transparency obligations with Government advice on social distancing. Members would discuss Agenda items and where appropriate make recommendations to Council officers who would make decisions under delegated authority in accordance with the Business Continuity Motion 19/71 of 21st March 2020.

2. Apologies

Councillors Jones, Pickering and Skinner had sent apologies for being unable to attend from the start of the meeting.

3. Declarations of interest

No Members had interests to declare in respect of agenda items.

4. Previous meetings

Members had seen draft minutes of the meeting of 9th February 2021 and notes of the informal meeting of 11th May 2021 and considered them accurate.

5. Matters raised by residents

i. Pavement parking on Patwell Street by delivery vehicles:

Two long-term residents of Patwell Street explained their concerns and contributed to a broader discussion of the problem by Committee Members. Among the points made were the following:

- The problem goes back many years but has been exacerbated by the recent increase in home deliveries, especially during the pandemic.
- In places the pavement is barely wide enough for a push chair so vehicles parking with their inside wheels on the pavement force pedestrians into the road.

- Vehicles approach Patwell Street via one or other of two blind corners, and often at some speed, so drivers have little warning of pedestrians stepping out into the roadway from behind parked vans.

At this point Councillor Pickering joined the meeting.

- Pavement parking in Patwell Street is an instance of the broader problem of the conflicting interests of pedestrians and motorists in Bruton, a matter which has exercised the Town Council for many years.

At this point Councillor Jones joined the meeting.

- It might be timely for the Council to revive the High Street project though this would likely require funding for a design consultant so would probably have to wait until next year.
- Possible solutions include wider pavements, bollards and *No Loading* kerb markings.
- In response, some suggested that wider pavements might actually encourage pavement parking, that bollards can cause problems for pedestrians and cyclists and displace rather than discourage determined pavement parkers, and that few motorists actually notice kerb markings - and even fewer know what they mean, though this could always be explained to offenders.
- Adopted roads and pavements belong to the County Council and are controlled by the Highways Department so Bruton may propose but it is for Highways to dispose.
- Asking local businesses about their delivery needs might yield useful information.
- Trees planted alongside the highway could make drivers more aware of pedestrians and their needs as well as discouraging pavement parking and capturing carbon.

At this point Councillor Skinner joined the meeting.

Members agreed that Councillor Hood should ask Highways to install *No Loading* kerb markings in Patwell Street.

There was a broad consensus in favour of asking the Town Council to allocate funding in next year's budget for research into how the needs of pedestrians, visiting motorists and through traffic in the centre of Bruton can be balanced to the benefit of the town, as outlined in the Town Plan.

ii. Parking outside the Primary School

Points made by a member of the public who had studied this matter included the following:

- The Town Plan wants "Bruton to be a place where it feels easy and safe to walk around" but when children were asked about how they feel about walking to and from school many of them wrote that they feel unsafe.
- The County Council's Road Safety Co-ordinator has been in touch with the Police and County Highways about refurbishing the road markings.
- The Avon and Somerset Police Road Safety Officer is reminding Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) of their powers to take action against motorists obstructing the highway and pavements.
- Staggering the start to the school day can leave children standing in the road waiting for the school gates to open.

- The car parks close to the school are usually full of cars belonging to local residents so parents dropping off or collecting their children are forced to pull up on the Higher Backway pavements, forcing other children into the road.
- A continuous pavement with a raised kerb along Higher Backway would help.
- Children walking between the Primary School and the Nursery School have to cross a car park.
- ‘Walking buses’ where groups of children on foot are escorted between designated drop-off points and the school have proved impracticable because parents find it hard to deliver their children on time every day and there are few places in or near the town centre where large groups of children can wait safely.

Members made a number of points including the following:

- We would love more Bruton children to walk to school, but the great majority (c. ¾) of those who are currently driven to the school come from outside Bruton.
- Banning traffic from Higher Backway (and access to its car parks) at the beginning and end of the school day might help but it could have the effect of displacing the dangerous mix of road traffic and children to Tolbury Mill.
- Any attempt to resolve the complex design and access problems associated with the school site requires careful discussion between many stakeholders and interested parties.

6. Heavy Goods Vehicles breaching Bruton’s 7.5t. weight limit - Councillor Brownlow reported on a Lorrywatch survey carried out on June 21st.

- Two enthusiastic residents have played an invaluable part in refocusing the Council’s attention on this long-standing problem and organising a Lorrywatch survey.
- Further surveys would help reveal significant patterns and changes.
- Conducting such surveys alongside Speedwatch, with volunteers clad in Hi Vis jackets, would deliver a powerful visual reminder to lorry drivers and operators that the passage of non-exempt vehicles through Bruton is being monitored.
- Prominent graphic signage on the approach roads to Bruton would serve to warn off HGV drivers who are unfamiliar with the area
- The Police do not have the resources to monitor traffic passing through Bruton over an extended period and will not proceed on the basis of photographic evidence provided by third parties, but they might be able to target operators whose vehicles offend persistently and regularly at a particular time of day.

It was suggested that contacting local operators (as has been done previously) about specific breaches is likely to be more fruitful than asking the Police to enforce the law.

7. **Footpaths:**
 - i. **Footpaths Working Group (FWG):** Committee Members took note of written reports on the FWG meetings of 6th April, 4th May and 1st June 2021.
 - ii. **Maintaining rights of way:** Members discussed a proposal that the Town Council exercise its powers under the provisions of §43 of the Highways Act (1980) to help maintain footpaths and other rights of way (apart from highway pavements). This would be in support of the body with statutory responsibility, Somerset County Council. If the proposal finds favour the Town Council would seek grants from the County Council and possibly other bodies to supply volunteers with appropriate training and specialist equipment.
All Members present expressed support for this proposal.
 - iii. **Overgrowth on footpaths:** Members noted that land and property owners are legally obliged to keep hedges, bushes and trees clear of footpaths and other rights of way, and that enforcement is the responsibility of the County Council except in areas like Cuckoo Hills where unadopted roads, pavements and paths are the responsibility of the developer.
8. **County Fields Footpath** - A preliminary feasibility study and a door-to-door survey of households east of Frome Road suggest that with County Council cooperation the project would be feasible and popular.
Members expressed support for the project and agreed that once the County Council engaged with it a Working Group should be established.
9. **Road crossing on Dropping Lane** – Members agreed with our Police Community Support Officer about the dangers faced by pedestrians crossing the road by Durslade Farm. Many vehicles exceed the speed limit and visibility is poor so many drivers are probably unaware of the potential presence of and dangers to pedestrians.
Members agreed to ask County Highways to investigate the hazard and identify remedies.
10. **For information:**
 - i. **Speed Indicator Device (SID) project** – we are waiting for the paperwork to be approved by the County Council.
 - ii. **Bus Improvement Plan** – the County Council will be consulting on a strategy to improve bus services.
 - iii. **Speedwatch** – the Council is liaising with the Police over arrangements for training volunteers and agreeing appropriate locations for Speedwatch.
11. **Next meeting** – September 14th, 2021

The meeting ended at 9.01pm