

COTON IN THE ELM PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15th NOVEMBER 2021 at 6PM
Held in Coton in the Elms Community Centre

Present:

Councillors: Cllr K Bradford (Chairman), Cllr A Martin (Vice Chairman), Cllr M Leech, Cllr M Kinson, Cllr J Heaven, Cllr A Leese, Cllr S Swann. Clerk: Susan Hughes

Before the meeting commenced, Chairman Cllr Karen Bradford announced the sad passing of the former Clerk Peter Davies. Peter worked as the Clerk for 30 years and helped the Council and the community enormously, especially with the Community Centre building. A minute silence was observed and a donation to Cancer Research UK was agreed to be paid in Peter's memory.

1. Apologies – Cllr A Wheelton. Cllr C Bradford

2. Report from Cllr Stuart Swann

HGVs:

On 13th October, I met with Cllr Margaret Leech, along with a resident of Chapel Street, and Richard Handbury (DCC's Traffic & Safety Team's Project Engineer) in the village to discuss a number of Highway matters, predominantly the issue of HGVs travelling through weight restricted routes for reasons other than access.

The discussions were constructive, and Mr Handbury is currently considering improved signage on approaches to the village as a way of helping to alleviate the problem.

His initial report is copied below for the information of the Parish Council:

Essentially the entire village of Coton-in-the-Elms sits within the area wide 7.5t Environmental Weight Limit. It sits within the area encompassed by the boundary with Staffordshire and Leicestershire and has the A444 to the east of the weight limit which is an exempt road. The situation around Linton is fairly complex as to why it has exemptions in this vicinity. From the Coton-in-the-Elms perspective it is very clear, access to this village should only be legitimate deliveries to premises within the weight limited area.

The offences of HGV traffic cutting through from the A38 / A513, I can see that they have the potential to appear at Coton village as a consequence of this, however to reach the A444 they are committing an offence as its not permitted.

We can take a look at a scheme for some signing improvements like the one we have recently done for Netherseal, but I would add that it might be somewhat different to the one at Netherseal because it had scope for the signs the Parish members referred to at being at the junction with the A444 (which is an exempt road) this is not applicable within Coton-in-the-Elms in reasonable distance from the exempt roads. However, I will take a look in more detail at some point and come back to you.

As of this morning, Mr Handbury states that he is continuing to work on the details of what is a complex issue and he will provide an update as soon as he can.

Having met with members of the Safer Neighbourhood Team in Overseal and discussed the issue of HGVs contravening a local weight limit with positive action forthcoming, I have requested a similar meeting in Coton in the Elms.

Copied below, for information, is the position outlined by Trading Standards when I contacted them in respect of the issue of HGVs on behalf of Cllr Leech:

We are likely to receive over 640 reports from residents regarding alleged weight restriction infringements in 2021/22, at around 15 main restricted highways in the County.

This is out of a total of 12000+ reports to us of potential criminal and civil law breaches across Trading Standards law within Derbyshire. From these reports we are likely to achieve at least 40 prosecutions this year. It remains the case that other actions including significant numbers of cautions and warnings are also undertaken. This figure is achieved by a single officer plus existing admin and management support. Weight restriction enforcement is not statutory duty for Trading Standards, and in contrast to police forces we have no powers under the relevant road traffic legislation, unlike 250+ other TS related laws that we are specifically charged with enforcing. We are one of only a handful of authorities where TS carries out this work. It is also in the context of our service losing 35% of its staff in the last three years. As a result we have no option but to triage and prioritise our investigative work, across all restrictions in Derbyshire, taking into account 'aggravating factors'. One of these factors is the extent to which the limits are exceeded, although I would clarify that 30 tonnes is not a definitive rule that we follow on all occasions. If we were investigate every potential breach, whatever the weight of the vehicle, we would need to devote several officers (and a specific manager) to this work, and hence fail to meet our mandatory duties in many other areas of enforcement, which could result in scrutiny and challenge by central government departments. All reports we receive from residents are logged as intelligence on our database, to which we can refer to determine previous conduct and are important to assist us in prioritising future actions. We are also at a point where police support in using their own statutory powers has ceased, which makes it difficult for us to apply our prosecution policies consistently.

In an ideal world we would not have to apply such prioritisation but I would consider that in the current circumstances the service does the very best job it can in difficult circumstances. It may be a question for the police as to the likely level of enforcement that would occur without Trading Standards intervention. Clearly, a multifaceted approach to this issue is necessary, so I wrote to the parent company of Downton, one of whose HGVs had been photographed travelling through Chapel Street by a resident on 13 th October, asking for an explanation. Initially I was told it was an agency driver with the company giving the impression this meant it was not their responsibility but on pressing the matter I was informed that the driver had taken the correct route into Keg Watch at Drakelow but had then taken the wrong route to leave the delivery point. I have asked the company to remind all its drivers, whether they are directly employed or agency workers, of the importance of taking the correct routes and avoiding villages such as Coton.

Wildfowl Signs:

Following discussions with Cllr Leech on 13 th October, Mr Handbury has confirmed that works have been 'issued' as follows:

The replacement of the Wildfowl Sign (opposite No.15 Mill Street) as the existing one is barely visible. To relocate the Wildfowl Sign (Burton Road) from opposite the Black Horse Public House to Street Lighting Column No. 21272 (opposite No.29 Chapel House).

Flood Liaison Meeting Queries:

I am still awaiting a response from Richard Ward of the Flood Team to the queries raised following the SDDC Flood Liaison Meeting on 2 nd November.

As ever, I will forward this information to the Parish Council as soon as I receive it.

Walton Bypass and Bridge:

The bypass and bridge are developer-led major projects integral to the planning permissions granted by South Derbyshire District Council in respect of the huge housing developments at Drakelow, which will transform what was once a hamlet into the largest settlement in the District outside Swadlincote. A lot has been 'reported' on social media about the progress of the projects, but as of the last update I received the County Council is still awaiting some key information from the developers.

I have kept Walton on Trent Parish Council updated with detailed reports, but these developments will have significant impacts on communities throughout the Linton Division, hence the inclusion of the issue in this report. Given the sheer size of these developments it would have been beneficial for a form of public liaison to be part of the conditions of the permissions granted.

3. A member of the public attended the meeting and asked about HGV restrictions signs for the village. This was been covered in Cllr Swanns report and a meeting with the Safer Neighbourhood Scheme is being requested. There will be an update on this in due course.

4. Minutes of previous meeting, October 11th 2021. These were circulated prior to the meeting, taken as read and will be signed as a true copy. A copy will also be shared on the website.

5. Finance -

Balance sheet at 22.10.2021 £21,231.84

a. £301.17 Clerks expense

b. Clerks home working allowance to be shared with Clifton Campville PC

c. 10 hours Clerks overtime

d. Mark Horton, October 2021 village maintenance £248.81

e. Mick Leech – Pessall Brook works £480.00

f. £50 donation to Cancer Research UK

All payments and balance sheet approved

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6. S136 claim form requests to be considered and bought to December meeting

7. Revised quote from M Signs for repairs to village signs £1698.96, approved.
The National Forest are to pay for half of this cost.

8. VIB – 28.11.2021 Christmas Tree and 5.12.2021 for the village light up. The PC also asked for the date of the lights removal to be confirmed.

9. Planning

Applications DMPN/2021/1614 & DMPA/2021/1705 55 Church St – No objection

Application DMPA/2021/1010 Overfields Farm – Extension on comments to SDDC requested for further investigation.

Chairman concluded the meeting at 18.32pm

Next meeting is 13th December 2021 @ 6pm