ALFRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

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**LEAD MEMBER MEETING – MONDAY 17TH JUNE 2019**

*The below are notes made by the Clerk at the Lead Member Meeting. They are not verbatim. The official minutes will be circulated once published by East Sussex County Council [ESCC].*

Cllr Bennett welcomed everyone to the Lead Member meeting and started with the Alfriston issue as most of those present were for that agenda item. Cllr Bennett wanted to make it clear that he was going to consider the outcome of the trial, consider the 3 recommendations and agree next steps.

Cllr Bennett explained that this has been going on for a very long time with lots of debate and different views. He is going to consider the 3 recommendations today and three people have asked to speak:

1. Cllr Stephen Rabagliati on behalf of Alfriston Parish Council
2. Mr Neil Parkinson on behalf of Conserve Alfriston
3. Ms June Goodfield on behalf of SAFE

Cllr Bennett explained he was chairing the meeting as the new Lead Member, Cllr Claire Dowling, had a long-standing holiday booked. He stated that they have received various correspondence, some helpful and some not, which will be dealt with when Cllr Dowling returns.

Cllr Bennett asked Cllr Stephen Rabagliati to speak first.

Cllr Stephen Rabagliati read the below script:

*On behalf of Alfriston Parish Council, I would like to thank ESCC for completing the trial of the traffic lights and 20mph speed limits as a possible solution to one of the Alfriston’s  traffic issues. We thank the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport’s office for their analysis which shows that the trial emphatically failed to deliver benefits in the key areas of:*

1. *Speed,*
2. *Transit times,*
3. *Localised pollution,*
4. *Operational issues (deliveries, pavement mounting in other sections of the High Street),*
5. *Queueing, and*
6. *Community feedback*

*We welcome the report’s recommendations to :*

1. *NOT implement a traffic signal solution*
2. *Consult upon and progress an alternative package of village-wide measures including*
	1. *village wide 20mph speed limits*
	2. *promoting an environment more conducive for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists*
	3. *Update waiting restrictions in the High Street*
	4. *Village Gateway signing*
	5. *Measures to restrict HGV access through the village*

*We urge the Lead Member to adopt the recommendation and to reject traffic lights as a solution, but instead to engage and work with village and valley wide stakeholder groups in developing a sensitive plan that addresses the needs of Alfriston, and the Cuckmere Valley as a whole.*

*We very much look forward to participating in this initiative.*

Cllr Bennett then asked Mr Neil Parkinson to speak. Mr Parkinson read the below script:

*I am speaking on behalf of Conserve Alfriston. Two years ago, following a village consultation, we presented a petition signed by 365 people calling on the Council to move away from its traffic light scheme and to instead develop a village and valley wide alternative to traffic management, working alongside other stakeholders.*

*The Council’s report on last year’s trial is the culmination of its decision to instead consult solely on a traffic light scheme for just one part of our HIgh Street, and to see that process through.*

*I would like to briefly consider the report and lessons from the trial, and to look forward to what we all hope will be a new start based on the report’s recommendations, our proposals, and the values of openness, partnership, and learning that are advocated in the council’s Core Offer to its residents.*

*Alongside the great majority of villagers who responded to the Council’s survey*

* *and to ours*
* *we are greatly relieved at this report’s key recommendation to abandon the traffic light proposal. We ask that this is clearly ratified by the Lead Member at today’s meeting.*

*We believe that this will create an opportunity to embark on a new beginning for the council’s relationship with our village.*

*We also welcome the recommendation that village-wide traffic measures are developed*

*- indeed, we argue along the whole Cuckmere valley*

*- and that pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists are taken into far greater account.*

*HGV signage, new parking arrangements, a 20 mph limit, and village gateways are specifically mentioned, and are to be welcomed - but they have been discussed many times before, and we hope that there will now be a move to action.*

*I would now like to provide some feedback from our many supporters and people we have spoken to. Here is undoubtably a feeling that the trial was a good thing in that it finally settled the question of traffic lights, by showing clearly that they were not the right approach. However, it will not be a surprise that many do question the years, effort, and public money spent on this process, rather than another solution or other council services.*

*And, for many, the feeling understandably remains that their council did not adequately listen to them. Indeed, the main body of this report does not substantively comment or learn from any of the extensive feedback from villagers found in` the appendices. The council must maximise value from the trial, by learning deeper lessons from it, and demonstrating that it is listening to others’ perspectives.*

*In terms of process:- following the feedback about the deficiencies in the council’s survey - which I believe the council has accepted - we hope that survey formats will be more openly discussed with communities before future trials take place.*

*In terms of engineering:- there is a lesson that a perfect hard engineering solution to cars mounting pavements in Alfriston is impossible. There will often be pedestrians in the road, and there will sometimes be cars on pavements. We must seek incremental improvements over a wider area, that change driver behaviour and pedestrian expectations to reduce incidents.*

*In terms of listening, and partnerships:- I hope that the council will show empathy regarding the problems during the trial, and publicly thank the many villagers who helped the traffic flow at the times of greatest congestion.*

*Finally, and most fundamentally,*

*I think people want to feel that their knowledge of their local area is given greater weight by their Council; and is then more positively acted upon. This of course brings me to the one other thing the report does not mention - which is that without openly stating it, its recommendations are a small subset of the very ones Conserve Alfriston proposed two years ago, and demonstrated democratic support for, but at the time, were not developed.*

*We ask that in the next phase of discussion, the council will not limit consideration to the specifics mentioned in this report. Instead, we ask that it works in partnership with us and a Cuckmere Coalition of the other public stakeholders to find and fund a new package of democratically supported, environmentally appropriate, valley-wide measures.*

*Our framework was not an endpoint, but a structured basis for this open, developmental discussion with villagers and stakeholders.*

*We therefore ask the Lead Member:- to demonstrate that ESCC has listened to village feedback on the trial, has learnt from it, and is living up to its Core Offer principles, by stating that Conserve Alfriston’s developmental framework will be the start point for the next phase of consultation. As I close, I undertake that we now intend to*

*Campaign For Something, Not Against Something.*

*We genuinely look forward to welcoming the new Lead Member for Transport and Environment to Alfriston. We earnestly hope that Claire, together with our excellent and supportive local councillor, Stephen Shing, will start afresh on this issue, and help to bring our village’s proposals for the beautiful Cuckmere valley to life. Thank you all for listening.*

Cllr Bennett then asked Ms June Goodfield to speak. Ms Goodfield stated that she had two questions;

1. What is going to be done on enforcement as it is a futile experiment if cars can’t be moved.
2. Interested to know how section 3.11 in the report which states that the measures will be improve driver awareness, how this happened as drivers still mounted the pavement which is a criminal act under rule 1.48 in Road Traffic Act 1998.

Cllr Bennett stated that enforcement is the Police’s responsibility. Whether it is illegal to drive on pathways, he does not know. He said you can’t change driver behaviour with signage.

Cllr Bennett then handed over to Mr James Vaks. Mr Vaks stated that all the exercises since 2016 have been working towards getting to the point we are at today. It was a comprehensive trial and gave them the evidence required. Mr Vaks wanted to thank the community for their support and patience during the trial, they wanted to test the system to see if it would break, and at times it did. The outcomes of the trial showed there were no increased traffic speeds, air monitoring showed no changes although it was noted it would need to be monitored over a longer timeframe and local changes to the air were noticed. The trial did show longer queue times and that areas such as North Street and Market Square were heavily affected, especially by ‘roundabouting’.

Mr Vaks continued to report that the signals did address issues between Star Lane and Weavers Lane but did generate issues elsewhere. During the trial period there was a fatal accident on the A259 and roadworks on the A27, the signals struggled to cope with the increase in traffic coming through the village for these reasons.

Mr Andrew Keer expressed his thanks to Alfriston Emergency Group [AEG] for all their hard work and material that they provided. He stated that they have worked with Conserve Alfriston and in one of the Stakeholder meetings, all the proposals were discussed in detail. Mr Parkinson stated that he appreciates that but they were looking just at the ‘Narrows’, the proposals now need to be looked at in a new context, as a valley wide initiative.

Cllr Bennett said they can be looked at again but a traffic calming package could mean anything you want it be.

Cllr Shing thanked all residents, Parish Council, AEG and Conserve Alfriston for their patience. It has hugely affected everyone especially the shop owners in the village, all at a huge cost to ESCC. He stated it is clear that lights would not work and now need to move forward to find a solution to help with the problem in Alfriston.

An ESCC Councillor whose name I did not hear stated that there is rarely any perfect solution. There are going to be issues with illegal parking and with no enforcement by the Police it is pointless. Parking needs to be decriminalised. Representation to Wealden District Council needs to be made to change their decision on this matter.

Mr Karl Taylor, Assistant Director of Transport and Operations, stated that ESCC were asked to look at the area of the ‘narrows’, they were not asked to look for a Valley wide solution. He wanted to point out that the signals did help with the traffic issue in the ‘narrows’ but did create issues elsewhere. Something needs to be done about the ‘narrows’ as it has been identified as a risk. The trial scheme was not a waste of time as it showed lights would not work which ESCC needed to know. In regards to enforcement and driving on pavements, as stated earlier, these are the responsibility of Sussex Police and this would be a low priority for them. If you banned HGV’s you would have a problem with deliveries and refuse trucks. Need to work better with them.

Ms June Goodfield stated that the lights did work within the ‘narrows’. She asked Cllr Shing if he could attend the ferry port to put leaflets up so drivers know not to come through the village.

Cllr Bennett ended the discussions by thanking the community for putting up with the scheme. We are now at the end of the experiment. The appendices linked to the report submitted to the Lead Member today show the learning and this information was used to come to the recommendations.

Cllr Bennett confirmed that he agreed with the recommendations and traffic lights would not be taken forward. He wishes the project well.

Mr Karl Tayor ended the item by confirming that he will now brief Cllr Dowling when she returns and a stakeholder meeting will be arranged after the Summer period to discuss next steps.