

Busbridge Community Forum meeting 26 June 2007

Meeting held at the Holloway Hill Ground clubhouse 7.30 to 9.15 PM

Note that this minute was compiled from several records. Any errors of reporting should be notified to the chairman Mike Harrison at forum@harrison-m.com.

Main item: discussion with Simon Hall, Surrey County Council's Highways Manager for Waverley District

Simon Hall took up the role of Surrey County Council's transportation manager for Waverley 18 months ago and was promoted to highways manager in May 2007. His responsibilities include all highways matters such as highways improvements, parking, bus services, and maintenance issues including potholes and flooding.

He said he was attending the meeting to glean opinions and views. He doesn't like formal public consultations because they might imply that he has all the answers and simply wants the public to confirm them. What he prefers is 'public engagement' in which the public come forward with their own ideas.

Historically there have been a lot of problems as a result of trying to impose Surrey County Council's views on the public. This was illustrated six years ago when the Council presented one-choice-only plans for residents' parking schemes which caused a lot of concern amongst local residents and were rejected.

He is currently engaging with local councillor Peter Martin and the Godalming Transportation Task Group – which is composed of elected members of Waverley and Surrey Councils – trying to develop policy to deal with the parking situation in South Godalming and Farncombe.

Godalming Transport Task Group is also looking at better ways of implementing highways improvements. Simon Hall says this follows from the considerable time and money "mis-spent" over the last six years on road safety consultations and feasibility studies which did not produce significant results. He claims that he "inherited £4½ millions' worth of promises for work" when he took over his present role. So, in the time he has been in post, he has tried to concentrate more on the delivery of schemes and less on feasibility studies, arguing that these tend to produce numerous iterations of design which do not gain significant approval. At some stage the politicians, working with the officers, have actually to make a decision.

In Busbridge, this approach, so far, has produced some safety measures on the Brighton Road, and other safety work in the Godalming area. Godalming Transport Task Group is preparing further work on the Brighton Road to deal with both safety and parking issues, hopefully to be

completed in September 2007. Simon Hall is also looking at options to improve Shackstead Lane.

Amongst his other duties are the problems left by the transfer of responsibility for enforcing parking restrictions from the police to Waverley Borough Council. Parking in the wrong place is now a civil, not a criminal, offence within Waverley's area. This change required legislation at the House of Lords to decriminalise parking offences location-by-location. This is a very bureaucratic process which now makes it difficult to make any further change in waiting restrictions. One unsatisfactory consequence is the situation in which a minority of residents are prevented from parking outside their own homes by double yellow lines. Waverley's current strategy is to treat these cases gently and to focus on those in which improper parking causes obstruction or safety problems. This will continue until he, Waverley and local residents can come up with more satisfactory arrangements after which waiting restrictions will be amended accordingly. Amendments might include revised residents' parking schemes.

Simon Hall says residents' schemes are "very difficult to agree and organise". Some residents – especially those with off-street parking – don't see the need for them, others who need to park on the road would welcome them. Those with off-street parking often don't understand that there will be a significant migration of parking into their street when schemes come on line elsewhere. This can apply to any sort of restriction – for example when workers travelling to the station or to jobs in Godalming choose to park on residential streets in Busbridge – many low-paid workers don't want to spend £6 per day on parking. These issues, he says, require further engagement with local residents. He emphasises that there is a need to find long-term solutions.

The cost of road marking is considerable. While paint and labour are relatively cheap, the high cost arises mainly from legal and administrative charges for each location. So economies of scale in this work are essential. For example, 5 metres of yellow line costs £3,000 [£600 per metre] while 5000 metres costs £15,000 [£3 per metre]. One large job is better value than several small ones.

To deal with parking problems Simon Hall's department is working closely with the Godalming Transport Task Group.

Busbridge Community Forum meeting 26 June 2007

Question and answer session

- *Summerhouse Road is suffering from increased parking by commuters and those displaced from elsewhere by enforcement. Is it feasible to provide a greater amount of affordable public parking in the centre of the town?*

No – it's not cost-effective and sites are not available. Surrey County Council already subsidises the cost of maintaining parking meters and other paid parking facilities and the cost of providing traffic wardens is not balanced by the additional fines collected. This will get worse as the new enforcement starts to bite and revenue from fines falls.

- *Why can't the whole area be provided with more council-owned off-street parking so that roads are not obstructed by parked vehicles?*

Simon Hall says his total budget for highway improvements this year is £700,000, split between Godalming, Cranleigh, Haslemere and Farnham. He can sometimes obtain further funds from developers where they impact on infrastructure but it is unlikely this small fund would ever be spent on additional off-street public parking spaces.

An additional problem is that development of flats in previously singly occupied houses is leading to increased demand for on-street parking. This is leading to further migration into the Forum's area.

- *What about the station car park? It cries out to be turned into a multi-storey.*

The agents for this space are Network Rail and Stagecoach who have agreed national targets for increasing the amount of station parking. Simon Hall has pressed them to make some further provision at Godalming but they have yet to see the business case for doing so. Waverley met them in December 2006 but they still have not submitted any planning applications.

- *Surrey CC's own Guildford staff have to use a public park-and-ride service. Is it feasible for Godalming to have such a facility?*

The Guildford facility at Meroo was funded on the back of the development there – whether there is an option to do this at Godalming hasn't yet been discussed.

- *Why is parking in our part of Surrey such a mess?*

The volume of traffic in Waverley has gone up 15% in the last five years as a result of displacement of people from rural villages to the south who want to commute to London. The London congestion charge has exacerbated this effect. Prior to that, the building of the M25 greatly

increased the use of cars for local commuting within Surrey. This is an on-going and very difficult problem – in the south of England it's not possible just to build your way out of it with new roads, so there has to be some sort of restraint on the increased pressure from traffic. Sooner or later, people will have to accept the need to live closer to work.

- *But shouldn't developers accept some of the responsibility? It is they who are bringing new problems to the area.*

To some extent, local authorities are now expecting developers to meet the cost of improved infrastructure.

- *Why can't Shackstead Lane be improved? It is a dreadful traffic bottleneck.*

Earlier plans allowed for widening it to accommodate the parked vehicles but it comes down to cost. Surrey's £700k budget doesn't go far. Widening the street would require that the bank be cut back which would need a retaining wall. That might cost £150 - £200k. And widening might give rise to speeding problems that would incur other costs for traffic calming so Simon Hall is against the idea. However, he points out that working with council members to develop a programme of works that is "both feasible within the budget and which delivers genuine benefits".

- *How is the highways budget allocated?*

Surrey County Council aims first to reduce accidents. In Waverley in 2006 there were 746 personal injury accidents. Of those, more than 80 were serious and eight fatal. It's Simon Hall's view is that the £700k budget should be spent mainly trying to reduce the level of accidents where there is a pattern of injury-causing accidents. The fatal ones tend to be unpredictable so he looks for constant patterns of accidents in residential areas then works with council members to try to allocate money accordingly. It would be very difficult to justify spending money on a retaining wall while accident patterns elsewhere were not receiving attention.

- *So what can be done about Shackstead Lane?*

In spite of the budgetary constraints, he hopes to reduce the speed of traffic and maintain an even flow. An arrangement similar to that planned for Brighton Road, with designated parking bays to keep parking out of the narrowest parts of Shackstead Lane, is the most likely cost-effective solution, he thinks.

- *Several speakers from the floor pointed out the serious dangers caused by illegal parking within 10 metres of the roundabout junction of Shackstead Lane with the Portsmouth Road.*

Busbridge Community Forum meeting 26 June 2007

Simon Hall appeared to feel that this was a consequence of the current pressure from parking on the road network and, unless it posed a serious danger was not a priority.

- *Neighbourhood Specialist Officer PC Peter Harris pointed out that ticketing illegally parked vehicles is not always effective.. He cited as an example the fact that parents who park illegally around the schools in the area appear not to be deterred by fines.*
- *(Speaker from the floor to Simon Hall) You mentioned Brighton Road. What are you doing there?*

The plan is to provide formal parking bays. This would allow parking by residents while keeping speeds low.

- *The Chairman pointed out that most drivers behave well there, waiting to allow opposing flow to pass and avoid grid-locking the single-track section. This goes wrong either because an aggressive driver tries to balk the oncoming flow, or because there is a gap in the parking and both streams of traffic attempt to reach it at the same time. This makes a strong case for not providing gaps in the formal parking section. The comment was endorsed by several other speakers.*
- *(Speaker from the floor to Simon Hall) Will the Forum area get residents-only parking schemes and, if so, who will get permits?*

No decisions have yet been taken about these and, in any case, all Simon Hall can do is to advise the elected members of the council. If residents' schemes were introduced, it's likely that the number of permits for a given area would be limited according to the number of spaces available. Where space allowed for more than one permit per household, charges would probably be graded – maybe £50 p.a. for the first and £100 p.a. for the second.

- *What happens to houses with off-street parking? They don't need resident's parking permits surely?*

There would be no discrimination against households with driveways – they would still be offered on-street spaces.

- *What's the timescale?*

Surrey County Council is planning a review of parking restrictions in Godalming. This will take evidence from members of the public about particular problems caused by parked vehicles, for example the dangerous single-track flow where traffic in Tuesley Lane is obstructed by cars parked near the junction with Holloway Hill.

New parking schemes will be implemented in two stages. The first would be to improve conditions for residents in the centre of the town. The second would consider residents' parking schemes all over Godalming. Any plans would be subject to a business case being built around the revenue gained from selling the permits – there is an additional administrative load involved in such schemes.

- *A speaker from the floor made the point that where there are no yellow lines, people think it's OK to park – even within 10 metres of a junction. Another thought that residents with driveways who park on the street are encouraging others to do the same.*
- *Godalming Healthcheck's representative, Christine Tebbott, reported they have accumulated some statistics about parking in the area and will make them available – these were drawn from about 600 questionnaires returned. They tend to support the view that a significant number of retail workers in the town use residential streets to park their vehicles.*
- *Neighbourhood policing specialist, PC Peter Harris suggested the Forum might recruit one representative per road to survey the parking priorities – longer roads might need more than one. It would be necessary to ensure that the surveys were properly representative, perhaps by holding road-based meetings.*
- *The Chairman pointed out that the Forum should, in any case, try to improve its level of representation. A meeting of 40 to 70 people may not be fully representative of an area of some 1,700 households, though it is a better ratio than many residents' associations achieve. However, he believes that this could be improved and appealed to the meeting to recruit new members.*

Simon Hall agreed and said that low levels of representation risk having proposals blocked at a late stage when people who haven't attended meetings react to something they don't like. He added, "Perhaps the threat of waiting restrictions on every road might motivate people". He suggests leafleting the area to say, "Surrey County Council wish to review parking and are considering waiting restrictions in your road. Please go and meet your representative to discuss your concerns." That, he thinks will engage people and allow him to come back with proposals that may be acceptable.

Godalming Transport Task Group has put aside £60,000 to undertake a review of parking problems. Simon Hall wants to do that and implement the recommendations in the 2007/8 financial year. With a team of only two people he

Busbridge Community Forum meeting 26 June 2007

will need outside help. He thought that a Forum-led review would be more trusted than one undertaken solely by Surrey CC. He will take this idea to members of Surrey County Council, Godalming Task Group and other elected representatives.

- *What about traffic calming? Is there any chance of getting schemes that make pedestrians and cyclists more important than motorists on our roads?*

In some parts of Surrey, traffic markings have been removed so as to make people think more carefully about risks – to take more responsibility, in fact. One example is the Quiet Lanes project at Westhumble near Dorking. All centre lines and signposts have been removed, hedges built up, and grass strips put in the middle of some roads. This has changed people's perception of the roads, encouraged more cyclists, and reduced risks from traffic.

Cobbles have been used in some more other schemes to slow traffic but, contrary to popular belief, one-way streets have the opposite effect, actually speeding it up.

Simon Hall wants to hear suggestions from the Forum for schemes that would suit our area.

- *A speaker reported that the Sustrans organisation [a charity which works on practical projects to help reduce motor traffic, including the national Cycle Network and Safe Routes to Schools] finds discussion of cycle path strategies with Surrey very difficult but believes that a more visionary approach would provide the answer to many local problems.*

Mr Hall supported this point of view having once been seconded to Sustrans for a year but points out that the organisation failed to find the balancing finance of £1.8 million needed for a Surrey national cycle path project.

- *Walking buses [schemes for accompanying crocodiles of children who walk to school] are a simple, cost effective safety measure. Why can't we have them?*

Simon Hall reported that there are "lots" of walking buses in Waverley. For example, St Edmund's has one. He is putting money into a Safe Routes to School project which will try to address some of the reasons why parents do not let their children walk to school.

- *The Forum's potholes volunteer, Tony Kirton, commented that he finds holes are repaired when reported and thanked Simon Hall for this.*

Simon Hall responded by urging residents to keep reporting potholes, preferably using Surrey

County Council's web site or, alternatively by phone to the hotline on 08456 009 009. [There are full contact details on the Forum's web site at www.busbridge.net]

The chairman thanked Mr Hall for his time, said he awaited further developments in cooperation between Surrey County Council and the Forum and moved to the next item.

Brief item: policing priorities

Priorities remain as youth disorder, and vehicle crime including speeding and anti-social parking.

The laser speed gun had been out of action for an unspecified period for recalibration but has now been returned. PC Harris has had five weeks sick leave but since then has issued five speeding tickets and four formal warnings.

Possible drug use in the Holloway Hill Ground has been reported. Small packets which appear to have contained cannabis have been found along with materials for rolling cigarettes. This, combined with allegations of observed cannabis use made by residents living close to the ground entrance, is taken as strong circumstantial evidence. The police have seized alcohol on a number of occasions.

The police attend the Holloway Hill Ground "as often as we can". They have to deal also with Broadwater Lake, Jubilee Fields, and the Bury's – particularly around the Philips Memorial. In those locations there are more reports of assaults than in the Ground and so they get priority. The police now use black fleece jackets or shirtsleeves on these trips to make themselves less conspicuous, though they do have to use marked police vehicles.

Local residents complained that they had reported one noisy incident in the Ground which went on until about six in the morning. They called 999 but were disappointed that there was no response. PC Harris agreed to find out why this was.

He commented that police find that youths will move from one location to another to find places where they can misbehave without police intervention.

3. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was not set at the time of this meeting but it has subsequently been arranged for 19 September 2007, 7 for 7.30 PM at the Holloway Hill Ground clubhouse. The main item will be a consultation with Waverley BC's new MD, Mary Orton.

END