

Draft Minutes of the Roads Committee meeting held Wednesday 23rd August 2023 at 10am at the Town Hall.

Present Cllrs; Beavan (DB), Jarvis (RJ), Palmer (MP),

Also present, Town Mayor Cllr Flunder (SF) (ex officio) and admin asst (CS). Also, SCC Ward Cllr M Ladd (ML)

Also present, Cathy Ryan – Sole Bay Care, and 1 member of the public.

Agenda

1. To receive apologies for absence None

2. Declarations of interest:

- a. To receive any declarations of Non-Registrable Interest regarding the agenda.
- b. To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/ Other Registrable Interest regarding the agenda.

Nil

3. Public section relating to the agenda items under consideration including Parking for carers – Cathy Ryan

A member of public advised that they have a touring caravan. One of their major concerns is that the present caravan route takes you round the Common to the campsite via Ferry Road which is a nightmare to get a caravan through. When you get almost to the top of the road at the junction of Gardner Road/Ferry Road there is a manhole cover which sticks up quite high. MP to have a look at manhole cover. If you come the other route up the High Street nightmare of getting through near Tesco and RNLI shop.

Other issue – brambles along Ferry Road where the houses are – brambles often hanging over into road down to harbour scratch vehicles.

Potholes along Mill Lane are really bad - SF advised he had asked for a long time to have a new road surface as he is always getting SCC to fill in the potholes. Unfortunately, because of the amount of traffic that comes up that road it is a real hazard because people are walking there, and they do not see the potholes.

ML advised that this was delayed because SCC were considering putting yellow lines there and no point in putting yellow lines and then resurfacing because you would have to do the yellow lines again. One thing held the other up.

ML advised proposal for the one way system down the High Street would solve the issue as traffic would not be diverted around Gardner Road because that would be one way. Can only come back that way and not go down it. So, you would only be able to go down the High Street. Still have the manhole issue but in terms of traffic flow it should be easier.

ML asked if the member of the public would you be in support of new one way system and the response was yes.

Cathy Ryan re carers parking.

DB summarised what STC are doing. Looking at traffic movement/parking looking at the whole thing around the town. Appreciate that carers do have a problem – so looking at those who have a problem to see whether anything can be done without upsetting anyone else. Really value what the problems are and how it can be made better for not only carers but also paramedics/doctors etc around town.

CR advised that their role is really difficult because of the traffic laws. Carer got a parking fine in Walberswick last week - parked on a patients drive with wheels just onto yellow line and at an 'end of life' call. They have rescinded it but within the letter they laid out the law well which says that medical practitioners even on an emergency which means ambulances cannot park on single or double yellow lines.

Often have things that say, 'nurse on call' or 'doctor on call' but that is not 'legal' and is not officially accepted. CR had 2 tickets in town and one in Walberswick – but not had one in town for a long while. Southwold has a lot of elderly people who live in the centre of town where there are no parking spaces as they are either double yellow or single yellow lines or they are full. Obviously shifts start when most people are out and about. If you are a blue badge holder you can park on a double or single yellow line for up to 3 hours.

Do carers qualify for a blue badge? A = No

DB – summarised the 2 issues = 1) cases of emergency when on call. It is essential that carers should have a car pass that should be issued to them personally. 2) The other issue is carers who are doing routine visits. They cannot park on a double yellow line.

At the moment there are carer vouchers. CR – advised that they had them for Covid. Carers had specific ones that they could put in their windows when dealing with Covid. They don't count anymore. They came from the Council. Years ago, when Southwold had own traffic wardens, they knew the cars and left carers alone.

DB explained that the carers exemption from ESC is £80 for the year and carers get so many vouchers but that allows them to park in a parking space. If there are no spaces the vouchers would not allow carers to park in a resident's space. So would need a resident's space to do that or would need to find another way.

Q - is carers visit normally more than an hour or less than an hour.

CR – it depends – a lot of them will have 4 visits a day – 2 carers maybe half an hour to an hour especially if have someone who is very disabled - would have 2 carers maybe half an hour 4 times a day or you may have someone who needs to be there all day. All day is usually ok but as they could park somewhere else, but it is the quick visits where it is a problem.

DB – what streets are the real problem?

CR – Park Lane, Mill Lane, the town -where have people in apartments upstairs, then Marlborough Road, Stradbroke Road, the little roads where holidaymakers and people going to the beach park and it varies day to day. Never the same every day and the other problem is that it is not always the same carers. Different cars, different people. At this time of year some of the local care agencies are using carers from Norwich because they haven't got enough people here because they are on school holidays. Not an easily solvable problem.

Could be solved if there were a couple of spaces one end of the town and a couple of spaces the other end of town for people who are regular carers where they could leave their cars and that's all they are there for.

Question was asked who does the money for the fines go to? DB – goes to ESC.

ML – what happens in places like Felixstowe – Southwold can't be the only town with this problem.

CR – When worked in Woodbridge it was exactly the same and when worked in Felixstowe it was exactly the same problem. In Woodbridge in the town carers used to park in the main car park in town and have a permit and it was the same in Felixstowe. ML – the problem is we don't have a central car park. CR - Difficult because when carers carry things like commodes – showing the world that you are taking this piece of equipment into the person. Creating vulnerability be people thinking that there must be someone in there that needs a carer.

Discussion about Blue Badge criteria and whether carers could have these- seems to be different interpretations in each county. Discussion about interpretation of the rules – and of how they are enforced. Discussion about the role of ESC/ SCC.

It was suggested that if it was left to the judgement of the person doing the ticketing that can be a problem. Could get a list of all the people that ESC could automatically rescind, but then ESC has got the administration of the tickets. It would be better if carers didn't get a ticket in the first place.

Meeting was asked whether there could be an agreement that parking permit could be issued by the Town Council or whoever for medical practitioners and then whether there is something that those care agencies could have.

ML explained that ESC's approach was that they enforce the rules, and people will appeal and if the appeal is successful then ESC will reimburse.

DB – ESC has got carers badges. One of the options = instead of residents spaces, having a single yellow line with the ability of residents to overstay there. That may be an option - but the carers would have to register their car otherwise the person doing the ticketing cannot recognise the carer.

Discussion reverted back to blue badges - government website says organisations can be eligible for blue badges. Possible that organisations if they have got caring responsibility have ability to apply for a blue badge. CR – there is an element where you can fill in for an organisation. ML – seem to think that they would prefer organisations to apply because know for a fact that when they do checks on blue badges quite a high number are abused and they are not used as they should be.

DB – advised CR that are STC/ SCC proposing having a one way system down the High Street. CR – advised that Woodbridge did it successfully. It was mentioned that if could get rid of the scooters/skateboards that would make life a lot easier.

4 Update from SCC ward Cllr M Ladd re Highways matters

SCC = About 6 weeks away from change of the highways contract so there will be a period of limbo before change over on 1st October to a new contractor. Longer term it will be better but highways officers are working hard to make a smooth transition - but obviously there will be some things that fall through the cracks.

Trying to convince the County Council to look at area behind Kings Head on an invest and save basis i.e., invest in a decent road surface and they will save money longer terms because won't have to keep coming and repairing the potholes every 3 months or so.

When there is flooding in the roads SCC will prioritise that because they prioritise people for 1) if it is going to affect their homes so if it is residential flooding and it is getting into their homes that is top priority, 2) is if it's a road safety issue and 3) is anything else. They also say that if flooding occurs and if it drains away within 24 hours it means that actually the drains are working but they're not working to 100% efficiency so they may be clogged up and that's when they come. They have on their schedule for once a year to come and flush all the drains out once a year in Suffolk - were due to come in October to Southwold but they pushed that one forward a little bit. There is a problem in Jermyn's Road in Reydon near the school which floods, but it does drain away after several hours. MP – the worst one is Quay Lane – been closed for weeks now. ML – will look at it. Another flood area – Victoria Street. Near Bank Alley. ML – that should have been done.

Discussion about Potters Bridge.

ML advised there were road closed signs out by the emergency group, the agreement was for the Southwold & Reydon Emergency Group to put them out and they get them out very quickly. The signs were very close to the bridge and motorists didn't hit the road closed sign until got 100 yards from the bridge.

Potential One Way system

Meeting was advised there is already some resistance from the residents in Godyll Road re making that one way and they can't go straight to their properties.

ML advised that Bungay did One Way, and it was divisive - won't suit everybody in the town Probably cannot do the High Street without doing Gardner Road a part of a circular route.

Re HGV/ larger vehicles - spoke to some lorry drivers and asked them which way they go out and they said they always go Godyll Rd - They do not go back down the High Street. Discussion about size of vehicles. if they are a big artic and they have a special delivery they should contact the county council and the police and they should make special arrangements.

Discussion about the High Street itself – and the build outs that are being suggested. pedestrians would have priority. Cannot have 20mph on an A road so cannot have this on High Street – best that can happen is slowing the traffic down. Average speed up the High Street is about 10mph – but in evening when there's nothing about and people go up and down there quicker - so the whole idea is to slow traffic by having bits come out into the road, so they are going to have to slow to get through there.

Discussion re who would be going to pay for any One Way system and associated needs? Going to be a big cost. The bits that come out into the High Street to slow the traffic could total a few hundred thousand pounds.

Q re how did Bungay get funding? STC might have to sell a property to do it if its critical to the town? ML – the County Council will contribute but they won't pay for the whole lot. CIL might be able to be used. Bungay One Way - split the town and was quite acrimonious.

DB advised that Chapmans do not want to lose any parking spaces. Q = Is there option of allowing shops that want parking spaces to have parking spaces, and shops or cafes that want a wide pavement to have a wide pavement?

ML advised that there has been no suggestion of widening any pavements. Going to leave bays so there would still be parking in the High Street for the shops - there will be more parking because motorists could park all the way down the left hand side to almost opposite Sutherland House. Separate suggestion is to take away some parking bays at East Street to improve safety due to lack of width of road - shops are likely to complain but only taking away 3 spaces at the narrowest end, but providing an additional 10 in High Street.

Meeting noted that when have 2 way parking as at the moment in High Street that is a natural slowing of cars. if you have one way then there isn't that natural slowing, apart from at the entrance to the One Way.

20mph

DB advised that it had been suggested having a survey question about 20mph for the whole town. But it was noted that cannot have 20mph on an A road so cannot have this on High Street. Therefore this could set STC in a difficult position because STC would not be able to fulfil such a suggestion anyway. RJ to consider the SCC 20mph criteria.

Width of pavements

MP –Re width of pavements – Did a survey using mobile buggy. The main problems are the shops putting stuff on the pavements. Queen Street was the worst and the other one was down the end of East Street. Could not get through outside H & J and Beaches n Cream. There was so much stuff for sale on the pavement and with the buggy = it was noted that there was no dropped kerb.

It was suggested that with the one way system there is an opportunity to widen the pavement one side, not the other side – and would not lose any parking because there is no parking on this side anyway . It would make the experience of going up the High Street more pleasant. It was suggested that widening of pavements be on the agenda .

ML explained that County Council have what they call a double buggy rule i.e., so if you can get a double buggy through that's fine, if you can't get a double buggy through that's causing an obstruction on the pavement and so is an offence. MP advised that there are lots of places you couldn't get a double buggy through. Need to restrict some shops from putting stuff out on the pavement.

It was suggested that SCC/ STC should look at the cost of widening pavement and then make a decision. Goal might be to widen the width on one side, have one way traffic, and retain the parking

Shared space

DB explained that this is the restricting of movement of traffic when it is busy. When there are a lot of pedestrians around it makes it hard to get down H S and should discourage motorists from using it. When there are no pedestrians around early in the morning i.e., when motorists are going down to get papers there is no problem. So, it's actually a sensible way of controlling things.

Allocated parking spaces

Discussion about what happens if a café has got a parking space outside their café - could they use that for some extra chairs? It could be a parking space, but could they be allowed to put chairs out there and use the parking space if they didn't want a parking space there, and they wanted to use it to put chairs out? Is there any reason why you can't allocate specific parking spaces to individual businesses? Is that in the gift of the County Council? STC / SCC would have to check the legal aspect because there is something about putting chairs and tables on the highway, which is probably not legal. Highway is the road, and the footpath is the footpath, so anything on that parking space would be on the highway. STC/SCC would have to check out the legalities. DB asked ML to find out more about the legalities.

Discussion about what schemes might be possible, and whether a One Way Scheme should be put in initially and then consideration be given to other matters from above at a later date. The possible One Way Scheme can be done under a temporary pilot and could be brought in for next year if it is wanted. Other stages might not be possible within the same timescales. The meeting was reminded that any One Way Scheme would only be possible next year under a Temporary Traffic order – which is a pilot, and which could be changed at any stage.

Discussion about Health and Safety within the High Street – and whether a One Way Scheme might help improve the situation.

Parking concerns – perhaps could be done in parallel to the One Way pilot scheme.

5 Survey and Consultations about Parking/ One Way system

One Way system/ Pedestrian priority along High Street

Discussion about timescales for a Temporary Traffic Order for High Street. SCC would probably need to be advised of people/ STC views, and if there is to be a go ahead, this would need to be given to SCC before Xmas.

Part of the SCC consultation will include HGV drivers as part of the consultation, as well as all other motorists / stakeholders.

Discussion about starting process re One Way Scheme with a Drop in at Town Hall in September – with SCC giving information out and gathering views.

8/9th September suggested as possible dates. ML will check SCC Highways Officer availability. Survey to be available at the drop in too - DB will start working on the formal survey.

One Way system/ shared space – these aspects will be included within the drop in/ consultation. It will not include widening pavements/ 20mph in town for the reasons as above.

Parking

DB reminded the meeting that he had asked ESC over 4 years ago to consider parking improvements. A flaw in the scheme that was initially suggested by ESC was that everyone who pays council tax was considered a resident and that there would therefore be lots of spaces available for people who are not 365 day a year resident. Any scheme could be divisive.

But North Parade has funding for a parking scheme – where residents parking could be created by giving exemption to residents to park longer than the actual restrictions for visitors etc. This could potentially also help schemes for carers/ residents on Victoria Street.

Many people are against any changes to parking.

ESC car park data provided to all members – shows that there are always spaces available any time of year.

Gardner Rd/ Millenium/ Common Trust car parks also have parking – and are being charged re donations. Discussion re overnight parking on these areas. Discussion re camper vans parking in these areas overnight too. Discussion about lack of clear signage in Gardner Rd car park. More of the signs as per York Rd re ‘no overnight camping’ to be placed around Gardner Rd car park.

It was suggested that holiday makers should be encouraged to use the car parks not the roads.

Residents parking – residents sometimes cannot find anywhere back in town when they move their car – could residents perhaps have a space on Common/ Millenium?

Suggestion about extending Common car park in summer to create more spaces – Charity Commission would need to be considered. Any parking on Common might then become a habit and people might park anywhere on Common – not a risk worth taking? There are always spaces on Millennium car park so should not need to extend onto Common.

Re Electric Charger installations – need to consider these along with providing car park spaces.

Electricity is in at Gardner Rd for Plug in Suffolk phase 2 funding for 4 more chargers – but this is unlikely until after Oct 2023. Millenium car park will also have 4 – but they will not be until Phase 3. There is an opportunity to increase the charge available depending upon use of the 4 chargers. They will all be overnight charging at 7kw – these chargers are being provided free by Plug in Suffolk.

Fast rapid chargers are usually on primary traffic routes, not within town centres. Huge jump in costs for the rapid chargers.

Cycling

Survey to ask re cycling provision – making it easier around the town?

Tradespeople parking

Need to consider encouraging them to get trades people permit from ESC. Then this needs enforcement.

Summary

Survey questions – questions need to be specific and there needs to be consideration about how the questions are asked.

It was agreed to include questions regarding; residents' parking/ width of pavements/ 20mph for High Street/ cycling around town/ carers permits/ signage May need to be a reference to the old ESC resident's parking suggestions- check whether this is still live with ESC?

Discussion on what level of response will be acceptable to give the go ahead to a One Way Scheme? It was suggested that the council will need to lead on this – it is not a referendum as such – it is a gathering of people's views/ concerns which themselves will then need to be considered.

Agreed that DB will send some survey questions on the above subjects to the roads cttee, and then cttee will need to discuss how to phrase the questions etc.

How the data analysis of the results will be gathered /recorded – to be considered.

- Agreed that survey would be available for 8/9th Sept.
- SF to organise Town Hall with LB.
- DB to organise survey. DB will liase with ESC re parking initiative too.
- ML to organise attendance of SCC Highway Engineer.

6. Next meeting – date to be agreed.