

MINUTES OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY FLEET TOWN COUNCIL HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

**24 August 2011 at 7.30pm
The Harlington**

Councillors

R. Appleton (Chair), C. Axam, S. Forster, D. Gotel, R. Schofield, A. Macallan, D. Pierce.

Also Present

Cllr Stephen Parker for part of the meeting.

Cllr Sharyn Wheale for part of the meeting.

Cllr Gavin Evans for part of the meeting

Cllr George Woods

Cllr Sue Tilley for part of the meeting

Cllr Fisher for part of the meeting

4 members of the public.

Geoff Bonner – Chief Executive Officer Hart District Council

Janet Stanton – Deputy Clerk

Shar Roselman – Clerk

H&T AUGUST 2011 ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Cllrs Gotel and Hope.

H&T AUGUST 2011 ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Forster declared an interest in that he lives in Birch Rd, in relation to Agenda item 5.

H&T AUGUST 2011 ITEM 3: PUBLIC SESSION

The chair enquired as to whether members of the public would like to speak at this point in the meeting or wait until the relevant agenda item. It was agreed members would speak during agenda item 5.

H&T AUGUST 2011 ITEM 4: MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting dated 27th July 2011, were approved subject to the minor amendment of Item 11 to read the need for a dropped curb, not a dropped curve, and the following addition, seen below in brackets, to Item 11:

Resolved to write to Hampshire Country Council Highways to request (the Council to explain the necessity for the proposed works, and if required) to consider adding a dropped curb for cyclists on the curve in Cove Road, and to restrict hours to avoid the evening rush hour.

Prop: BS Sec: AM

Action: The clerk

H&T JULY 2011 ITEM 6: PROPOSED PARKING RESTRICTIONS FOR FLEET ROAD

The Chairman invited Mr Bonner to give a presentation on the matter, from the Hart District Council perspective. Mr Bonner explained that the District Council recognised that this was a contentious issue, and that because of that the consultation period had been extended. He mentioned that Hampshire County Council was ultimately responsible for parking, but that Hart District Council would make a recommendation to them, hopefully in November. The District Council would welcome the views of Fleet Town Council and members of the public.

Mr Bonner went on to explain that at present Fleet Road has 19 general parking bays available between 3 – 6 pm, public car parks with 24 bays free for half an hour, and 100 on street free parking spaces, so the bays in question were a very small percentage of the overall parking available.

At the moment Hart District Council had prioritised user of Fleet Road in the following order:

1. Loading, as it was noted that around 50% of shops have no parking facilities
2. Disabled parking spaces
3. Through traffic
4. Shoppers.

He enquired as to whether people believed these were the right priorities.

The Department for Transport (DfT) lays down rules for road markings and signs. Some of these are standard, others have to be negotiated. In Fleet, unlike most of Britain, there is a heavy preponderance of Hybrid bays, which is the main issue of concern to the District Council. Because these are unusual it was believed that people get confused about them, and instances had occurred where, although the signage had been approved by the DfT, the adjudicator had ruled against these on parking disputes. A further issue was that the nature of these signs allowed disabled users to park in the loading bays at any time. He gave a demonstration of certain standard signs that might be used, but mentioned that the signage currently used would be changed because it was confusing. The proposal was stick with single purpose bays by turning parking in Fleet Road into loading only bays, and to add further parking on side roads that could be used throughout the day, which would increase the available free parking time in the town.

The Chairman called for comments from members of the public.

Mr Kevin Whibley spoke about the potential for the town if the 19 existing bays could be used for parking on a full time basis. He calculated that this would amount to 2000 to 4000 visits per week, which would be a good revenue stream for Fleet. He felt that Loading Bays were, for the most part, unnecessary, although he believed that there was an argument for a few loading bays in the centre of Fleet. He stated that currently loading bays were unoccupied for much of the time, and that larger retailers were at liberty to demand earlier delivery times from their suppliers. He felt that the loading facilities were actually acting as a detriment to his business as, using local suppliers, these often did not deliver using loading vehicles and so were penalised by being unable to delivery heavy goods to his shop. He mentioned that a petition of some 1600 signatures had been signed against the proposal.

He proposed keeping the current hybrid system and extending parking hours, so that loading could only take place between 9 and 11 am.

The chairman asked Mr Whibley how long his appointments were usually for. Mr Whibley indicated that whilst he did have longer appointments during which clients parked in the car parks provided, he also had many customers whose needs were filled in half hour slots.

Mr Simon Clark, another retailer, then spoke, advising that his business rates had increased by 20% last year, and that retailers were struggling on the high street. He stated that Fleet was hanging on with difficulty. He himself was having to work very hard to keep his shop open, and had extended his opening hours over the weekends to do so. His number one customer issue was lack of parking outside his shop. He believed that convenience was a major factor for customers, that most deliveries in the town came before 11 am and that Saturday Parking was crucial.

Cllr Fisher asked what goods loading vehicles meant. It was clarified that this had to be a vehicle designed for the loading/offloading of goods, and not any vehicle that was currently fulfilling this function. Mr Whibley stated that if customers had prepaid, they could temporarily park in a no parking zone to collect their goods, but that they could not park in a loading zone for this purpose.

Cllr Forster mentioned that he had personally surveyed retailers and residents around the high street. He wholeheartedly supported the points made by Mr Whibley. He suggested that the second of the parking signs proposed by Hart District Council would seem to be acceptable, especially if accompanied by a write up in the press explaining the signs to members of the public. He felt that the 10 disabled parking bays were a disproportionately large number, particularly the six clustered together around Sainsburys. He noted that disabled people can park in loading bays if they are hybrid bays. He asked what enforcement was carried out on people using badges who clearly were not disabled.

The Chair asked Mr Bonner if it was possible to have clarification from Mr Hislop on enforcement on disabled badges, and on the numbers of disabled bays in the high street in relation to legal requirements.

Cllr Axam thanked Hart District Council for a very good presentation. He stated that he personally had never had a problem understanding the existing signs, but understood that these were being changed. He believed that the attempted solution to change the bays to loading only was a bit draconian, and he liked the idea of retaining the hybrid bays and restricting loading to the hours of 9 – 11 am.

Cllr Macallan asked about restriction of parking time to 30 minutes. He was pleased to see the addition in parking in Victoria Road and Upper Street. He proposed that one taxi bay for disabled users be set up outside the Hart Centre, but this proved to be impossible, as no such distinction exists in law.

Cllr Woods felt it would be helpful for communication purposes if the morning was left to loading and the afternoon to shoppers, and suggested that the hours for loading be 9 – 12 noon. He would like parking restricted to 30 minutes periods, and approved of the extra spaces proposed by Hart District Council.

Cllr Schofield endorsed what had been said already, and wished to support the retailers. He mentioned that some towns had offered the first half hour of parking facilities free to shoppers and others had removed all yellow lines in an effort to support their Town Centres. He would go along with the suggestion of reducing the loading times, and hybrid bays.

The Chairman mentioned that free parking doesn't necessarily improve trade and cited a recent newspaper article about this. He also mentioned that it should be recognised that the road was an A road and any changes should not affect traffic flow.

Cllr Forster felt that the article mentioned by the Chair was relevant only to out of town trade. He also suggested that the issue of motor cycle parking bays was reviewed, as there were none on Fleet Road. He stated that whilst he supported the idea of loading bays during the 9 – 11 period and hybrid parking thereafter, on the junction of Birch Parade and Fleet Road, there had been several minor accidents already, because of lack of visibility, and that he would recommend that the last 6 feet be neither loading nor parking, with double yellow lines.

It was clarified that taxi companies can pick up in loading bays and bus stops.

Resolved to write to Hart District Council in response to the consultation, saying that the Town Council View on parking was:

To keep the hybrid signs

To change the hours of loading on these signs to 9 – 11 am Monday to Friday.

To limit the duration of the parking periods thereafter to 30 minutes.

To prohibit loading on a Saturday at hybrid bays.

To alter the parking at the Birch Road/Fleet Road junction to double yellow lines for six ft, with no parking and no loading, to increase visibility.

To note that Fleet Town Council welcome the additional spaces proposed in the side roads.

Prop: SF Sec: DP

Action: The clerk to write to HDC.

The committee noted that Fleet Town Council had not been advised on the consultation on parking, and had found out about it by accident, and had also not been advised of the extension of the consultation period until the meeting. An extra-ordinary meeting had been scheduled to meet the previous date of consultation.

H&T AUGUST 2011 ITEM 6: NAMING OF A NEW CLOSE OFF ALBANY ROAD

Hart District Council had asked Fleet Town Council if they held any view on the naming of a new close off Albany Road.

The clerk mentioned that she had written to Hart District Council, providing them with several names of significant historical residents, as suggested by the Fleet and Church Historical Society, as per a previous resolution of the Council.

Resolved to write to Hart District Council to propose they use one of these names.

Prop: RA

Action: The clerk

H&T AUGUST 2011 ITEM 7: RAIL REPRESENTATION

South West Trains are attending a meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Hart District Council on 20th September 2011. Fleet Town Council had been asked to provide questions for this meeting.

The chairman mentioned that he welcomed the changes that had been made to Waterloo station.

The committee considered a number of comments on the services at the station, which had been sent to the committee by a resident of Fleet.

Resolved to put forward the following comments and questions to Hart District Council to forward to South West Trains.

1. **The Ticket Machines don't work in the rain and are unreadable in the sunshine.**
2. **Staffing is inadequate at the station.**
3. **The shelter on platform one is inadequate.**
4. **Now that a bridge was in place on Fleet Pond, proper access from this direction into the station was sought.**
5. **The toilets are in a disgusting state and need regular cleaning.**
6. **The one way system of driving into the station is dangerous for pedestrians and drivers. It is strongly suggested that the direction of flow be reversed. This matter urgently needs addressing before an injury takes place.**
7. **There was a need for looking to the future for parking for smaller (possibly electrically driven) vehicles and motorbikes, which could be offered at a reduced cost to parkers, but which would generate more income by fitting in additional vehicles.**
8. **Last year the increase of rail fares for Fleet had been the top of the range. With the anticipated large increases this year, would Fleet again be at the top of the range? If so, it was suggested that the monopolies commission be advised.**

Prop: BS Sec: RA

The committee thanked the resident who put forward views on the station.

Action: The clerk.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

Please note that the next meeting will be held on 28th September 2011 at 7.30 at the Harlington.

Signed.....

Date:.....