

Blandford Town Team

Civic Briefing – Outcome and Notes Meeting held in NDDC’s Council Chamber on Thursday 24th September 2015 at 6.30 pm

Format: presentation and briefing delivered by Nic Nicol (Chair) and David Rose (Vice Chair), with stands covering Railway Arches (Nicci Brown), Town Cleanliness, Retail Survey, Ring-road Brown Tourist and Gateway Signage, Town Centre Traffic Flow and Pedestrianisation and Heritage Enforcement.

Presentation: attached with these notes.

Attendance: a lively audience of 35 people attended (not counting the Town Team), including members of the public, Cllr. Barry Cooper, Ian Brewer (Dorset Waste Partnership), Cllrs. Steve Hitchings, Esme Butler and John and Jackie Stayt.

Apologies: Charlotte Bentley, Mike Burt, Della Jones, Kevin Morris, Steven Clark and Sue Sullivan.

Item	Subject and Outcome Notes	Remarks
1. Phase 1 – Town Team Brief.	<p>1.1. Town Business Survey. DR briefed the meeting on the survey which follows on from the town survey conducted in 2014. The survey is managed by NDDC’s Economic Development Officer Sue Sullivan on behalf of the Town Team, and delivered on the ground by Town Team members and others, led by DR. The survey will be conducted between Sep – Dec 2015 with results published in Mar 2016.</p> <p>1.2. Heritage Group.</p> <p>1.2.1. NN explained the outcome of the meeting held on 10th September, chaired by Kevin Morris, which determined to undertake a Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan. Who does what tasks were subsequently agreed between the main parties involved after the meeting. The Town Museum will hold the Heritage Group’s information database. Sylvia Hixson-Andrews took on responsibility for the Awareness Plan, and Ros Nelmes has resigned from the Town Team to take on independent production of the Conservation Appraisal (target delivery date Easter 2016) and the Management Plan.</p> <p>1.2.2. DR briefed the meeting on the planning enforcement template letter and encouraged everyone to support the cause by writing to NDDC’s Chief Executive and Planning Portfolio Holder, calling for action to rectify the four worst examples of contravention to Conservation Area planning rules.</p> <p>1.3. Town DVAMP Projects.</p> <p>1.3.1. Trailway Visitors’ Centre. The bid for £2.5m of grant funding includes £1m for a Trailway Visitors’ Centre based on the design of the Hardy’s Visitor Centre near Kingstone Mauward. Two locations are in the frame: the Milldown and Langton Road long stay car park. BFTC has stated a preference for the latter site, with the proviso that there is no loss in the number of car parking spaces.</p>	

	<p>1.3.2. Ring-road Signage.</p> <p>1.3.2.1. Brown Tourist Signs. NN explained the concept.</p> <p>1.3.2.2. Gateway Signs. NN explained the concept and the design alternatives suggested by the Town Team.</p> <p>1.3.2.3. Themed Roundabouts. Separate DVAMP funding is available for themed roundabouts. NN has received one theme idea from The Blandford School based on poppies and satellites and is looking for more ideas.</p> <p>1.3.3. Town Centre Signage. Jean Longley and NN have worked with the Town Council Clerk and Deputy Clerk on improvements to finger post signage and town maps. With the exception of the Post Office finger arm, none of the additional finger posts proposed by the Town Team sub group were approved by BFTC. The Fashion Museum will need to fund the change of 'Costume Museum' finger arms to 'Fashion Museum'. The Town Team favours a more descriptive to scale map that more easily relates the viewer to where they are, and where they want to get to, than the current town map designed by local artist Jake Winkell which is iconic but often unhelpful to the visitor. There is also scope for greater use of art to portray the town's history and heritage. (NN has invited BFTC through the Deputy Town Clerk to join in a project for possible inclusion in the DVAMP submission.)</p> <p>1.3.4. Arches Viewing Platform. The brief recorded the recent release by BFTC of £18,000 to restore the arches. NB's display showed the viewing platform concept which is Phase 2 of the project.</p> <p>1.4. Traffic Flow and Pedestrianisation. NN described some of Simon Ible's ideas favoured by the Town Team to improve access to Whitecliff Mill St doctors' surgeries and achieve occasional pedestrianisation of the Market Place.</p>	<p>*Business Case needed for approval by BFTC and DVAMP submission by 1 Nov.</p> <p>*Town Team volunteer wanted to lead on art in the town.</p>
<p>2. Phase 2 – Updates from Local Government and Community Groups.</p>	<p>2.1 Vibrant Town Centre. There was praise for the work of the Regeneration Group in bringing in better market stalls and additional farmers' markets.</p> <p>2.2 Markets and Market Management. BFTC councillors and NDDC officers said there was nothing new to report on potential changes to the ownership and management of markets in the Market Place.. They hope for an outcome by Xmas 2015.</p> <p>2.3 Cleanliness of the Town. DR's stand showed a map of the town and responsibilities for cleaning alley ways. Subsequent discussion is recorded in Phase 3.</p>	
<p>3. Phase 3 – Questions, Conclusions and Recommendations.</p>	<p>3.1 Brown Tourist Signs. The meeting gave unanimous support to the provision of brown tourist signs on the ring-road.</p> <p>3.2 Gateway Signs. The concept was unanimously supported. The town skyline design received widespread approval, without the crest and with a brighter background colour than grey blue.</p> <p>3.3 Traffic Management. Several members of the audience had clearly come to express their views on the Town Team's published ideas aimed at improving traffic flow and pedestrianizing the Market Place on specific days. There was a lively discussion. Comments and votes on the main issues, and a strongly supported suggestion that there should be standard traffic light pedestrian crossings in East Street and the Market Place rather than the current ad hoc walk on crossings, are recorded below.</p>	

3.3.1 **Whitecliff Mill Street – 2 Way.** Discussions with long standing members of the Town Council suggest that there is strong support for Whitecliff Mill Street being 2 way down to the doctors' surgeries to improve access from the north of the town, and that this should be the top priority. Those present were less enthusiastic. Some said the road and the pavements are too narrow; others that this would create a problem with traffic turning around to go back up the road or driving through Eagle House Gardens and Bryanston Street. (There was considerable support for doctors' surgeries moving to a more accessible site in the town.) In a show of hands, there were 6 in favour of the idea and 9 against.

3.3.2 **The Impact of Change.** One person with traffic engineering experience advised that there were proposals in the 1970's for an Inner Relief Road, from Langton Road along the river and coming out by the TIC, which would have enabled the town centre to have been pedestrianised. With the build of the bypass, he suggested there were no funds to do anything significant. He advised against making minor changes without a thorough traffic flow analysis (for which there is no money).

3.3.3 **Pedestrian Crossings in the Market Place.** There was agreement that the current ramped crossing areas - which people walk onto at will - are a nuisance and slow down traffic significantly with just one or two people repeatedly bringing traffic to a halt. There was almost unanimous support for traffic light controlled crossings to sort out this problem.

3.3.4 **Disabled Access.** Any plan has to be considerate to people with disabilities.

3.3.5 **HGVs.** Several said that congestion caused by HGVs unloading at all hours of the day in narrow streets should be resolved by insisting that suppliers deliver in quiet periods of the day or at night. Cllr. Jackie Stayt said that Blandford Forum is too small a town to be able to dictate loading times in this way; suppliers often deliver to Blandford on their way to somewhere else.

3.3.6 **East Street Roundabout.** A suggestion of a roundabout outside M&Co was not supported.

3.3.7 **Sheep Market Hill – One-way Reversed.** The impact of reversing one-way traffic flow to up Sheep Market Hill was considered to be adverse and would cause more problems getting through The Plocks than it would solve. In a show of hands, 10 people were in favour of retaining the status quo with only a few supporting change.

3.3.8 **Park Road and Damory Street.** There was little support for Damory Street and Park Road becoming two way.

3.3.9 **Surveys.** DCC commissioned a survey circa 2001 about traffic in Blandford which should be examined (contact DCC Portfolio holder). Cllr. Barry Cooper suggested that the Highways Dept. may not be able to fund a traffic survey for some time, as their priority is to maintain existing highways and essential repairs. Cllr. Stephen Hitchins said that BFTC had asked DCC Highways to do a survey a few years ago, but it was never done. There was general support for the idea of a survey. **Town Team** to advise the DCC Transport portfolio holder of the requirement for a survey, investigate alternative sources of funding and a means of conducting a professional traffic flow survey other than through DCC Highways.

3.4 **Cleanliness of the Town.** DR led a lively debate about the shortcomings and plus points of

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rubbish collection in the town. Ian Brewer (**IB**) responded on behalf of the DWP. The main points raised are recorded below.

3.4.1 **DWP Management.** **IB** described the close relationship between DWP and the Town Council, how improvements were always being sought, and the ongoing review of town street cleaning. He talked about the model used to reduce littering on beaches and the coastline being used elsewhere, and the forthcoming 'Keep Dorset Litter Free' campaign, which will focus on stopping people dropping litter and challenging littering. **DR** advised everyone to complain to NDDC and the DWP by phone and via the web site, and to complain to offending businesses whenever appropriate.

3.4.2 **Spilled Rubbish During Collection.** Two residents who live in the area of Dorset Street complained vociferously about the spillage of rubbish during collections by the bin men. This has been complained about repeatedly, including elsewhere in Damory Street and in the Anchor Gateway off Salisbury Street. The resulting mess and smell is unacceptable. **IB** said this was constantly monitored, including the study of on-board camera footage. Crews are regularly briefed on the avoidance of spilling litter during collection, and DWP will always follow-up complaints.

3.4.3 **Bigger and Better Bins.** In response to an observation about the size and design of bins compared to those available in Poole, **IB** said this was always under review and that the cost of upgrading is significant.

3.4.4 **Better Technology to Recycle More.** The current technology in Blandford's recycling centre does not enable a number of plastic materials to be recycled, including plant pots and containers. **IB** detailed the difficulties involved and said he did not know when improved recycling technology would be available.

3.4.5 **Urine Stains.** In response to a question about the removal of human urine stains on pavements, **IB** said street cleaners have a lance for dealing with spot cleaning of this nature.

3.5 **Paving Slab Problems.** Peter Newell asked Cllr. Barry Cooper why the trip hazard presented by uneven paving stones is not properly addressed and managed. Barry explained that pavements are inspected monthly and repaired promptly as appropriate. He explained the high costs and DCC priority of focusing on one town at a time. Peter was not content that DCC is on top of the problem and suggested they might as well tarmac over the pavements to avoid the health and safety issues associated with perpetually uneven pavements.

3.6 **Transport.** In a response to a question about the Salisbury to Weymouth bus not stopping at Dorchester Hospital, John Cummings (DCC Transport) said that the schedule was due to change but that it had not been achieved yet. (Comment. This is disappointing, given that the requirement was promoted by the DT11 Forum Transport Action Group and agreed with John about 12 months ago.)

3.7 **Meeting Closure.** **NN** thanked everyone for their contributions – most appeared to think the meeting had been worthwhile. The meeting closed at about 8.45 pm.