

1. **Attendees:** Nikola Floodgate (KCC Officer– Chair); Jamie Watson (KCC Officer), Ruth Goudie (Canterbury CC Officer);
6 Community representatives of:
David Cain (local businessman)
Sallyann Baxter lead petitioner 'reconsider the Plaza' petition
Sheila Appleton; president of the Boccia (disability sports) group in Herne Bay
Andrew Patterson-Watson (young family rep)
Martin Head (cycling rep)
Local resident with events & tourism expertise (chosen to remain anonymous)
Elected members: Dan Watkins KCC Conservative Member; Cllr Tom Mellish and Cllr Chris Cornell (Labour CCC councillors)
2. **Apologies:** None
3. **Overview of the working group based on Terms of Reference that has previously been circulated.**
 - NF started the meeting giving an overview of the project and a high-level briefing of the procedures that took place for KCC to receive this concept idea from CCC and then how the project progressed to construction. This included the consultation process. It was accepted that there were elements of the consultation that could have been improved. There was a consensus from the working group that the consultation didn't clearly identify that Central Parade was to be closed off. Some feedback given about the lack of clarity around what was being consulted upon since residents would not have necessarily gone online to look at full plans.
 - General discussions on the consultation process that took place. KCC followed their public consultation guidance and the whole process was overseen by corporate governance, but all accepted lessons could be learned to improve this in the future.
 - 6500 leaflets were sent out which amounted to around 20,000 residents and businesses.
 - In addition to the formal consultation, DW undertook his own publicity of the scheme which included a plan of the closure and letter drops.
 - There was general agreement from the community representatives that locals were not fully aware, and this was accepted.
 - Discussed what the aims and objectives of the scheme were. The funding was provided with the aim of promoting "Active Travel" although this term wasn't understood generally. The space created, free of vehicular traffic was aimed at providing a safe space for walking, wheeling and cycling with an added advantage to use the space for events. The Working Group challenged the benefit of this over the disbenefits of putting in the closure.
4. **Specific issues:**

Large scale drawings of the scheme were tabled, and all attendees were encouraged to feedback specific concerns that they had and had received from other residents.

Closure of Central Parade:

 - This was the main area of concern with a consensus that closing of this route all year long was not required but could be closed for special events which the Town has been used to for years for various activities.

- The knock-on effect of the closure could be increased traffic on the side roads and on the High Street which at peak times is very congested and has been for many years; often due to illegal or inconsiderate parking. Data needed to be collected to understand whether growth generally in Herne Bay was adding to the congestion or the closure was contributing. It may be a combination.
- It was agreed that options would be investigated to see what was feasible and the timescale involved in lifting the closure on Central Parade to allow one or two way traffic to flow here. The issue of conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and cars was discussed and there was an agreement that under any option safety needed to be considered. There was a discussion about how to keep the space as open as possible and then once open how to prevent parking within the space surfaced with a buff colour or 2 return the parking to it's original layout which included coach and car parking.

One-way streets:

- It was generally agreed that the one way streets had some issues with signing and the co-ordination of the work could have been better with confusing signing and road markings. The vandalism of the signs was not condoned.
- It was agreed that along with the closure of central parade options, the one way streets would also be investigated but it was initially believed that the one-way streets could remain and stand alone as it did help with the movement of walking and wheeling (e.g. making it easier for disabled residents to identify if it is safe to cross the road). Changes such as this can take quite a while to settle in and quick reactions to amending them could cause further confusion.

Coaches/Long vehicles not able to negotiate side roads:

- This was highlighted as a significant issue and needed resolving quickly. Although the designs may identify that coaches and long vehicles can negotiate them, in practice coaches have struggled and other long vehicles have been witnessed grinding out on the road surface due to the steepness. Also parking cars (not always within the designated parking area) and loading/unloading had caused issues for coaches. This could be an enforcement issue however practically this was happening regularly.
- If the closure was reopened, could coach and car parking be reintroduced in this area. This is to be investigated.
- Foreign coaches were unloading passengers onto the live highway. This needed further investigation.

Parking:

- The one-way roads would allow for additional parking near the seafront e.g. on Station Road and additional disabled parking could be investigated along Central Parade.
- The loss of parking in front of businesses on Central Parade in favour of a cycle lane was discussed and generally accepted.

Cycle lanes either side of the closure:

- The cycle lanes either side needed to be looked at to see if there were improvements to be had or that they were possible if 2 way was introduced.

Access issues:

- There was general agreement that access for less mobile residents and visitors and those in mobility scooters/wheelchairs could be improved as dropped kerbs were not provided everywhere and some still caused issues as they were too steep or the kerb too high.
- The representative for those with mobility issues said that there were some benefits of one way roads, because users did not have to look in so many directions when trying to cross the roads safely. Other members of the working group listened to this perspective as it was not one they have considered as they are otherwise able-bodied.

20mph Zone:

- The working Group generally agreed that the 20mph speed limit extension was sensible although the co-ordination of the installation and communication of it taking place could have been better.

Railway Station to Central Parade walking and cycling improvements:

- The working group agreed that these improvements were satisfactory but highlighted that along Station Road but that there were issues with parking until the double yellow lines were introduced. This feedback was taken on board.

General:

- The group asked if Speed Indicator devices help with reducing speeds if the closure was removed.

Next Steps:

- KCC officers to investigate options to revert the closure to one or two way traffic and the implications on the one-way part of the scheme and potential parking implications. A timeline for outputs is being prepared.
- Options presented to a second meeting of the working group ideally at the beginning of April.
- Recommendations will then be given to KCC Cabinet Member for a decision ideally mid April.