



## **MINUTES OF BEXHILL TOWN FORUM 16th September 2014**

### **1. Welcome**

Paul Courtel, acting Chair of the Forum, welcomed everyone and advised that the meeting was being recorded for the purposes of ensuring accuracy of the minutes. The Chair confirmed that the recording would be used for no other purpose and would be held by the minutes secretary.

The Chair continued that there would have been an election during the meeting and he outlined the process that had been agreed for managing the election. He reported that once nominations closed one of the candidates withdrew leaving only eight candidates for the eight positions. This means there is no need for a formal election.

He advised that Ron Storkey would give an update on the Oasis Garden using the time allotted for the election would be used by. In addition Cllr Bridget George would be permitted to talk about the League of Friends of Bexhill Hospital if time permitted.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

- Cllr Robin Patten
- Cllr Michael Phillips
- Linda Seddon
- Jack Docherty
- Cllr Simon Elford
- Conor Hill
- Frank Moore

### **3. Marina Pedestrian Improvement Scheme update:**

Mr James Vaks, Scheme Delivery Manager / Infrastructure Design, East Sussex County Council.

JV gave an overview of the scheme which covers Marina, Marina Court Avenue and Channel View. It also includes improvement works to Marina Court Avenue and Channel View West. The objective of the scheme is to enhance the pedestrian environment and provide a stronger pedestrian link between the seafront and town centre. These

improvements will benefit those who visit the town and the promenade and include changes to Sackville Road roundabout, implementation of a 20mph speed limit (along Marina), alterations to the zebra crossing and changes to the appearance of Marina Court Avenue and Channel View West.

A public consultation took place in November and December last year. A public exhibition was held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> November with 482 people attending. Over the four-week consultation period 233 responses were given. JV thanked all those who had contributed to the consultation process.

Once the review was completed the results of the consultation were put to the lead member and the proposals put forward were approved.

JV advised that the scheme was presented as three distinct phases as it was never going to be possible to do everything in one financial year due to the size of the scheme and the costs involved:

#### *Phase 1*

- Relocate the existing zebra crossing closer to Devonshire Road and remove the existing centre island
- Widening of the footways in Marina Court Avenue
- Introducing a coloured road surface on Channel View West
- Introducing new parking layout on Marina Court Avenue

#### *Phase 1 feedback*

To what extent do you support the proposed changes to footways

- 42% strongly supported or supported
- 50% opposed or strongly opposed

To what extent do you support the proposed changes to Marina Court Avenue

- 45% strongly supported or supported
- 42% opposed or strongly opposed

To what extent do you support the proposed changes to the existing zebra crossing

- 38% strongly supported or supported
- 54% opposed or strongly opposed

JV advised that those opposing had safety and congestion concerns.

#### *Phase 1 going forward*

- Crossing to be kept in existing location

- Remove central island at crossing but widen the footways at the north and south of Marina, creating a shorter distance to cross the road (this was the preferred option for the disability groups consulted)
- Review proposals for Marina Court Avenue

### *Phase 2*

- Introduction of 20mph limit between the roundabout and Devonshire Road (there are no known safety issues in this area so this proposal is simply to make the area pedestrian friendly)
- Improved bus stop facilities including a new bus border (to allow people to get on and off busses without having to walk through the cars)
- New parking layout on Marina
- Widening the footways on Marina

### *Phase 2 feedback*

- To what extent do you support the proposed introduction of a 20mph speed limit
- 64% strongly supported or supported
- 24% opposed or strongly opposed

To what extent do you support the proposed changes to the footways on Marina

- 43% strongly supported or supported
- 39% opposed or strongly opposed

JV advised that in order to put the 20mph limit in place there would be a need to change the layout of the roads.

To what extent do you support the proposed changes to the bus stop facilities on Marina

- 52% strongly supported or supported
- 25% opposed or strongly opposed

JV said it was felt that some of the concerns were related to coaches parking outside of the De La Warr and that this could lead to congestion.

To what extent do you support the proposed changes to the layout of the road

- 47% strongly supported or supported
- 35% opposed or strongly opposed

### *Phase 2 going forward*

- Looking to progress the 20mph speed limit
- No footway widening but keep the proposed bus stop build out
- Introduce uncontrolled pedestrian crossing with central refuge

### *Phase 3*

- New roundabout layout at Sackville Road with the shape of the roundabout being adjusted
- Widening of the footways and upgrading the crossing facilities

### *Phase 3 feedback*

- To what extent do you support the proposed changes to the roundabout
- 54% strongly supported or supported
- 32% opposed or strongly opposed

### *Phase 3 going forward*

- Above to be carried out plus
- Introduction of loading bay
- Introduction of a 'painted' island

### *Summary of proposals going forward*

- Progress Sackville Road roundabout
- Progress proposals along Marina
- Progress with changes to zebra crossing
- Review proposals at Marina Court Avenue and Channel View West

### *Next steps*

- September 2014 – consult on the proposed changes to the parking layout and 20mph speed limit including legal notices
- October 2014 – finalise the design
- January 2015 - commence construction
- Marina Court Avenue / Channel View West proposals to be reviewed

### **Ruth Green**

RG raised the issue of removal of vehicular access from the De La Warr Pavilion car park and asked what this would mean. JV clarified that this element of the plans is being reviewed and won't be taken forward at this time.

### **Ken Blair**

KB said he was concerned about the bus stop as the buses don't stop in the place where the bus stop is proposed. JV confirmed that the bus company had been consulted and have said that the proposed location is an existing bus stop. He acknowledged that this stop may not currently be flagged. KB raised concern that by people leaving the buses at this stop they will miss the town centre completely.

KB flagged that coaches stop outside the De La Warr for three hours at a time and this causes a blockage; therefore the change won't help with traffic flow. JV advised that

there is currently a stop in that location and therefore nothing is being changed; it's just being made easier for people to use.

KB asked how the 20mph speed limit would be enforced. JV advised that Sussex Police will enforce the limit as they do any other speed limit and this speed limit is designed only to make the area pedestrian friendly.

JV continued that the existing footways to north of Marina will not be widened and that the bus border will be the size of a parked car / parking space which will make it easier for those using the buses to get on and off.

#### **Lorna Extence**

LE asked about the zebra crossing near Devonshire Road and the proposal she put forward at the last meeting for a further crossing. LE raised concern that the minutes of the last meeting do not represent the discussion. LE said that quite a lot of people in the area of the proposed roundabout changes are concerned that there is no proposal for a crossing in that area.

JV responded that putting in another crossing would mean removing more parking spaces. He continued that that would not be part of the scope of these works where the focus is from Devonshire Road down to Channel View West and Marina Court Avenue, with a view to attracting people to these areas. JV and LE continued discussions outside of the meeting as there was disagreement as to whether there are currently parking spaces in the area that LE was referring to.

#### **Julie Penfold**

JP asked about the roundabout and asked whether cars trying to squeeze through will get stuck. JV advised that the yellow area on his diagram will be constructed rather than just be painted. The red colour on the surface will be retained and the paint will be in a contrasting colour. Any car travelling at speed is likely to cause damage to their vehicle and this will hopefully be a deterrent.

The Chair thanked JV for his input into the meeting and acknowledged that ESCC have listened to the feedback given as part of the consultation and reviewed the proposals accordingly. Jackie Bialeska was also thanked for inviting JV and making arrangements for his presentation.

JV advised that anyone who would like to discuss issues in more detail may contact him at [infrastructure.delivery@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:infrastructure.delivery@eastsussex.gov.uk).

#### **4. Presentation on Oasis Gardens by Ron Storkey**

This item was added to the agenda and followed the Executive Committee report

RS showed two slides. The first showed the Oasis Gardens as they currently are. The second showed the changes of the parking arrangements as proposed by RDC. RS suggested that the changes had been introduced quietly without many people realising.

The plan showed the two flowerbeds, which would be covered in concrete under the last set of proposals. An area at the other side would be taken to widen the pavement and the crossing would be moved. This would leave a small area of garden to remain, approximately half the size of the current garden.

RS showed a slide featuring a photo of people sitting on the walls of the garden. RS said that once the changes are made to the gardens the walls will no longer be there.

RS has put forward a proposal for the pedestrian crossing to remain where it is and a low wall to be incorporated to stop the cars from going on the pavement and getting in the way of pedestrians. RS advised that the Council have said the recycling bins would be moved, although it is not known where they will go. RS had suggested that 6ft be taken off the garden to give a 20ft wide path. This had been presented by RS at an earlier Forum meeting and was voted on with the majority voting in favour (approximately 140 in favour and two against). This proposal was put forward to RDS and this has now been agreed as the plan that will be taken forward.

RS showed a slide detailing the current proposal. The pedestrian crossing will stay in place. The widened path will use 6ft from the garden. There will be three cycle stands, seats and planting. The Civilian War Memorial will move from outside the De La Warr Pavilion into the garden. 90% of the garden will remain. RS suggested that whilst the wall will be gone, other campaigners could work towards getting it replaced in the future.

RS advised that ESCC have listened to the people who said they didn't want the pedestrian crossing to move.

The meeting gave RS a round of applause.

### **Jim Milne**

JM said that he disapproves of most of the changes and feels that the current garden should be retained. He feels that people like the enclosed nature of the garden where they can be away from people walking by. JM stated that he will be trying to save the current garden.

RS responded that he too would like to see the current garden remain, however, RDC is determined that the garden will change and therefore this new plan is the best compromise as it retains the majority of the garden and leaves something for campaigners to work with in the future.

**Lorna Extence**

LE said that she is disappointed at the reduced amount of seating in the new plan and that this will not compensate for the loss of the wall.

**Cllr Maurice Watson**

MW said that he feels the new plan is a success story, which should be celebrated, as the Council have listened to most of what has been said.

RS agreed with LE but stated that he feels this is the best result that could have been achieved. This way the area is preserved so that another group of campaigners can work towards improving the garden in the future.

**Bethany Thompson**

BT expressed gratitude for what RS has achieved, however, she expressed concern that there has been little said about the flowers which many people want.

RS said that he agreed with the comments about the lack of flowers but again stressed that there are beds that could possibly be used for flowers in the future.

**5. Executive Committee report**

The Chair said a considerable amount of time had been spent organising the election, which is not now needed.

Thanks were expressed to Sylvia Sigfusdottir and Jay Wootten of Hastings Direct. SS has taken on management of the Forum facebook page and Hastings Direct have set up the page as well as putting together ballot papers and undertaking printing and photocopying on behalf of the Forum, in order to help keep costs down.

It was reported that the new facebook page has been necessary due to a committee member (who was the only person with login details) leaving the committee and being unreachable.

Following the parking meeting, Conor Hill has researched legislation and concluded that primary legislation is needed in order to allow fines from parking to be used to pay for the salaries of traffic wardens. He has confirmed that such legislation would need to go through both Houses of Parliament.

The Chair reported that Katy Bourne who, when attending the Parking Forum, had agreed to approach the relevant minister about such a change in legislation, has since (via her Performance and Information Officer) sent an email stating that her position is that the preferred option is to see parking decriminalised (privatised) in Rother and Wealden to bring them into line with the rest of East Sussex. As such, Katy Bourne would not be supportive of a change in legislation at this time.

The Chair advised that the next step is to contact the local MP, Greg Barker on this matter. This action, from the June meeting, has not yet been actioned.

The Chair reported that he has been approached by a person who would like to attend a future meeting to talk about a sustainable built environment. This would not be the same presentation as that given at the June meeting by Chris Lewcock, which had covered a wider subject but which had been of interest to those attending the meeting. The Chair reported that he was under the impression that the talk would be about sustainable housing but a detailed conversation has not taken place. Those attending voted in favour of the talk being included on the agenda of a future meeting with the majority abstaining but the number in favour being greater than those against.

Margaret Jones took the floor to talk about options for the governance of Bexhill. MJ proposed that the Forum hold a special meeting on this subject to which the parties who have put forward proposals for governance would be invited to make a presentation. The presentations would be followed by opportunities for questions and a vote. MJ said that her hope would be that the presentations would not be political but would give the opportunity to hear the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches. Ron Storkey seconded this proposal. The proposal was voted on with the majority being in favour.

**6. Approval of minutes of past meetings: -**

This item was moved to before Item 4 – presentation from Ron Storkey

*a. Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014*

Lorna Extence raised concern with the section of Item 7.1, which says:

“SE advised that ESCC will be putting a further crossing further westwards towards the De La Warr Pavilion but there won’t be another crossing in the area referred to by LE.”

LE did not feel that this was what was stated in the meeting, however after discussing the issue with JV outside of the current meeting she had been advised that adding another crossing would require removal of a disabled parking space in order to put the zig zag lines in, which is a requirement when installing a zebra crossing.

The Forum agreed that this section of the minutes could be updated in consultation with LE to words which more accurately reflect what was said.

With this exception, these minutes were agreed as an accurate record and duly approved by the meeting.

*b. Tuesday, 6th May 2014 (special meeting on Parking)*

These minutes were agreed as an accurate record and duly approved by the meeting.

*c. Tuesday, 10th June 2014*

These minutes were agreed as an accurate record and duly approved by the meeting. It was noted that Cllr Watson did attend the meeting although his apologies were recorded as he had given them in advance. The minutes to be amended to reflect his attendance.

## **7. Election of 8 member Executive Committee:**

The election candidates:

- Jackie Bialeska
- Chrissy Foote
- Roger Gillett
- Margaret Jones
- Hugh La Trobe
- Alan Peirce
- Theresa Stanbridge
- Stephen Westlake

PC advised that he has not put himself forward for election as he will be focussing on campaigning for the RDC elections and does not feel that the two activities would be ethically compatible. PC said that he has been on the Executive Committee for 14 months, having joined at a time when it was not running well, and feels that he can leave the Forum in a more stable place.

Each candidate was offered the opportunity to address the Forum for up to two minutes each:

- **Jackie Bialeska**

JB declined to address the meeting.

- **Chrissy Foote**

CF has been a resident of Little Common for approximately 18 months after joining her husband who has lived in Bexhill for 10 years.

CF is a former NHS sister of seven years in a career of 15 years with the NHS. She was responsible for a budget of £0.5million per annum and had 24/7 responsibility for the care of patients. Formerly she was a PA for a medical imaging firm.

CF said she supports free parking and believes that people will travel a long way to places with free parking. She also has an interest in safety issues relating to Freedom Leisure, the unadopted roads system and productions offered by the De La Warr Pavilion.

- **Roger Gillett**

RG declined to address the meeting.

- **Margaret Jones**

MJ said that she started the Forum as there was a democratic deficit in the town. She joined the Forum Committee 18 months ago when it was struggling. MJ is now involved in running the Youth Council.

- **Hugh La Trobe**

HL is an antique restorer, cabinet maker, runs the Antiques Centre, is former Chair of The Heart of Sidley and currently Chair of The Friends of Combe Valley. He has lived in Sidley for around 15 years. HL said he is interested in taking the Forum forward by having its own website and getting a lot more people to attend the meetings.

- **Alan Peirce**

AP said that he returned to Bexhill seven years ago after leaving when he went to university.

He has been a Chartered Professional Engineer for his whole career and was previously a County Councillor in Surrey, which he became after finding he couldn't get his son into the school that he wanted. He went on to Chair the Police Authority for eight years.

AP would like to offer his skills and has experience in dealing with bureaucracy. He enjoys working as a team and believes that it shouldn't just be down to the Chairman to do everything, but that the whole team should be engaged.

- **Theresa Stanbridge**

The Chair read out a statement from TS who gave apologies for not attending the meeting as she was on holiday in France. TS will be 63 in October and has lived in Bexhill for a year. She came to live in Bexhill after falling in love with the town 20 years ago and since then it was always her aim to move to the town.

The experience that TS feels she would bring includes previously being a Parish Councillor, being a teacher for eight years, a senior manager in a major UK bank, working with Birmingham City Council and being secretary for many organisations.

- **Stephen Westlake**

SW retired to Bexhill two years ago after moving from London. SW is a volunteer attendant at Bexhill Museum, helps at the Food Bank and is neighbourhood watch coordinator at the block of flats in which he lives in Old Town. In addition he does some work for his church.

SW said that if elected he would do his best to put as much as possible into the town.

## **7.1 Election**

All were duly elected.

### **Julia Penfold**

JP thanked PC for all he has done for the Forum. This was followed by a round of applause.

*The remainder of this item was covered after Item 9*

The Chair proposed MJ to act as Chair to bridge the gap which would exist once he stepped down at the end of the meeting. MJ would then convene and Chair the first meeting of the new committee, before they elect their new Chair. MJ would also deal with all the tasks that need to be completed in the coming days.

JB opposed this proposal on the grounds that a Chair wouldn't be needed for the first meeting, which would be informal.

PC responded by pointing out that there are a number of tasks that need to be completed in the next few days, including setting the date of the next meeting, collecting of contact details of those serving, writing the response in the Bexhillian magazine and paying bills.

### **Ron Storkey**

RS stated that a Chair isn't needed for the informal meeting. This was seconded from the floor.

The Chair outlined the proposal for an acting Chair (or 'Acting Secretary') to ensure that those tasks that need to be carried out can be carried out.

Margaret Jones was voted as 'Co-ordinator' for the next few days until a Chair is in place. A show of hands indicated overwhelming support for this proposal.

## **8. Open Forum (3 minute presentations): -**

### **8.1 Jackie Bialeska, presentation on cuts to bus services**

JB advised that ESCC have launched a public consultation regarding cuts to bus services which includes some services being reduced and some cancelled altogether.

The public consultation ends on 28th September. JB left papers detailing the services which will be affected and said that there were consultation papers in the entrance to the church.

JB stated that those who are vulnerable are being affected and stopped from getting around once they are unable to drive. This includes people who need to get to the Conquest on bus services which only run every two hours.

Forms need to be submitted by 28th September and can be left in the library.

The Chair asked whether it is the poorest that are being affected as they are the ones relying on public transport.

**Cllr Maurice Watson**

MW stated that it's not just the poor who are affected as people from all backgrounds may need to use the buses from time to time.

**Ruth Green**

RG accompanies a friend to the hospital and neither of them drive. She said that without the 95 bus service they will have to use taxis as the patient transport service is not adequate (her friend had to wait five hours for a vehicle to take her home from hospital).

**Carol Thomas**

CT said that it's difficult to know when the 95 bus is due and it's hard for a person who is new to the town to understand the system. She felt it's also difficult to take visitors to the seafront due to lack of buses and also it's hard to travel by bus at night due to lack of services.

**Rebecca Parker**

RP said getting to the Conquest is a problem as in her area there is only the Community bus which is only four times per day and doesn't run on a Sunday.

**County Cllr Michael Ensor**

ME thanked JB for raising this issue.

He advised that 80% of bus routes are commercially run by Stagecoach. 20% are subsidised by the County Council and these are the routes that are being looked at as the Council can no longer afford the subsidy.

ME said the Council have looked at the routes and times that are least used to minimise impact. The savings will be over £1m per year.

He advised that once the routes that can be reduced are identified then there will be consultation with Stagecoach and it is anticipated that Stagecoach may be willing to keep some of these routes but without subsidy.

### **Lorna Extence**

LE asked who has received the questionnaire. The Chair advised that JB has received 200 and that he has 100 himself. JB said that they are also available in the library and a few other places and that there has been coverage in the newspapers.

LE said that every resident should have received a copy, however the Chair pointed out that the cost of sending a copy to every person in East Sussex may not be financially viable.

### **Cllr Michael Ensor**

ME advised that there is a statutory process for advising residents of a public consultation and that this has been followed. This does not mean that every resident is sent a copy.

### **Paul Courtel**

PC suggested that part of the problem is that only one company provides the service and therefore there is no competition. He advised that there was a competitive tendering process that closed on 15<sup>th</sup> September. It is not clear whether there were any other companies putting in bids as the tendering process was still live and therefore information was confidential at the time he enquired.

## **8.2 Alan Witt, presentation on 99 bus**

AW said that he is getting frustrated getting information on the 99 bus and that he sometimes has to wait an hour for a bus. He has taken this to the bus companies but has been told that this is normal at this time of year due to weather and the holiday season.

AW has been told by a friend that wireless communication has been taken away as part of a cost cutting exercise and bus drivers won't use their personal mobile phones to tell management about problems. Therefore there is no hands-on management on a minute-by-minute basis.

AW said that after talking to people he has found that they are not happy and some of these people are visitors or those in Bexhill on holidays.

AW appealed for councillors in attendance to take these issues up with the bus company as they are not providing an adequate public service.

## **9. Forthcoming event announcements (maximum 2 minutes) including: -**

- a. Health Walk, Cllr Paul Lendon

PL thanked the previous committee for their work on the Forum.

PL started the Health Walk ten years ago and on 10th October they will celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a record breaking event and competitions including best dressed walker and decorated umbrella.

PL thanked Hastings Direct for their support with this and other events.

**10. Matters arising from the minutes of past meetings: -**

No matters were raised.

**11. Any other business**

**a. Cllr Bridget George, Friends of Bexhill Hospital**

BG advised that she is a member of the Bexhill Hospital League of Friends with Cllr Stuart Earl and others. Donations, legacies and gifts are received to enable the hospital to buy equipment and towards services for now and in the future.

The hospital recently requested funding for a new ophthalmology day unit for the hospital. £480,000 has been received in donations so far.

BG stated that membership is dwindling and more members are needed. An appeal was made for people in attendance to consider becoming members and to take more interest in their local hospital. Attendees were asked to contact BG if interested.

BG asked whether the Forum would be interested in getting regular updates on the work of the League of Friends. The Forum agreed that BG should address the February meeting.