West Itchenor Parish Council

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of West Itchenor Parish Council held on Tuesday 20 March 2018 in Itchenor Memorial Hall.

Present: Mr G Colbourne, Mr J Dunn, Mr C Mead-Briggs, Mrs S Taylor, Mrs A Trevelyan, Mr C Watson

In attendance: Mrs C Smith (Clerk), Mr P Montyn (WSCC), 17 members of public

In the absence of the Chairman of the Council the Vice Chairman, Cllr Dunn took the chair.

41/18C Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to highlight the proposals that had been put together by Systra on behalf of the Build a Better A27 group. Cllr Mead-Briggs would explain the proposals after which the meeting would be opened for discussion.

42/18C Presentation of the package of measures for the A27 from Systra.

Cllr Mead-Briggs explained that two Councillors from the Parish Council had attended the Build a Better A27 (BABA27) meetings since its inception in 2016. The steering group had been set up by WSCC to bring the community together after the devisive options presented by Highways England. From March 2017 to date the steering group had focused on two objectives. That was to provide options that most people would be comfortable with and the liaise with the local MP and Highways England Officers. The purpose of the group was to try and bring the local community together to deal with the A27 to find solutions that would be realistic, affordable and bring about effective results.

Towards the end of December 2017, Systra was selected from a short list of three highway consultants. They have been working at extreme speed towards a long list of suggestions. The MP, Gillian Keegan met with Dept for Transport and Highways England (HE) and was given a window of opportunity for a community lead bid for inclusion in the Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) funding.

Views from the community need to be communicated by 29 March 2018. If as a result there is a package of solutions that can be agreed upon then there is enough time for Chichester District Council (CDC) and WSCC to hold a public meeting to allow an application for inclusion in RIS 2. There are no guarantees that any proposals put forward will be accepted.

Systra have had very little time to put proposals together and has relied on the BABA27 group to review whether suggestions should be taken forward or not.

The proposals made by Systra were explained. There were three types of proposals. Online proposals that dealt with suggestions based around the existing A27, offline proposals that dealt with provisions of new roads or the upgrading of existing roads (but not the A27 itself) and modal proposals that dealt with things such as park and ride, active traffic management schemes and public transport.
For each of these options the proposal had been split into above the line and below the line proposals. The above the line proposals were those considered by Systra appropriate to take forward. The below the line proposals were considered inappropriate to take forward.

Cllr Mead-Briggs quickly ran through the tables that had been produced and highlighted the tick boxes which gave an indication of Systra's view on the impacks of each of the proposals. There were no costs for any of the options or any cost benefit analysis.
The idea is to reduce the number of options. Consideration is to be given as to whether any of the options should move above or below the line and to identify if there are any other options that are not mentioned.

43/18C Open forum.

Whilst the options were being explained residents were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

Q. We are being asked to judge the A27 options in relation to transport along it. We are not interested in this, but on the impact on residents. How do we feed this in?
A. Individuals can write in to WSCC directly or to use WSCC form either in paper format or via the link online.

C. There is nothing that covers a seasonal system. A narrow tunnel underneath the A27 could allow cars through but not HGV's which would help.

Q. Is the purpose of the meeting to ascertain views of residents to enable the Parish Council to put forward a view. When the Parish Council considered the HE options, it was the only Parish Council not to support the 'no' option.
A. The Parish Council felt that it would not be possible to put in a response based on a small number of residents views.

Q. if there is a northern route is it possible for it to go south of airfield?
A. Yes this is last of the offline options, it is possible. However, it would disrupt the local plan as this option cuts through the CDC's strategic housing area.

Q. Is the situation that there is no more money available for plans to be taken in five years time?
A. Mr Montyn replied that the details of available funding were now over three years old. Systra had advised that funding might be available from other sources and the project was not necessarily constrained by the HE budget. For RIS2 funding the A27 project third behind two M25 projects at this time. It is important the people need to to have a consensus of views across the area.

C. It is difficult for people to make up their minds when costs are not known in the knowledge that limited funds are available.

Residents were asked if they felt they were in a position to make choices?
C. The editing and bodging of the existing route is not going to work. The only feasible option is northern bypass.
C. If we are going to spend large amounts of money then the best way long term without years of upset for residents would be a northern route.

C. Two issues have not been addressed in the schedule of options. None of the options score the disruptive impact particularly for people south or A27. There is no mention of how existing A27 will improve the increases in traffic anyway.
A. Mr Montyn highlighted the disruption from the previous HE proposals; 41 months for option 2 and 24 months for a northern bypass.

Q. How much might be available from other sources.
A. This is not known. When the HE options were put for consultation they included costs for land compensation, the northern route did not include this aspect.

C. A resident spoke in favour of improvements to the existing road with proper grade separation as there had been too much damage to countryside already.
C. A residents had concerns about the disruption that building work will make.
A. HE can reduce speed limits and concertina traffic.
C. 41 months to construct a road that decreases journey time by 2.5 minutes seems extraordinary. We should look at going north, having the least amount of disruption. The recent northern bypass at Bognor had limited disruption.
C. It would be the right thing to go north. Anything done to the south would be a sticking plaster.
C. A residents was worried about the unreliability of the A27. When trying to run a business it makes this difficult. He was more concerned about flow than speed.
C. A northern route still leaves the issues on the A27, within 15 years traffic would still be an issue.

The Parish Council had some further debate about the vagueness of the proposals. Cllr Mead-Briggs felt having gone through options, these had been pulled together too quickly. A lot of the options have been rehashed from HE data and previous consultation. There was a need for costings to been included. It was known from meetings the MP had with DFT that were new roads would be on the edge of a national park, most decisions will be against such a proposal. To go back and revisit the northern options without costs, we could end up in same place as last year. It might be better to reach decisions that would improve what we have.

There was some concern about how to go forward. Councillors and residents were unhappy with what has been presented and there was not enough detail in the options to decide what is feasible. It was acknowledged that there was a variety of views at the meeting.

It was agreed that the Parish Council would not comment itself but it encouraged residents to do so.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed_____Date_____
Chairman

By resolution the Parish Council may decided to exclude the Press and Public from any part of the meeting [1]

1. Public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960