

167. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None168. CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk referred to the email received from HCC concerning the proposed road closure amendments which was read out to members.

Whilst the opening of Osbourne Road could be seen as a minor change to the scheme, the opening of Old Milton Road, even one way, would significantly reduce the Covid-19 benefits at this busy junction. Our Director of Public Health recently stated "We need to continue to promote social distancing and the measures on roads and pavements can support this"

I understand that the changes have been requested in response to concerns about increased traffic on the alternative routes and difficulty in motorists accessing the area.

Provided that you include signing to warn pedestrians of the one way street then, subject to approval from our Director and Cllr Humby as Executive Member for Environment and Transport, I am satisfied that the change can be implemented.

However, there is still the COVID-19 social distancing issue, and it does appear that many benefits of the scheme will be lost and would not be in accordance with the clear advice given by Public Health. I trust this was given serious consideration as part of the decision process.

169. ROAD CLOSURES

The Chairman went out of session and invited Alan Watson, representing NMRA, to comment regarding the road closures. Mr Watson confirmed receiving many emails on the matter with a 50/50 opinion on whether the road closure should remain in place.

Mr Watson also referred to the Hampshire Covid Travel Map which the Chairman asked to be discussed at the next Amenities Committee meeting which was noted by Cllr Blunden, Chairman of Amenities.

The Estates & Facilities Manager referred to the proposal to open the road east bound and shared concerns for pedestrian confusion with the green traffic lights in operation for vehicle traffic. Some pedestrians may not realise this and try and cross the road without looking. NMTC have a road traffic order until the 31st December so if the barriers are taken away, they can be put back in place following an email to HCC should it be required.

Councillors thanked the Town Clerk and Estates & Facilities Manager for their hard work during this difficult period and working towards making the town as safe as possible for residents and visitors.

The Chairman asked Ward Councillors to comment first with Cllr Davies thanking the Town Clerk and Estates & Facilities Manager for meeting with Ward Councillors earlier in the day at the site. He raised concerns over the safety of the elderly.

Cllr Schooling shared the Estates Managers concerns on confusion with half the road being open and highlighted concern for the lack of social distancing she has witnessed herself within the town. She recommended that all of the road should be opened, not just half.

Cllr Clarke has received a lot of correspondence from members of the public, particularly concerning older people struggling to cross the road at Whitefield Road due to the traffic. Every business he has spoken to also wants the road closure lifted and reported lorries struggling to turn in the centre with damage noticed this morning at the barriers outside Boots.

It was then proposed by Cllr Clarke that the Station Road/Old Milton Road closure be removed as well as the parking restrictions at Whitefield Road.

Cllr K Craze raised concern for the health and wellbeing of residents and felt that the outcome of the meeting should be what is best for the community.

Cllr Blunden supports the officer's decisions over the past few months to protect its residents and highlighted the fact that these measures are taking place all across the country. He didn't feel that now would be the right time to remove measures to ensure we are trying to prevent the spread of the virus and suggest alternate avenues such as signage or control over pedestrian movement.

Cllr Tungate referred to his comment at the last meeting and noted sources for evidence of low Covid-19 transmission outdoors. This included the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention: *Close Contact definition - Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated. The UK uses the same definition, meaning that tracing will not be carried out for anyone who did not have a Close Contact. The implication is that infection is not considered likely outside the parameters of a Close Contact.*

Cllr Tungate voiced concerns over no parking at Whitefield Road for traders of residents.

Cllr Brownsea felt that, after reviewing the positive and negatives of the closure, it should be reopened for the overall benefit of the town.

Cllr J Ward referred to Government advice on maintaining a 2m distance and felt that this would not be possible if the road closure was removed. It was suggested that there were temporary pedestrian traffic lights at Whitefield Road.

Cllr C Ward noted that there are several areas in the town that are very difficult to maintain social distancing.

Cllr Hawkins referred to comments from the Estates Manager and HCC and noted the traffic pollution at Whitefield Road caused by the road closure at Old Milton Road.

Cllr M Craze raised concerns over confusion if half the road was to open and suggested that it remain closed to keep people safe.

Cllr Wallis-Dowling agreed with the suggestion of temporary traffic lights and referred to the temporary traffic lights at Bashley possibly causing more congestion within the town at the moment.

Cllr Samber noted the importance of social distancing all across the country and agreed the congestion at Whitefield Road needs to be reviewed.

Cllr O'Sullivan referred to a statistic recently released showing a very low infection rate in this part of the country and agreed with the proposal to reopen the whole of the road.

The Chairman asked Cllr Clarke to repeat his earlier proposal for the Station Road / Osborne Road closure be removed as well as the parking restrictions at Whitefield Road and following a vote with a majority of 8 in favour and 6 against it was

RESOLVED: That the Station Road/Old Milton Road closure be removed as well as the parking restrictions at Whitefield Road.

The Estates Manager advised that the removal will be completed by the weekend once HCC have approved it and the traffic engineers have been out to sort the traffic lights.

170. ANY ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman asked the attendees for any other comments.

Chris March asked for a copy of the Mayor's opening statement and the statements read out by Cllr Tungate.

171. NEXT MEETING

The next Town Council Meeting will take place on **Monday 5 October 2020** at 6.30 pm.

The Chairman thanked Councillors, members of the public, officers and press for attending and closed the virtual meeting at 1.58pm.

Chairman _____ Date _____

Distribution:

Town Councillors

District Councillor Mrs J L Cleary

County Councillors M Kendal, F Carpenter, K Mans

Mark Jeffries – Estates & Facilities Manager

Alan Watson – Focus & NMRA

New Milton Police

Press