

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2016 FROM 7.30 PM TO 7.55 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Keith Baker (Chairman), Julian McGhee-Sumner, Mark Ashwell, Pauline Jorgensen, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards and Angus Ross

**Other Councillors Present**

Gary Cowan  
Richard Dolinski  
John Kaiser  
Oliver Whittle

**40. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Charlotte Haitham Taylor.

Councillor Richard Dolinski, Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services, attended the meeting on behalf of Councillor Haitham Taylor. In accordance with legislation Councillor Dolinski could take part in any discussions but was not entitled to vote.

**41. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**42. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

**42.1 Pam Stubbs asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

**Question**

A consultation on speed limit changes was initiated by a householder letter on 25<sup>th</sup> July and the last date for comments was 18<sup>th</sup> August. Barkham Parish Council, who were not consulted, feel that this TRO is not satisfactory and that since the changes are due to the new school complex, Bearwood Road (within Barkham), Barkham Street and Langley Common Road should be considered as part of this TRO.

The School is due to open in a matter of days and we are bewildered by the fact that no thought was given to this until July and also why the Traffic Management Team will not meet with the Parish Council to discuss their proposals until the end of September, when, presumably their changes will already be in place.

**Answer**

Barkham Street and Bearwood Road (the section within Barkham and north of The Lilacs) are considered to be outside of the defined walked routes associated with access improvements to the new Bohunt School. Reducing the speed limit to 30mph on Langley Common Road was considered and formed part of the proposed speed limit reductions review in accordance with the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 "Setting Local Speed Limits". Unfortunately the outcome of the review was that the speed limit reduction to 30pmh could not be introduced as it did not meet the required criteria and therefore is

not currently supported by Thames Valley Police; who are responsible for enforcement of speed limits.

I confirm the formal consultation on the proposed TRO, to reduce speed limits on three sections of roads, commenced on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016. This consultation included a letter drop to all residents on each of the roads, notices on streets, adverts in the local newspaper and on the Council website. E-mails were also sent to affected parish councils including Barkham Parish Council via an address which has since unfortunately transpired to be out of date and for this we apologise. However Barkham Parish did become aware of the consultation and the Council received and considered their response as part of the overall 43 received. I confirm also that Barkham Parish Council's response has been fully considered and is included in the Executive report scheduled for tonight.

The statement that the Council had not given this any thought until July 2016 is incorrect. Discussions with the Project Team, Parents Reference Group and the Council's Education Team have been ongoing since December 2015 and in addition a number of these highway issues and concerns were discussed directly with Barkham Parish Council during a meeting with Highways Officers in May 2016. The reason the Traffic Management Team have declined to meet with Barkham Parish Council again before the end of September is because the Team have been prioritising the three speed limit reductions proposed in the Executive report, that met the "Setting Local Speeds" Department for Transport review criteria, and which were supported by Thames Valley Police plus other measures associated with access improvements to the new Bohunt School prior to this School opening in early September.

### **Supplementary Question**

I am particularly worried about the Bearwood Road section. I used to live on Bearwood Road and lived there for some 25 years. I drove from Sindlesham, as is my want, at 38mph as soon as I received this. I came down Bearwood Hill and attempted to suddenly, or fairly suddenly, reduce my speed to 30mph at the point at which you have decided it is no longer necessary. It is exceptionally dangerous and I wouldn't recommend it. The people who live on that side of the road have no footpath for them to walk on. They have to cross a road, and in fact are told they need to cross the road, and you are asking them to cross the road in a 40mph limit area when you have denied them a footpath to travel on. Most of those residents are elderly and we have been fighting for years to get the speed limit on that road down to 30mph. I just find it astounding that you can chop off half a road half way down a hill.

### **Supplementary Answer**

I note your comments and what I can say is we will consider your proposal in the coming months.

## **42.2 Bernie Waters asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

### **Question**

The response from Barkham Parish Council stated they would like to see the extent of the proposed 30mph speed limit on Bearwood Road extended further north to Highlands Avenue. This will be picked up as a wider issue by the Project Manager outside of this TRO process.

What commitment will the Council give to actioning this feedback given that:

- a) The Parish Council is the most informed party to this speed restriction need and that Highlands Avenue is the “Gateway” to the residential area of Bearwood Road Barkham;
- b) The cost addition is negligible – a few more signs between the proposed 30 mph limit and the Parish Council’s requested limit.

### **Answer**

Wider issues will be picked up by the Traffic Management Team, including comments made previously about various locations. It is premature for the Council to commit to anything specific without first undertaking the necessary investigative work. Reducing an existing speed limit would require a speed limit reductions review in accordance with the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 called “Setting Local Speed Limits” and any proposed speed limit reduction would require the support of Thames Valley Police who are responsible; but as we have said issues are being discussed about other areas other than the ones for which we are speaking tonight so all comments will be noted and considered.

### **Supplementary Question**

How many Members involved in the decision actually live in Bearwood Road and therefore have first-hand experience of the challenges eg the earlier sensible request to move the speed limit across?

### **Supplementary Answer**

It was confirmed that none of the Executive Members lived in Bearwood Road but that the Executive Member for Highways and Transport had actually driven along the road.

## **43. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

### **43.1 Gary Cowan asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

#### **Question**

WSP had a scheme which the Traffic Management Team and the Highways Inspector asked the Council to look at because the plastic bollards on the extremely narrow footway were being regularly hit by vehicles, which meant they were had to be mounting the footway.

The scheme was on a list to be done just over a year ago that extended the 30 mph speed limit and gave the illusion that the road was narrowing so that this should slow vehicles entering and leaving the village at this point where currently pupils/parents (many with pushchairs with young children also) walk to The Coombes and when Bohunt opens there will be two-way traffic with many more pupils/parents walking in the opposite direction at the same times.

The footway is so narrow in this area and it cannot be widened because that is the extent of the footway width of the Council owned land.

Can you explain why this scheme has been totally ignored when the very clear risks to pedestrians, mainly children and their parents is there for all to see and for which you

appeared to baulk at taking responsibility for as I asked you to do in my recent question at Council?

### **Answer**

The section of footway in question is an established walked route for The Coombes School and will become part of a walked route for the new Bohunt School once open in September.

The plastic reflective bollards were installed to better define the edge of roads for motorists, particularly in the hours of darkness. They offer no physical protection to pedestrians using the footway. But I can confirm there is no evidence of vehicles actually mounting the footway at this location as this would have resulted in several bollards being taken out in a single section and incident.

However, the presence of the bollards on the footway does take some space, therefore they can reduce the readily accessible walking width on the footway.

All walked routes associated with access to the new Bohunt School, including this section, have very recently been subject to an independent assessment of walked routes. This assessment commented that the width of the existing footway is reduced by the presence of the bollards, as was mentioned above, and recommends that either the bollards are fully removed or the number of bollards reduced to maximise the footway width available. Either of these recommendations, in the opinion of the independent assessment team would provide a “non-hazardous walked route” to serve both schools. The Council’s project team for access improvements to the new Bohunt School, having considered the recommendation, are accepting the second option to reduce the number of bollards. This will then provide both an increase in the footway width available, while still highlighting the edge of the road for motorists, particularly in the hours of darkness.

The WSP scheme referred to looked in isolation at this bollarded section of footway on Eversley Road. With the reduction of bollards now proposed Officers are satisfied the Council are complying with the independent assessment and therefore providing a non-hazardous walked route at this location. Therefore the earlier WSP scheme has recently been withdrawn. This will now allow the Traffic Management Team to work with Thames Valley Police for a more holistic engineering scheme that will allow the speed limit to be reduced on both Eversley Road and Langley Common Road, which remains an aspiration of local parishes, the local Members and the Traffic Management Team which, of course, requires the support of Thames Valley Police.

### **Supplementary Question**

16 years ago at the appeal for Penrose Park the Inspector walked that route with the Parish Council and myself and he decided there and then that it wasn’t safe and he actually allocated £200,000 for footpaths and cycleways in that area. None of this was ever used and that was pre-bollard. So there was a clear recognition that this was a problem.

Since June I have probably sent about 50-70 e-mails to Officers and to Malcolm Richards to try and get to some sort of solution for this issue and sadly Malcolm never replied to any of them; which I found strange. So I would ask you: would you consider putting this section of road into the TRO and if not would you do, once you have done the work you are going to do, carry out a risk assessment and a safety audit and let me know the results please?

## **Supplementary Answer**

I have already indicated that there are other things going on and we will be looking at all these things, including tonight's comments, and as information emerges and gets processed I will let you know.

### **44. PROPOSED REDUCTION TO SPEED LIMITS ON SECTIONS OF B3349 BARKHAM ROAD, BEARWOOD ROAD AND SHEERLANDS ROAD TO SUPPORT ACCESS AND WALKED ROUTES TO THE NEW BOHUNT SCHOOL, ARBORFIELD**

The Executive considered a report relating to a proposed reduction in speed limits on all or sections of the following roads: B3349 Barkham Road, Bearwood Road and Sheerlands Road in order to support access improvements and walked routes to the new Bohunt School, Arborfield.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport advised the meeting that following an existing access assessment and speed survey review it was recommended that the new Bohunt School, which was due to open on 5 September 2016, would benefit from the reduction of speed limits on three sections of the road network in proximity of the new school where children may choose to walk beside.

Councillor Richards advised that the proposed speed reduction Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) had been published and consulted upon in accordance with regulations, including consultation with statutory consultees i.e. police, local parish councils and ward Members and local residents. 43 consultation responses were received and analysed and found to show clear support for the speed reduction, including support and approval for the reductions from the police; who were the enforcement agency for speeding matters. It was noted that Arborfield and Newland Parish Council's response had been received shortly after the consultation period and that too showed a clear support for the speed reductions.

Councillor Richards also clarified that the usual decision making process for TROs was through an Individual Executive Member Decision but because of objections to the proposals by Ward Members the Constitution states that the decision must be made by the Executive.

Members were also advised that in addition to the proposed speed reductions the Council had investigated reducing the speed limits on sections of the A327 Eversley Road and Langley Common Road. Unfortunately these two sections did not meet the national review criteria that would allow the speed limits to be reduced and the Police had advised that they would not be supportive of such reductions. It was noted that discussions were ongoing about these two sections of road,

Following a query about how many of the 150 children starting the new school were likely to walk. Councillor Richards stated that it was anticipated that around 30 children would walk although this would not be known until the school opened.

Councillor Jorgensen commented that regardless of how many children were likely to walk they would be more likely to do so if parents viewed the traffic as reasonably slow and the route as reasonably safe. Councillor Jorgensen was therefore keen that the width of the footpath be reviewed as she felt it was very narrow. Councillor Richards assured Members that in order to widen the footpath vegetation, including bushes and trees, had been cut back along its length and some of the bollards were planned to be removed. Members wanted to ensure that the vegetation would be cut back on a regular basis.

Councillor Ross asked for consideration to be given to placing a white line near to the verge of the relevant roads as had been seen in other areas it gave the impression of making the road narrower, slowed the traffic down, and kept drivers from driving right up to the kerb.

**RESOLVED:** That the making of the Wokingham Borough Council (Various Roads, Wokingham Borough) (30, 40, 50 mph speed limits) Order 2016 be approved and the Director for Environment be instructed to inform those persons who objected accordingly.

The three routes where the speed limits are proposed to be reduced to 30mph are as follows:

- **B3349 Barkham Road** reducing the existing 40mph speed limit to 30mph for its entirety
- **Bearwood Road** reducing the existing 40mph speed limit to 30mph from the junction of Barkham Road to a point 100 metres north of The Lilacs
- **Sheerlands Road** reducing the existing 60mph speed limit to 30mph from the existing 30mph limit to a point 10 metres south of Bridleway 18.