



Chepstow Town Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of Chepstow Town Council held via Zoom remote meetings on Wednesday 19th May 2021 at 7.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Tom Kirton (Town Mayor)

Councillors: J Becker, M Brady, A Braund, H Beach, Y Havard, N Heywood, A Horne, P Pavia, D Rooke, A Watts

Apologies: J Brews, C Duchet

In Attendance: Lucy Allen (Town Clerk)
Alison Sandiford (Deputy Town Clerk)
Members of Public (33)

170. Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda.

Cllr P Pavia declared an interest under the code of conduct in **Item 171** as a County Councillor. Cllr Pavia remained in the meeting and participated in the discussion.

Cllr A Watts declared an interest under the code of conduct in **item 171** as a County Councillor and a business owner in the town. Cllr Watts remained in the meeting and participated in the discussion.

171. To Suspend Standing Orders

Standing Order 36(c) was suspended to allow Members to enter into discussions with Councillor Jane Pratt, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services, Mark Hand, Head of Service and Paul Keeble, Group Engineer – Highway and Flood Management in regards to the High Street Closure and disabled access.

See Appendix A below

Standing Orders were reinstated

172. High Street Regeneration

i) Members considered ways in which to help the High Street recover from the pandemic. The following suggestions were discussed:

- Financially assisting new start-up businesses.
- Maintenance of the Port Wall.

- Increased bus services to the town centre.
 - Persuading Monmouthshire County Council to reconsider its parking charges in the town to allow for 2 hours free parking.
- ii) Members considered a request received in writing from a Member, to withdraw from the tri-partite bid for the High Street

RESOLVED:

That Cllr J Becker produce a report on the proposed withdrawal from the tri-partite bid for the High Street for consideration by Full Council.

- iii) Members considered and agreed in principle to enter into an agreement with Monmouthshire County Council to cover the costs associated with providing free parking spaces similar to the arrangements made for Christmas 2020 to be funded from the Covid Emergency Fund (*Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s57*)

RESOLVED:

- a) To obtain costs to provide free parking spaces in the town over the Summer months for consideration at Finance, Policy & Audit Committee in June 2021 to encourage people into the town to assist in the High Street recovery.
- b) To request Mon CC reconsiders its parking charges in the town to allow for 2 hours free parking.

173. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the Annual meeting will be held on **Wednesday 26th May 2021** at 7pm via Zoom online meetings.

CLOSE: This completed the business of the meeting at 9.05 p.m.

SIGNED CHAIR PERSON: _____ **DATE:** _____

Appendix A

The Mayor thanked Councillor Jane Pratt (JP), Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Services; Mark Hand (MH), Head of Service; Paul Keeble (PK), Group Engineer – Highway and Flood Management and members of the public for attending the meeting.

Members entered into discussions in regards to the High Street Closure and disabled access. The following items were discussed:

Consultation

Members were unhappy with an apparent lack of consultation with Town Council on the closure of the High Street.

MH outlined the temporary trial measures, funded by Welsh Government and referred to a series of meetings where Chepstow County Councillors, and a representative from both Chepstow Town Council and Chepstow Chamber of Commerce had been invited to discuss proposals and ideas for the High Street. Experimental orders were used to implement works due to the emergency nature of the pandemic. The objective from the outset was about making towns safe for visitors and residents to return and support businesses when allowed whilst enabling social distancing and supporting active travel, i.e. walking and cycling – a requirement of Welsh Government funding. Mon CC is listening to feedback and making adjustments as needed.

PK reiterated that meetings had taken place with Town Council to share proposals for Beaufort Square and a recent update on the arrangements for the planters and parklets.

A leaflet drop was carried out to businesses and information is available on the Mon CC website.

There is no intention to make permanent measures without widespread consultation with stakeholders such as the Town Council, access groups, businesses and residents.

MH is looking to set up a series of meetings with Chepstow County Councillors, representatives from Town Council and business representatives from Chepstow Chamber of Commerce to discuss the Reopening Towns Projects to work on the longer term vision for Chepstow. Mon CC is currently working with the Town Council on the Place Plan, which these could link in with and looking at any future grant funding potential from Welsh Government. PK referred to a Public Realm Group set up in Abergavenny and this could also be an ideal opportunity for Chepstow.

Town Arch

Members expressed concerns that vehicles including cyclists at speed, were entering the town centre through the Town Arch causing confusion as to whether it was open or closed, particularly visually impaired persons.

PK confirmed the road was under a Temporary Road Closure Order preventing vehicles from entering, other than for disabled access to Bank Street and for deliveries during certain times. It was acknowledged that the contractor currently working on Beaufort Square, who has a

compound on Welsh Street car park, had likely been removing the barriers to access Welsh Street and not replacing the barriers afterwards. The contractor has been reminded of its responsibility to ensure the arch is closed. It was noted that the current barriers will shortly be replaced by planters.

Crossing

Members expressed concerns over issues with the raised table following removal of the controlled crossing, particularly for pedestrians crossing the road and the need for white lines to be added to the raised table.

MH advised a safety audit was carried out prior to the works being implemented. There are 3 stages to a safety audit - stages 1 and 2 are completed at design stage and stage 3 is undertaken once schemes are in place and operating. Stage 3 audit has not been undertaken yet and Mon CC will look at any measures which are needed to adjust at stage 3.

MH advised the intention of the raised table is to create a civilised space which is more pedestrian friendly, less vehicle dominated. Members concerns have been noted and Mon CC will look at these to see if any adjustments are needed.

Clear tactile paving is in place for disabled persons and demarcation in colour to assist those who have a vision impairment.

All electronics have been kept from the controlled crossing which has been temporarily removed, should it be reinstated in the future.

An early sketch showing the controlled crossing being replaced with zebra crossings was superseded by the Design Engineers in order to follow Welsh Government Active Travel Act guidance on shared spaces. The intention is not to put too many signs or white line markings to allow pedestrians and motorists to share the space. Examples of these shared spaces in areas of high pedestrian usage, i.e. Caldicot and Monmouth will become standard design throughout the country as per Welsh Government guidance.

JP confirmed that Welsh Government Active Travel Act and Manual Street Guidance had been followed, however comments made would be taken on board and Mon CC will work with Town Council to support the community to keep everyone safe.

A Member outlined the tri-partite scheme and requested confirmation that the funding for the amenities scheme had not been used to fund the crossing, which was a separate scheme.

MH confirmed funding was made available from Welsh Government/Mon CC and not Town Council's contribution to the Tri-partite agreement.

JP confirmed Mon CC was responsible for the safety of the users of the High Street.

Disability Issues

Mon CC has not consulted with access groups directly but consideration has been given to disabled access.

Bank Street disabled bay has been kept open in response to feedback and extra disabled spaces have been provided in Welsh Street car park.

PK outlined the temporary changes to the parking bays outside Henry's resulting in the suspension of one bay and the other bay being changed to a shared bay for loading/disabled parking.

A Member referred to the suggestion made to reverse the flow of traffic up Bank Street and out through the Town Arch allowing closure of the High Street. MH confirmed discussions had taken place but the suggestion would mean flipping the entire one-way system around Chepstow to make it work so the idea was not progressed. MH apologised if this had not been communicated back effectively.

MH/PK/JP are happy to meet on site with Cllr Havard and disabled community members to discuss their concerns – Cllr Havard to invite.

Signage

Concerns were expressed regarding the signage at both ends of the town centre causing confusion. A particular concern was raised about traffic coming off the A48.

MH accepted initial issues with signage and lack of clarity.

PK advised businesses have raised concerns about the red and white signage which will shortly be replaced by the planters to give a more pleasant approach to the town. New signage will be installed when works are complete as per standard practice.

Mon CC has responded to comments about the appearance of various barriers. Measures will be put in place to identify the 20mph zone.

Bollards

A Member referred to the reinstated bollards at St Mary's Street which need to be closed between 10am – 4.30pm as per the regulations to allow hospitality businesses to use the road space.

High Street/Planters/Trees/Parklets

It was recognised that Chepstow being on a hill was a unique challenge.

It was stated that the amenities scheme was nothing like the original proposals.

Concerns were expressed regarding vehicles manoeuvring around the planters.

Members considered the closing of the High Street caused a restriction in the flow of traffic elsewhere and that consideration should be given to the knock-on effect including the parking on Moor St and the use of Thomas St.

The loss of a bus stop from the High Street was referred to and it was requested if this could be re-considered when making future plans. MH is happy to meet with Cllr Beach to discuss.

It was requested if Mon CC had a contingency plan in place to open up the High Street should there be an accident/incident on the A48.

Members requested that the current temporary measures in the High Street be removed and the road re-opened to traffic following the easing of restrictions.