

Meeting with John Halsall – WBC Council Leader

Council Offices Shute End – 23rd July 2019

Minutes

Attendees:

WBC: Cllr. John Halsall (JH), Cllr. Malcolm Richardson (MR)

Great Langborough Residents Association Committee: Pat Smith (PS), David Nash (DN), Robin Cops (RC)

Agenda items/concerns

Wokingham town centre traffic: increasing congestion & pollution: unclear whether the Southern SDR will help significantly?

GLRA reps voiced concerns about the current traffic problems and the unknown future impact of the South Wokingham SDR.

RC and DN had been meeting with Chris Easton to discuss traffic modelling around the three roundabouts as demonstrated to JH on his map. Further meetings were planned. (*See minutes of meeting 6th August 2019*)

JH explained that he had set up 3 teams to look at Congestion, Climate Change and Housing Numbers.

Congestion was to be addressed as a 3-stage programme: -

1. Short term: monitoring and review of congestion using drones, etc. and the use of progressive signage to direct traffic.
2. Medium term: to look at issues of school transport with catchment areas so wide (e.g. for Bohunt, Arborfield) where WBC has to provide transport.
3. Possible congestion charge or use of cul-de-sacs to discourage through traffic /rat runs.

Retaining the current traffic control arrangements through the Langborough & Murdoch Roads conservation areas

GLRA explained the issues and how parking bays in Langborough road created its own traffic calming scheme.

Previous suggestions to make Langborough road one way would not be welcomed by residents and was likely to create a speed problem.

MR said that no change to the current Langborough Road scheme was currently being proposed.

Had WBC over-invested in retail space in the Elms Field & Peach Place developments? As a result, was the estimated capital value of the assets much too high?

JH reported that most of Peach place was now let and that 60% of Elm's field retail space was also in negotiation

The money used for the development came from government long term loans at a very low rate of interest.

The main financial issue for the council was providing the revenue to support adult and children's services, which were over 60% of the WBC annual expenditure.

A way of achieving this was to create income from capital investment in revenue generating assets; thus boosting annual revenue for the WBC general fund, which supports services.

How would the WBC Climate Emergency change new buildings without the support of central government planning regulation enhancements?

The discussion about climate change focused on how solar panels might be used and toilets deployed that use 'grey' water

JH was committed to environmentally effective schemes but clearly was not involved in the details of current development planning.

How could WBC provide more public art & culture in Wokingham?

JH reported that there are 4 Platforms in this area: -

1. He had tasked officers to capture and catalogue cultural activities around the borough to make the information available to residents.
2. There would be promotion of a town centre festival in 2022 when the works are completed.
3. Art and culture strategy was being written currently.
4. The council would be promoting public art.