

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING No. 134

Held at 2pm on Monday 14th August 2017

At Weymouth Fire & Safety Centre, Radipole Lane, Weymouth

The Vice-Chairman opened the meeting with the sad news that our Treasurer for many years, Steve Rook, had died suddenly on Saturday 12th August.

A minutes silence was held by the meeting as a mark of respect

1. Welcome and Introduction

Marguerite Brown (Vice Chairman), David Harris (Secretary), Mike Kelly (President), Carolyn Harris, Sue Ward-Rice (WPBC), Sylvia O'Conner, Pauline Haime, Graham & June Ryan, David Dowle, Cllr Paul Kimber (WPBC), Gill Penwell, Sheila Dyer, Cllr Katharine Garcia (DCC), Christine Pearce, Bob Irwin (Investigations Officer), Ian White (Investigations Officer), Christine James

2. Apologies

Carole Chinn(Chairman), Jean Spain

3. Minutes of Previous meeting

Proposed for acceptance and approved by show of hands.

4. President's Report

Town Centre Pedestrianisation

I hope that measures being taken by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council will improve traffic control in the pedestrianised parts of Weymouth Town Centre better than has been the case since the move to "self - regulated" controls.

Weymouth Town Council

A consultation is underway to ask opinions about the setting up of a Town Council for Weymouth when Unitary local government is brought in for Dorset.

Highway Problems

Inconsiderate driving and parking is causing danger to highway users. This includes parking on footpaths and across dropped crossings, and careless driving to park on shop forecourts etc. Many drivers show insufficient care for pedestrians or cyclists when turning left or right. Some cyclists on shared paths ride at excessive speeds. Some users of mobility scooters also cause concerns. These are national issues but I have been in contact with Councillor Christine James to consider whether more might be done locally about these hazards.

Air Pollution

I responded, on behalf of the Access Group to the Government consultation paper on air quality and pollution but it appears that the subject is being largely left to local authorities. It will be interesting to hear how the County and Borough Councils propose to address these concerns Borough Council.

Lloyds Bank, Easton

Lloyds Bank Portland Branch has now closed. I have written to McColls who run Easton Post Office to say this adds to the need to make their premises easily accessible (currently it has an entrance step).

Accessible routes for wheelchair users

I have asked Tara Williams, W&PBC Parks Office, if the route across Bingleaves Green could be improved. The budget for such works is limited but the request will be considered. Some people at Nothe Parade by the Harbourside are uncertain whether they can access the Gardens and Fort without climbing steps. There is a ramped route, though it is of necessity quite steep. Signage of this route would be helpful.

5. Obstructions caused by parked cars.

Some of this was already covered in the above Presidents report above.

During the discussion observations were made about the recent installation of temporary Gents public toilets near the Tea Cabin on the Esplanade - handrails were not initially provided for the three steps up to the entrance. These were felt to be essential to meet the needs of our holiday visitors and residents.

Concerns were expressed that although several representations had been made there was not clear evidence that teams working on behalf of the council were applying the same standards as had been thrashed out with regards to the installation of public toilets at the Pavilion. Cllr Paul Kimber that it might be of benefit to hold some form of "Disability Awareness Campaign" for a period of time to bring these issues into focus for a range of participants.

6. Obstructions caused by sitting out areas.

A lot of concern was expressed during the meeting about the unsatisfactory situation with regard to the sitting out areas from Bond Street past the back of Marks & Spencer and down to the Kings statue.

A more detailed report has been submitted by Investigations officer, Ian White which covers this and other topics. For completeness and because some of his other topics were not covered in the meeting, his full report is included at item 11 below.

7. Chairman's Report.

A walkabout meeting was held in June with Simon King, the Senior Economic Regeneration Officer, and Jane Nicklen, the Community Planning and Development Manager of Dorset Councils' Partnership. Marguerite, Sheila, Sylvia and I looked at where the possible street closures would be for pedestrianisation of St Mary and St Thomas Streets.

However since then there has been one change in St Mary Street where the bollards are now at the end of the cobbles due to safety at the Kings' Statue area. St Mary Street is now pedestrianised between 10:30 and 17:30 and St Thomas Street week commencing 14th August, subject to delivery and installation of the gate. The current set-up will be reviewed again next year and we will be contacted again then.

I was invited to visit Millbrook's new mobile vehicle; Millbrook provide equipment or aids for daily living which enable individuals to live independent lives. Some minor adaptations to the home, such as handrails and ramps can make a significant difference in giving people the confidence to live independently. There are a few leaflets for your information.

8. Treasurer`s Report.

With the recent news of Steve's death, it is too early for any action at this meeting. Members are, however, asked to consider if they know of anyone who might in future take up this role for us.

9. Access Officers Report.

The town centre traffic reorganisation for Saint Thomas Street starts today. New bollards are being introduced to the St Mary Street/Bond Street junction to improve control.

Local government reorganisation - a government decision was awaited about where to put it into effect.

Dorchester Access Group - The new group had now done surveys of the Town Centre and Poundbury areas. Some DCC issues had been resolved. A letter had been sent to WDDC asking to be involved.

A discussion about Taxis and Disabilities commenced - for simplicity this has been dealt with in the AOB section of these minutes.

10. Highway Officers Report.

Not available.

11. Investigations Officers Report.

I was asked by Cllr David Harris if I would have a look at Ullswater Crescent and Icen Road. I did find that there was some areas where trees are part of the path this does make it some times difficult to pass in a wheelchair or mobility scooters but it is passable as there are many drop kerbs near by.

Carole Chinn informed me about a sitting out area behind Marks & Spencer I did look into this and I have to agree that there was very little room to get into the correct position to cross the road where you are able to look to the right to insure that it was clear to cross. I also find the pavement was very small near the corner for wheelchair and a pram to pass without one going onto the road.

I had a conversation with Cllr David Harris about the Park & Ride bus service, it was agreed I would write to Simon Newport of First Bus in connection with the Park & Ride bus service, I am sure many of you are very much aware that it more likes Park & Walk. This year I have had conversations with visitors one informing me of their issues with using the Park & Ride Car Park the husband informed me that his wife found very hard walking to the bus stop, she was unable to get back to the car, her husband went to get the car and then drove to the bus stop where she was waiting. I will contact the group as soon as I hear from Simon Newport of First Bus Group.

I am also pleased that I have spoken with Vodafone phone in connection with the not working lift. I am pleased to inform the group that the lift will be removed in the next upgrade to the shop; there will a ramp to take place of the lift. I did offer Vodafone that Weymouth & Portland Access Group would be very willing to help to insure that the ramp fitted will be safe for all users.

I am also disappointed that even though the group has made many issues about A boards also the sitting out areas. On many visits into the town there have been several areas where it is very difficult to get around the town due to the placements of A boards also other traders. I would like to know if there is any person insuring the areas are safe for all who visit Weymouth.

I have also been checking the toilets at the Pavilion which I pleased to state that access to all the toilets has been acceptable.

I have been spoken to by residents and visitors who are in wheelchairs or pushing the wheelchair have found some of the drop kerbs not very easy as they are like a step which some people have nearly fallen out of there wheelchair.

I have also written to Mr Martin Underhill The Officer of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Dorset asking him why do we need a 50MPH speed limit with in the Borough of Weymouth as I reminded him of the number of deaths with in these areas as people try and cross at places, I also informed that there are no signs informing drivers about pedestrian crossing, they are people who do not walk very quick also I think some people do not realise the speed of some of the vehicles.

I will contact the groups if he replies to my letter.

12. Any Other Business

Taxis and Disabled persons. David Dowle explained that at times in the day it was not possible to get a wheelchair accessible taxi. He understood that taxi companies used their 6 seater vehicles (which were also the Wheelchair Capable ones) for the school contract work and thus had no vehicles available during the afternoons - times when he needed to travel.

It was noted that there was still no handrail fitted to the public path/ steps south of Greenhill Gardens.

Christine Pearce stated that buildings on Chapelhay had now been scaffolded - this was causing her difficulty in getting around safely. This issue should be referred to Synergy Housing.

Meeting closed at 16.05

Next Meetings (All start at 2pm)	
at The Fire & Safety Centre:	
Monday 14 August 2017	Monday 11th June 2018
Monday 9 October 2017	Monday 13th August, 2018
Monday 11 December 2017	Monday 8th October 2018
Monday 12 February 2018	Monday 10th December 2018
Monday 9th April 2018	Monday 11th February 2019

Help Line Phone numbers: DCC highway emergencies: 01305 221020
WPBC Help Desk: 01305 838000