

# HALBERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of members of Parish Councillors from the parishes of Halberton, Sampford Peverell, Uffculme and Willand to discuss joint traffic issues on Thursday, 15 February 2024 at Willand Health and Community Centre

Councillor Ian Batchelor, Chair, Halberton Parish Council, took the chair and thanked everyone for attending the meeting which was, in the first instance, to discuss a joint initiative to call for a reduction in the speed limit on the Uffculme Straight.

He hoped that the Joint Traffic Working Group could be reinstated with the cooperation of all Parish Councils to ensure a united front on traffic issues within the four parishes.

## 1. Introductions

Present at the meeting were:

Councillor Ian Batchelor – Chair, Halberton Parish Council  
Councillor Patricia Blackman – Chair, Uffculme Parish Council  
Councillor Tim Burt – Chair, Sampford Peverell Parish Council  
Councillor Rob Furmedge – Vice-Chair, Halberton Parish Council  
Councillor Keith Grantham – Willand Parish Council  
Councillor Sue Leach – Willand Parish Council  
Councillor Tim Pointing – Uffculme Parish Council  
Councillor Jason Scott – Willand Parish Council  
Susan McGeever – as Clerk for Halberton Parish Council

## 2. Recent accident

The recent accident on the Uffculme Straight had focussed minds on the need to make the road safer for cyclists and pedestrian. Immediately following the accident, Councillor Batchelor had written, through the Clerk, to Devon County Council officers including Meg Booth calling for a reduction in the speed limit. Willand Parish Council had, after its meeting, formally backed Halberton's call for a reduced speed limit.

MDDC Councillors Gwen DuChesne MBE, Andrea Glover and John Poynton together with DCC Councillor Colin Slade had been present at the Halberton Parish Council meeting of 13 February 2024. Concerns regarding the Uffculme Straight, its speed limit and status as a 'walk to school' route were expressed.

Councillor Batchelor advised that Halberton's Traffic Committee had been in decline following the initial petition which had not had any affect on reducing speed limits within the parish.

Halberton Parish Council was currently working on:

- Setting up Community Speedwatch
- Monitoring operational VAS units in the village
- Installing flashing lights for the school in Lower Town
- Writing a bid for a 20mph limit in Lower Town
- Researching Parish Council funded 20mph limits as announced by DCC
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Councillor Pointing advised that Uffculme had been successful in their 2023/24 bid for a 20mph speed limit through Uffculme from Russet Close (Bridwell entrance) to the bridge and all roads coming off the through road.

It was noted that it had taken some time to secure the extended 30mph zone at Luckham Park which had been part of the planning application.

Councillor Grantham advised that an extension to the 30mph zone in Willand past the new housing estate to the garage had been requested but this had refused. He believed in part because the route was used when the M5 was closed between Tiverton and Cullompton and weight restrictions became void for diverted traffic. The B3181 from Waterloo Cross to Willand had been reduced from 60mph to 50mph following the death of two people and had taken 15 years.

The stretch from Willand to Cullompton was 40mph again following accidents on the route and despite the 40mph limit, fatalities had taken place.

Councillor Burt advised that whilst an extension to the 30mph zone to the new estate at Higher Town in Sampford Peverell had originally been agreed as part of the planning application, the road had remained at 40mph with a potential increase of 120 cars.

The Clerk advised that the Blackdown Hills Parish Network had recently circulated a questionnaire on speeding to member parishes advised that they were looking into Surrey County Councils initiative to reduce rural roads to 20/30 and 40mph.

Councillor Burt advised that he was in touch with a Field Centre in Dorking and would see if he could obtain any information.

It was noted that both the road from Waterloo Cross to Willand and the Uffculme Straight from Willand to Uffculme served business parks.

Councillor Scott advised that he put together the statistics for Willand's VAS units and Councillor Furmedge would contact him with regard to Halberton's VAS unit data.

The Clerk advised that Hitchcocks were implementing a condition in the last planning Decision Notice to provide better walking connections to/from Uffculme and Willand. Paths would be opened to join up with the existing path at Luckham Park through the estate to Hitchcocks Lane, Bridwell Lane and the B3181.

Councillor Grantham advised that Willand had hoped that Hitchcocks would provide a path alongside the B3181 from the business park to Willand.

Councillor Burt considered that all parishes should benefit from a common denominator and advised that Sampford Peverell had applied for a 20mph limit through Lower Town. Whilst the extension of the 30mph limit to the Tiverton Parkway turning had been welcomed, speeding was a frequent problem.

All were in agreement that a reduction in speed limits, pavement and/or improved cycle routes and pedestrian routes would be beneficial to all parishes and a united front to Devon County Council may assist in achieving this aim.

The Clerk advised that DCC's Speed Compliance Action Review Forum (Scarf) had assessed Halberton Parish Council's request for lower speed limits and concluded that the average speed recorded on the roads in the parish did not warrant any reduction. Whatever the speed limit drivers were expected to drive at a speed that allowed them to safely navigate the road. For example, the road

from Halberton to Willand which was considered a 'safe to walk route for school children' had a speed limit of 60mph but the average speed of vehicles had been 55mph.

The majority of rural villages were on 'safe to walk routes' which did not have to have pavements, street lighting or 30mph speed limits. It was noted that Devon had over 8000 miles of rural lanes.

It was noted that all four parishes would be in the new Tiverton and Minehead constituency.

### **3. Petition for reduction in speed limit**

See action points below

### **4. Areas of highways to concentrate on improving safety across all parishes**

See action points below

### **5. DCC contact**

Halberton Parish Council were being supported by Councillor Slade to achieve their objectives of safer roads but ultimately such decisions remained in the hands of Devon County Council Officers.

### **6. Press/Publicity to raise awareness**

The use of social media to raise awareness of the traffic issues within the parishes was important and each Parish Council had their own websites and access to Facebook.

### **7. Wider participation of other Town Councils and Parishes**

Bring forward to next meeting.

Actions:

1. Those present to take the proposal of a joint working group to their individual parishes and gain approval and appoint representatives. Given that Halberton were taking the lead and that their Clerk was undertaking the work, Councillor Batchelor asked if there was any support available.

2. Seek approval for a joint petition to reduce the speed limit on the Uffculme Straight. Expectations needed to be reasonable and a reduction to either 50mph or 40mph would be welcomed. It was noted that speeding occurred as traffic went into and out of the 30mph limits at Willand and Uffculme. A template for petitions would be designed that met the relevant Devon County Council criteria. Petitions would either be presented to HATOC or to the full Cabinet and, in this regard, both Councillors Slade and Radford could be approached.

It was noted that there would be individuals that were both for and against a reduction in the speed limit and that the more signatures on a petition, the greater the chance of success as reductions in speed limits went to public consultation.

3. Map the speed on roads within the four parishes.

4. Design a template for submitting requests to Devon County Council that would ensure that all relevant information was included. In this respect, some research would be required to fully understand what factors HATOC - Devon has eight Highway and Traffic Orders Committees (HATOC -- and SCARF take into consideration. It was noted 'crash maps' were available as the police had to record an accident if they were called to attend.

5. Research all relevant information relating to national speed limits and variations applied by County Councils.

6. Share information on 20mph applications, VAS units, Community Speedwatch etc

Given that the individual Parish Councils would be meeting at the end of February and the first two weeks of March, a date of Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 was set for the next meeting subject to approval of the Parish Councils.