

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD  
ON-LINE AT 18.00 ON TUESDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

PRESENT: R TAPLIN (Town Mayor)  
Councillors: G CAMPBELL, Mrs S CONBOY, J HLADKIWSKYJ; C HYAMS; P IRVING; R MAHMOOD; P MORGAN;  
Mrs M RADFORD; P ROUND; C THOMAS; C VANE PERCY; G WILSON; Mrs S WILSON; Mrs S  
WORTHINGTON (Deputy Mayor); J YOUNG

Town Clerk: Ms V PRYCE  
Minute Taker: Mrs C WHITLOCK

**MINUTES**

Action

**21/1 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:**

Cllr ROUND – joined the meeting at 7pm  
Cllr HOOKER – None received

**21/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

The MAYOR opened the meeting and thanked the TOWN CLERK for confirming that, although they were Councillors who had a non-pecuniary interest in the proposed trial closure of the Town Bridge, all Councillors were able to debate and vote on the trial.

**21/3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:**

The MAYOR welcomed John Morris and Paul Ryan to the meeting.

Mr Ryan made a presentation in support of the trial closure of the Town Bridge. He advised that, in the past, he had been a member of Stukeley Parish Council and had been involved in the Market Town Transport Strategy. Mr Ryan highlighted the current situation of long standing obesity and respiratory problems in people and noted the benefits of both walking and cycling. Quoting from the Neighbourhood Plan, Mr Ryan made particular reference to the protection of the Town's local history, the problematic area in Post Street due to the volume of traffic and how cycling routes required improving. Mr Ryan ended his presentation by asking what action would be taken to make those improvements.

Mr Morris thanked the Council for giving him the opportunity to speak as a representative of the Hunts Active Travel Group, again in support of the trial closure. Mr Morris advised that it was not only walking and cycling which the group encouraged but all modes of non-motorised transport (including mobility scooters, pushchairs, and wheelchairs). He wished to see less traffic in Godmanchester and mentioned his previous involvement with the Huntingdon Association of Community Transport (Dial a Ride). The Government had introduced a travel fund, which was a one off contribution to address traffic issues in Godmanchester. The concern was that if a decision on the trial was not made now, and deferred instead, the funding opportunity may be missed. Mr Morris and Cllr G WILSON attended Huntingdon Town Council's (HTC) meeting on 17 December 2020 when HTC objected to the trial closure. Mr Morris agreed that the trial closure was a once in a generation opportunity to transfer the street scene in Godmanchester, to carry out consultation with residents and businesses, and an excellent opportunity for road users (particularly children cycling). Mr Morris finished his presentation with the question; 'what type of legacy do we wish to leave our children and grandchildren'?

The MAYOR thanked both Mr Ryan and Mr Morris for their valid comments.

**21/4 PLANNING REPORT:**

The TOWN CLERK was to advise HDC of planning application recommendations.

Town Clerk

Cllr G WILSON referred to the CCC Stakeholder Survey which had been circulated to gauge the Council's thoughts on their Highways Service. Cllr G WILSON had drafted a response and had circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr THOMAS pointed out that question 7 (Q7) still required a

response. Following a group discussion, the MAYOR confirmed that the Council were in agreement with the first four answers to the survey, Q5 regarding timescales should be a 'strongly disagree', Q6 'agree' and Q7 'disagree' with the 'works contribute to a safer environment'. The last item would need to be changed from 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'disagree'. The questionnaire welcomed additional comments and it was agreed to make reference to the CCC's criteria for pothole repairs being too high for the Council to meet on most occasions and possibly needing a requirement for a lower threshold.

Town  
Clerk/Cllr G  
Wilson

### **21/5 TRIAL CLOSURE OF THE HUNTINGDON/GODMANCHESTER BRIDGE:**

Cllr G WILSON advised that, in principle, the Town Council had agreed to the trial closure of the town bridge back in August 2020. Cllr G WILSON advised that the TOWN CLERK had invited Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) officers to join the Town Council meeting, however, they were unable to do so. The TOWN CLERK would enquire as to whether the officers would be able to meet during the day to help accommodate officers' personal commitments.

Town Clerk

In relation to the impact the closure would have on the current bus service, Cllr G WILSON reported that CCC had commented that *'it's highly likely that there would be a negative impact on both Huntingdon and Godmanchester'*. Cllr G WILSON advised that reassurances were required to ensure that both bus services, Whippet and Stagecoach, would not be affected as it would be irresponsible to go ahead with trial if there were to be an adverse effect on the services. Concern was also raised for both residents and local businesses (including Bellmans, and Premier) as to how much passing trade they would miss out on. Cllr G WILSON reiterated from previous meetings that consultation options would include posts on Facebook pages, road signs, a poster on the vicarage wall and notices at the bus stops and volunteers to deliver leaflets (depending on Covid restrictions at the time).

Prior to the meeting, Cllr THOMAS had also circulated an email on the closure with details of his counter-proposal. Cllr CONBOY seconded the counter-proposal. He reminded the Council that only one piece of communication had been received by Cllr G WILSON from the CCC, in his capacity as a County Councillor, in the form of the Godmanchester Bridge Scheme Feasibility Report (dated 19 August 2020) and he had then circulated the document to the Council. The document had not been sent direct to the TOWN CLERK/Town Office. Back in August, the closure was supported by Council for pedestrians but no discussions had taken place regarding the effects on emergency vehicles or the bus services. Various suggestions had been bounced about but no clear information had been provided by CCC. Cllr THOMAS advised that the Council should not change their resolution until February unless under exceptional circumstances. The long term aim was for long term vehicular closure. Cllr THOMAS suggested a traffic control system to be installed allowing the temporary pausing of access by mobility scooters and cycle traffic on the occasions when required by emergency vehicles or the bus services. If, following public consultation during the trial period, CCC further propose a permanent closure of the bridge, then the traffic control measure required by Council in the trial period are maintained. Cllr G WILSON sought to reverse the decision due to the negative impact on the bus services, emergency vehicles and the loss of trade for local businesses. Cllr THOMAS did not want to kill the proposal before residents had had an opportunity to comment.

Cllr CONBOY agreed that it would be a mandatory requirement to consult with residents and businesses on how they thought the closure would affect them. Occasionally, HGV vehicles ignore the signage in the town prohibiting them from using the bridge and were therefore required to turnaround near RGE Engineering. Concern was raised as to whether there would be an option so do this if there were to be a barrier on the bridge and the Highways Dept needed to consider this. A number of unanswered questions and some clarity was required before the Council could go out to residents, who would then be able to make an informed decision.

Cllr CAMPBELL welcomed the idea of the trial and advised that responding negatively to CCC would be a mistake. It was a great opportunity for the town and would benefit the community. He suggested that Council would only approve the closure if various criteria were met by the

CCC. There was a fear that if the trial had a lot of opposition, the scheme would not go ahead.

Cllr WORTHINGTON advised that she had previously voted against the trial in August knowing that it would require a lot of consultation. Cllr WORTHINGTON was concerned about the effect on older residents and that any consultation would need to include those who may be not conversant with IT. Cllr CAMPBELL added, similarly, that young children would not comment online either and his concern was for their safety and for a better environment.

Cllr MORGAN enquired if the trial did not go ahead, and the bridge remained open, what would happen to the medieval bridge if the footbridge reportedly had a short life? Bus services would not wish to snake around the town, which would slow them down and possibly would have an adverse effect on the service.

Cllr IRVING questioned why consultation would take place before the trial closure rather than during or after when residents and businesses would be better placed to provide feedback. If the bridge closed it would give the town a real opportunity to improve parts of the community: a reduction in traffic and speeding motorists; removal of cyclists from the pavement; and a safer environment along Post Street.

The MAYOR recommended that the Council required an official response from CCC as to their proposal for the closure, and needed details of what format the consultation would take, prior to any physical action being taken to close the bridge. The MAYOR suggested, and it was agreed, that Cllrs G WILSON and THOMAS, in conjunction with the TOWN CLERK, would write to CCC with the Council's requirements in order to progress the matter.

Cllr G  
Wilson, Cllr  
Thomas and  
Town Clerk

Cllr CONBOY excused herself from the meeting due to another commitment.

#### **21/6 LONDON LUTON STACK CONSULTATION:**

The MAYOR referred to the paper he had presented in December on the proposed changes to the flightpaths of aircraft arriving at London Luton Airport. Before submitting a response, the Council wished to hear the opinions of the neighbouring authorities. The MAYOR confirmed that Buckden, St Ives and Alconbury had voted against the decision. Huntingdon had also voted against it but only by one vote (and a number of councillors who had expressed support for it had been absent). Brampton recognised the changes were a necessity and the effects were likely to be minimal. *{Note: we have subsequently been advised that Huntingdon had a 2-vote difference.}*

Cllr THOMAS advised that the noise from a modern aircraft at 8,000ft was indiscernible and confirmed his support of the MAYOR's paper. The stacking process would only be used when the skies were overloaded. Cllr S WILSON commented that, having seen correspondence from other parishes and individuals, most responses exactly mirrored the wording of the lobbying group, Against Luton Airport Stack (ALAS). The MAYOR confirmed that the military had helped to define the area due to their own flight-limited area over Lakenheath, Mildenhall and the Norfolk training areas. The MAYOR proposed that the Council should neither welcome nor object to the plan, nor join the Against Luton Airport Stack (ALAS) movement, and that the Town Clerk should respond accordingly. This motion was carried.

Town Clerk

The meeting closed at 19.27.