

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Faversham Town Council

Tuesday 21 July 2020, 8pm

Present:

The Mayor, Cllr A Reynolds	Cllr A Hook	Cllr K Barker	Cllr J Irwin
Deputy Mayor, Cllr T Martin	Cllr C Jackson	Cllr H Perkin	Cllr D Knights
Cllr B J Martin	Cllr J Saunders	Cllr E Thomas	

In attendance:

Louise Bareham – Town Clerk

Adrienne Begent – Deputy Town Clerk

256. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Williams due to ill health. It was proposed by the Mayor, Cllr Reynolds, and, on being put to the meeting, it was **RESOLVED to accept the apologies of Cllr Williams.**

257. **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

258. **Town Centre Pedestrianisation**

Cllr Irwin proposed the motion that *Faversham Town Council recommends to Swale Borough Council that the current temporary traffic order is lifted on non-Market Days which are Monday, Wednesday Thursday and Sunday.*

He noted the motion passed at the Town Council meeting dated 6th July recommending mitigations to facilitate operation of business and continued to support it. However, there were other issues in the town and it was important to understand what was happening. Cllrs Irwin, Williams and Perkin visited 23 businesses between 7th and 10th July. One third welcomed the closures, one third were inconvenienced but had found solutions and one third experienced real issues. Four key areas had been covered by the mitigations brought forward by Cllr Thomas, including deliveries (although not necessarily bulk deliveries of furniture), blue badge holders (a small number of businesses dealt significantly with clients who had disabilities), emergency access and refuse collection.

Cllr Perkin seconded the motion and acknowledged she knew the difficulties for people with disabilities from personal experience.

Cllr Thomas sympathised with Cllr Perkin but felt the situation was not black and white and he continued to support the closure of the gates. He thanked the officers and members of Swale Borough Council who were

analysing the feedback received and noted that there had been more positive responses from businesses than negative. He did not wish shoppers to be confused with the changes and dilute the safe shopping and healthy environment and felt there was opportunity to attract more shoppers. The pedestrianised area provided a safe area, more room for wheelchair users. He himself has a chronic condition and is at greater risk and continues to support the road closure and remains committed to see the mitigations in place. However, he agreed that short term, because those with disabilities had difficulty changing routines, he supported a daily enforcement with an end time adjusted, only until appropriate mitigations were in place. He therefore supported the continued closure of the gates from Monday to Saturday but was willing to debate an earlier opening time in the short term.

Cllr Hook thanked businesses for their feedback and information provided. He had sent an email with three proposed amendments to the Town Clerk, but later acknowledged he had not asked for it to be forwarded to other councillors, as was his intention. Cllr Hook proposed an amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Cllr Barker, that the road was closed from 10am to 3pm on market days.

Cllr Barker proposed an amendment, seconded by Cllr Thomas, that the roads were closed 10am to 2pm on non-market days.

Cllr Saunders was disappointed that having met two weeks previously and agreed to support the road closure order and Cllr Thomas's mitigations. He felt Cllr Irwin had not provided any evidence and that his report addressed only 7 or 8 businesses. He noted that the pandemic had a massive impact and had highly discriminatory effects on different groups and he was not convinced there was evidence to support the motion as the focus must be on public health.

Cllr Knights noted that it was a global pandemic and it must be about safety for all. KCC via SBC had timed the road closure for social distancing to build up confidence, the hospitality trade had just adapted to use the roads. SBC officers and cabinet members were collating information to alleviate the problems and were listening to many views, many of whom were in favour. She felt there was moral duty to keep people safe. Cllr Knights further noted the abuse and intimidation, which was a criminal matter. SBC will be reporting at the end of the month and will provide a solution for the best way forward, this is a new normal and everyone had to adapt.

Cllr B J Martin noted the pinch point in Preston Street, whilst having empathy with those who have a mobility issue, this is a killer pandemic, he confirmed the mitigations were being reviewed and asked that SBC officers were given the time to analyse.

Cllr Barker recognised the seriousness of Covid-19 and took objection to the dogmatic stance requiring evidence before making changes. He felt

tough decisions needed to be made.

Cllr Jackson felt at times she was not part of the council and was not included on emails.

Cllr Knights proposed an amendment, which was seconded by Cllr T Martin, that the road was closed from 10am to 3pm to avoid confusion by changing

Cllr T Martin acknowledged a number of businesses had been able to trade throughout the pandemic, but public health could not be ignored. He also noted that Jacob's Yard was too narrow to enable social distancing while queuing and it was likely that queuing would have to be in Preston Street.

Cllr Irwin responded to the comments and accepted the amendments proposed by Cllr Hook and Cllr Barker, to his original motion.

The amendment to close the road from 10am to 3pm everyday was called to vote - AGAINST: 8, FOR: 2, ABSTENTION: 1. The amendment failed.

It was proposed by Cllr Irwin, seconded by Cllr Barker and on being put to the meeting it was **RESOLVED to make recommendations to SBC that the town centre roads are closed 10am to 3pm on market days and 10am to 2pm on non-market days.**

AGAINST: 3, FOR 8, ABSTENTION: 0

The meeting closed at 21.32

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

David Taylor

Have the Council received any response at all from Southern Water Services regarding the foul sewage flows from the Perry Court Housing Development _ 310 , residential units, under ref 19/503002/SUB to discharge condition 21 foul drainage.

This is because these foul sewage flows will directly impact on the North Eastern foul and combined surface water drainage catchment in Faversham by overloading the existing trunk sewers in Whitstable Rd and Cyprus Rd, which already run at capacity in storm rainfall conditions, and which will also overwhelm the "at capacity" Cyprus Rd Flood Relief Scheme, installed in 1996.

There could also be capacity issues for the combined trunk sewer in Abbey Street and Abbey Road as these sewers will also be subject to additional foul sewage flows emanating from the Western side of Faversham where new housing estates are being built in Ham Road and off of the Western Link Road.

In addition, the North Eastern drainage catchment will also have to take the foul sewage flows from the new Lady Dane Farm (Kingsmead), Housing and Commercial Development, phase 1, of which is now building.

So that lay persons can understand this - Southern Water's sewer network in the area of the Perry Court site consists of an existing single combined (foul waste and surface water) sewer of 225mm diameter, laid in the Ashford Road near to the Faversham Laundry and Fire station.

This is going to be the only receiving sewer for all of the foul sewage flows from the Perry Court site including the 310 Residential units, the Aldi supermarket, the planned Hotel and the planned Care Home facility of 66 persons and the proposal for another additional 58 Residential units.

This sewer will also be taking foul flows from the 9 houses being built as part of the Residential development on the site located east of the Ashford Rd between the Laundry and the A2.

in addition, this sewer takes existing foul flows from the Laundry facility and the Fire Station complex and associated housing and some nearby private housing.

This sewer in turn, runs into a sewer in the A2 and The Mall before heading off northwards into the North Eastern drainage catchment which consists of trunk

sewers in Cyprus Road, Whitstable Road and Abbey Street and Abbey Road referred to above.

This is a meeting about a single item and the question will be deferred to the next meeting.

Simon Tyler

"Why are Faversham Town Council willing to be in Non Compliance of your duties, as set out in the Equalities Act and specifically Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the public sector equality duty), and The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011?"

Cllr Perkin noted that she will speak on this subject in the formal debate.

Jenny Reeves

As you may be aware on the 15th of July a lady got stuck in the town due to the closure, this was my mother in law, she has agreed to me including her account in my concerns. On the 15th she arrived shortly after 9am and as a Blue Badge holder legally accessed the town via the Court Street gates which were open. She parked in Preston Street, and had completed her desired tasks by approximately 9.45am.

Trying to leave Preston Street she found that the barrier had already been put in place, at this point she went into The Alexander Building and was told that they couldn't help so she went to 12 Market Place and was then told that there nobody who could assist her. This means that unlike the promised access for emergency services there could easily be a delay to vital medical treatment if required, quite obviously any emergency needs to happen at a convenient time for staff.

She eventually got out of Preston Street with the assistance of a member of the public, this is not in anyway suitable, especially as she is an insulin dependent diabetic and could have easily been delayed in her medical requirements due to the early closure and unexplainable lack of ability to be released.

I was able to listen to Cllr Ben Martin on BBC radio Kent on Friday 17th July when he took part in a phone interview regarding the current disharmony between the council, some traders and certainly many members of the public regarding this scheme. He denied any form of discrimination against disabled people, I however being married to a wheelchair user would argue that he needs to spend a day in the life of a severely disabled person to understand.

The market place is now only accessible by the cobbled surface, this is uneven and very unsuitable not only for the mobility challenged but for the partially sighted too. Preston Street is accessed by either the narrow Gatefield land entrance or the passage way next to 12 Market Place and walking via the triangle marker, if you are mobility challenged this is certainly not ideal on either instance. Gatefield Lane is not wide enough to allow for social distancing even 1mt plus mitigation and the alternative route is much too far not to cause significant discomfort or serious health concerns for some with heart or lung issues.

It was also during this interview Cllr Martin spoke about a ShopMobility scheme, While this may be a partial recovery of access there are some very important questions to be answered.

How will this be funded?

Where will this be run from? - shop mobility schemes need large storage area and skilled staff to maintain the equipment

Will this be just for Faversham residents or open to all?

Will people have to book in advance?

And most importantly How long will it take for this to become reality?

There however is a greater issue with this scheme, if Faversham can accommodate mobility scooters on Pavements and presumably in shops - wheelchair users will literally have an either/or choice, it is most likely that those who rely on walking frames will have to use the scooters instead too, why not simply use more sensible mitigation?

Sensible use of space is a much better option, talking to the Natwest Bank to encourage the queue management more sensibly, even on a market day this queue makes social distancing all but impossible. In my mind, using the side door as an exit would undoubtedly help this issue too.

Moving some of the market stalls to along West Street, this would help those businesses and free up some of the space at the bottom of the market place to in essence bring down the market, meaning those cafes who require outside tables can use the place under the Guildhall for seating.

There could even be expansion of a market stall to in front of the old Iceland building again boosting trade to that part of our town.

The known pinch points including outside Ozzies should have no stopping markers, as this is not wide enough for a vehicle to be parked and an emergency vehicle to pass.

If sensible Town Management by the council is undertaken rather than a blanket policy that has ostracised the elderly and disabled, let alone caused damage to the

relationships with businesses within the town centre I feel certain that a solution will be found swiftly.

If however the Council decides to use Faversham as a constant tourist attraction, sold as a picturesque ancient market town, they will find that both businesses and people have no choice but to go elsewhere.

Cllr B J Martin noted that all his comments on BBC Radio were on behalf of Swale Borough Council as Cabinet Member. He further noted the road closures would be reviewed by SBC. Rental of mobility aids could be funded by the EU money, unlike a wage which cannot be covered. Cllr B J Martin also confirmed that it was a matter of public health. Cllr Jackson confirmed that the gate had not been closed before 10am on that day. Cllr Barker noted that a lot of tears had been shed over the abuse received and they were all genuinely trying to make the best decision.

Chris Oswald Jones

" The Mayor, Councillor Members Faversham Town Council -

I have to say that

1. The Town Marketing Group presented to Policy & Finance Committee meeting held 22 June 2020
2. Full Town Council considered the Minutes of that P&F Committee on 6 July
3. The Minutes Full Town Council Meeting 6 July are not yet in the Public Domain nor do they appear in draft on the Agenda 21 July 2020
4. It is my understanding that they should be received before further debate
5. I think it absurd that this topic be discussed so soon, NOT 14 days, since the KCC Traffic Order commenced "

Cllr Irwin disagreed with the suggestion that the discussion was absurd or a sign of weakness. He felt they had a duty to understand and consider the perspective from all an go a small step further.

Maria Newman

I would like to make the following points:

- 1) I echo what Chris Oswald-Jones has said in his email to the council ie I cannot see how this can be procedurally correct. As you are aware, I follow closely matters

relating to FTC and have been watching this situation unfold. It seems incongruous for the councillors to consider back-tracking on decisions made and road closures put in place only a couple of weeks ago.

2) I feel that this situation has arisen due to a handful of dissenting voices who happen to be shouting the loudest. I have spoken to a great number of people (traders and shoppers) who are extremely happy being able to amble around the town without being inconvenienced by vehicles. I have witnessed daily the lovely atmosphere since the roads have been closed to vehicles.

3) I do not see how our cafes, pubs and restaurants will be able to take advantage of the government initiative to relax the licencing fees and application procedures for tables and chairs placed on the highway if vehicles are allowed back into the town. I suggest the councillors obtain a copy of the latest guidelines which extend this scheme to 31 August and judge for themselves. Clearly these establishments risk having their licences revoked if the distancing requirements cannot be satisfied.

4) I note that there has been comment also on behalf of blue badge holders. I accept that this will cause inconvenience but how many towns are fully accessible? It is not usual to be able to park within a couple of steps of a business premises. Anyone with mobility issues will have the necessary walking aids etc. I have assisted various family members with blue badges for many years (shopping, banks, hospitals, restaurants etc) and I fully appreciate the issues however, you learn to think ahead, allow more time and plan your journey. It really is not far from any of the car parks to any of the town centre establishments, particularly if you have a friend or family member to accompany you.

Noted.