

**Notes of the Extraordinary Town Council meeting held virtually (on line) via Zoom on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Councillors Anderton, A. Baker (from 19:39), K. Baker, Brownlow, Fradley, Hood, Jones (Chair), Pickering (from 19:41), Robinson and Skinner

**Also present:** Gordon Davis (GWD Consulting Engineers), James Neill (Scottish Power) and the Town Clerk

No members of the public were present at the start of the meeting.

**The meeting started at 19:31.**

**21/079 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillors Buckland and Day.

The Vice-Chair noted that this meeting was a consultative meeting only because it was being held on Zoom and that any decisions would need to be formally ratified at a future face-to-face meeting.

**21/080 Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**21/081 Public Question Time**

No members of the public were present.

**21/082 To receive an update on Station Road Car Park Project Design, Costs, and Options from Gordon Davis of GWD Consulting Engineers.**

The Chair reminded Councillors that Gordon Davis was the client manager acting on behalf of the Town Council for the Station Road Car Park project. Gordon introduced himself and explained that his role was to help the Council with decision making and to liaise between the Council and the other parties involved in the project. Gordon proceeded to share a presentation on the screen.

**19:39 – Councillor A. Baker joined meeting.**

**19:41 – Councillor Pickering joined meeting.**

The main points from the presentation were as follows:

**Review of progress**

- GWD appointed on 22 June 2021
- GWD discussed electrical vehicle charging point installation with Scottish Power and Somerton Town Council
- GWD reviewed the technical and financial proposals made by Crestmoor in January 21
- On 27 July 2021 GWD met on site with members of the Council and Crestmoor
- GWD consulted with the Environment Agency
- On 9 August 2021 an alternative technical and financial proposal was prepared by Crestmoor

### **Summary of Current Issues to be Resolved**

- Significant number and depth of potholes
- Standing water
- No electrical charging points
- Regular and costly maintenance

### **Feedback from the Environment Agency**

- EA do not oppose the works in principle
- Access strip of 8m to be retained in accordance with the agreements made with SSDC in 2012.
- No parking spaces or hardware (lighting, EV charging points etc.) within the 8m strip

### **Drawbacks of Option 1 – the lowest cost design**

- No containment for the Cotswold stone in the parking spaces – stone scatter an issue
- Drainage proposals are better than existing, but need to be more robust
- Disabled spaces would be stone surfacing – cannot be marked out and non-compliant

### **Drawbacks of Option 2 – the highest cost version**

- Deluxe solution'
- Significantly more expensive
- Drainage proposals are better than existing, but need to be more robust
- Additional features (bins, cycle stands, fencing etc.) that do not address current issues
- Life expectancy of some features in excess of 12 years

### **Option 3**

A third option had been devised which addressed the drawbacks of options 1 and 2, i.e. stone retention system, decent drainage, marked out disabled bays and kerbing to hold everything in place.

The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

Following the presentation, the following points and questions were raised:

- All costings are exclusive of VAT.
- If the design allows outflow of surface water to the river, planning permission would be required but a revised design could be drawn up to ensure there is no outflow to the river. It is important that the project can go ahead without the need for planning permission because SSDC's Planning Department is not currently able to verify applications promptly due to the ongoing phosphate issue and a backlog of cases.
- The budget available to the Council for this project, without borrowing, is £80,000. It was felt that it may be possible to back engineer the design to this figure if required.
- The Cotswold Stone would begin to scatter immediately without the installation of the stone retention system.
- The two parking spaces that are sub-let by the landowner to another party are not included in the pricing or diagrams. Crestmoor would tidy them up but, other than that, they would be left for the landowner to deal with at their own cost.
- The height barrier at the entrance would be retained and no changes to it were included in the plans.
- The Environment Agency had stipulated that an 8 metre strip must be left on the western boundary of the car park. It was noted that cars park along this boundary already so this area would not have parking bays marked on it, meaning that drivers would be able to use the car park as they currently do.

**Councillor Pickering experienced connectivity problems and entered and left the meeting several times, finally re-joining at 19:50**

- In response to a question from Councillor Hood, the Chair clarified that one of the outcomes of the meeting needed to be a recommendation on the final budget for the project, which would need to be considered and ratified by a future, face-to-face meeting of the Full Council. The reason for holding this meeting on Zoom was to enable as many Councillors as possible to attend and speak to the issues because some Councillors would not be able to attend a face-to-face meeting due to the ongoing pandemic.
- Option 3 would provide 23 official parking spaces. Drivers would also be able to park along the western edge of the site, although bays would not be marked in this area.

**19:54** – Councillor Pickering left the meeting due to connectivity problems.

- Councillor Robinson felt that the budget should be £80,000 because that was the sum available to the Council.
- Some aspects of the option 3 design could be removed to try to reach a cost of £80,000, including the kerbing supporting the main driveway and the gravel crates on the unofficial parking spaces.
- There was a general discussion about whether the budget for the project should be capped at £80,000 or if funds should be found from elsewhere, from either earmarked reserves or borrowing, to increase the available funds.
- Councillor Skinner felt that removing the gravel crates from the unmarked bays would not be advisable.
- Gordon Davis said that option 3 was, in his professional opinion, the best design to provide a technical grade car park surface which would require minimal maintenance for the duration of the 13 years remaining on the lease. Gordon said that he needed a firm decision on the Council's preferred budget for the project so that he could effectively work with Crestmoor to achieve a final design.
- Councillor Robinson explained that, if money was diverted from other earmarked reserves, other projects would not be able to go ahead. Councillor Robinson went on to say that, as the Council only had 13 years remaining on the lease for the car park, it would be financially irresponsible to spend more than £80,000 of taxpayers money on the project.
- The Chair explained that the Council had previously agreed to consult the public on the idea of taking out a loan from the Public Works Loan Board but this consultation had not taken place. It was also noted that PWLB was taking some considerable time to agree new borrowing.

It was **agreed** to take item 21/083 at this point to enable the representative from Scottish Power to join the meeting.

**21/083 Council to receive an introduction to Fully Funded EV Charging Solutions from James Neil of Scottish Power.**

Gordon Davis resumed his presentation and covered issues relating to the provision of electric vehicle (EV) charging points. There were two main models for provision of EV charging points:

- Supply and Provide – EV charging points provided free-of-charge, with installation and maintenance costs falling to the Council and the units being free to the end user.
- Lease and Charge – EV charging points provided free-of-charge, with installation and maintenance provided by the installer and end users being required to pay to charge their vehicles.

**James Neil from Scottish Power** described their EV charging point offering. It was noted that SSDC was working in partnership with Scottish Power to roll out EV charging points in their public car parks. The main points of the scheme were as follows:

- A long-term (10 year) lease would be entered into for the parking bays that would be used for EV charging points. Scottish Power would not make any profit in the first 10 years and the Council would not be under any obligation to renew the lease, although

Scottish Power was confident that its customers would want to renew after the first 10 years.

- Scottish Power would install and maintain the charging units at no cost to the Council.
- A separate electricity connection would be installed, which would enable the number of EV charging units to be increased in future as demand rose.
- There would be a profit-sharing agreement between Scottish Power and the Council. The amount of profit would depend on usage levels but could be in the region of 15% or £2,000 per unit per year.
- To cater for drivers commuting to Bruton for work and for shoppers, James Neil said the Council would need to install a mix of 22kw and 50kw chargers. Installation of 7kw chargers may be useful to residents wishing to charge their electric vehicles overnight.
- In order for Scottish Power to survey the site for suitability, the Council would need to provide the Land Registry number for the site and enter into an exclusivity agreement, preventing the Council from commencing talks with any other EV charging point providers while survey activity was taking place.
- After the initial survey had been completed, Scottish Power would be able to determine if the site was viable for the scheme described above. If the survey showed that the site would not provide adequate long-term profit for Scottish Power, James Neill suggested that the Council could purchase EV charging units itself. This would mean that the Council would have to bear the initial cost but would possibly benefit from higher profits because the tariff could be set locally, rather than being set by Scottish Power.
- After the initial survey had been completed, there would be no obligation for the Council to enter into any further agreement with Scottish Power.

**20:22** – James Neil left the meeting

#### **21/084 Council to consider and decide upon the preferred design and agree the resulting cost budget and approach for delivering the EV Charging Stations.**

The Chair asked Gordon Davis if the removal of the provision of EV charging points from the Crestmoor designs would realise any saving for the Council. Gordon said that it would not because of the uplift in material costs being experienced nationwide.

The Chair asked if option 3 could be built at a cost of £92,740 without the inclusion of the extras. Gordon said that it could.

Councillor Robinson noted that one of the MTIG grants, to the value of £9,014.99, related specifically to the provision of EV charging points. If the charging points were to be installed at no cost to the Council, MTIG would need to be contacted to find out if the grant could be diverted to another aspect of the project. If it could not be diverted, the amount would have to be found from elsewhere.

There was some general discussion about the cost of the project. Councillors felt that the most important outcome of the project was a car park that did not flood and which had a surface that required minimal maintenance. Some Councillors felt that the budget for the project should be limited to £80,000 but others thought it should be possible to find funds elsewhere to increase the available budget. Some Councillors thought that taking out a loan of around £12,500 would be reasonable but others were opposed to taking out a loan at all.

Councillor Anderton noted that Station Road Car Park was the main car park for the town and felt that it was worthwhile investing in it.

Gordon Davis pointed out that removing some of the additional aspects of the design would detract from the final quality of the car park. Some options for aspects that could be removed were noted but Gordon pointed out that it was unlikely that the works would be backed up by more than a one year warranty if it was not built to a reasonable standard. Gordon also said that the Council would need to add a 5% contingency to the project budget to deal with any unforeseen issues that might arise once the construction had commenced. Gordon went on to say that another option would be to ask Crestmoor to draw up a “maintenance-plus” design, which would have very minimal improvements and would result in a car park that looked the same as it did now, requiring much more frequent maintenance than any of the other options. Councillor Hood **proposed** going ahead with option 3 without the additional aspects, at a cost of £92,740. The Chair asked Councillors if they had any thoughts on this proposal. Aspects of the project and costings were discussed.

**RESOLVED:** It was proposed and agreed to recommend that the Full Council selects the option 3 design without the additional features, at a cost of £92,740. Six votes for; One vote against; Three abstentions.

The Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk would look for options on how to fund the shortfall in time for the next Full Council meeting.

*Action 210810/1: Chair, Vice-Chair and Town Clerk*

Regarding the provision of EV charging points, it was **agreed** that more information was needed on other providers so that a comparison could be made with the Scottish Power offering. I was **agreed** that it would be preferable for the unit provider to install and maintain the units. Gordon Davis said that it would be very useful to know what sort of underground works would be needed so that this could be accounted for during the main construction of the car park. Councillor A. Baker said she would seek information on similar projects she was aware of in Guildford.

*Action 210810/2: Councillor A. Baker*

Councillor Hood said he would do some local research of other organisations who may have been dealing with EV charging point installation. He would also contact Cara Naden from SSDC, who were dealing with Scottish Power via a Devon initiative to install charging units in public car parks.

*Action 210810/3: Councillor Hood*

Gordon Davis said he would not take any further steps until the Council was able to agree the final budget and the EV requirements.

**The meeting ended at 21:18.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_