

Agenda item 188

PROPOSED KING STREET (SOUTHWELL) CLOSURE.

1.King Street was closed for a period of some 6 hours on Saturday mornings/early afternoons during the period of the pandemic. This arrangement was primarily in the interests of pedestrian safety.

2.The manual barrier was patrolled by STC councillors.

3.In general, the scheme worked well and was applauded by members of the public. While there were some objections, subsequently there was very appreciable public support to retain the arrangement and make it permanent.

4.Early deliberations explored the concept of a 'shared street' scheme. Views on this were varied but, in particular, it was felt it might be prohibitive in terms of cost

5.Consequently, STC has worked with VIA to explore such a permanent 'Saturday closure' scheme. consultations have taken place over a period of some two years, dating back to the former council.

6.STC was asked to provide evidence of support for the scheme. Such was collated from an article and questionnaire placed in the Bramley where responses from residents within Southwell and environs indicted strong support (in excess of 80%). There were some objections. Some responses took a view that STC was not being sufficiently ambitious and that a wider scheme (in time and space) ought to be contemplated.

7.STC was asked to also provide evidence from traders. The questionnaire elicited a modest response and was followed up by personal visits to businesses. All traders had an opportunity to respond. Of the formal responses over 80% were favourable. Even where traders had reservations, it was frequently the case that they identified merit to the scheme.

8.STC was asked to submit details of characteristics for the scheme and its mode of operation. Such were submitted acknowledging that professional input would be welcomed. For example, while it was felt by STC that making exceptions for entry 'might open the flood gates', it was pointed out by VIA that accommodating King Street residents might be a prudent measure.

From the outset STC felt there was merit in adopting a remote operation of a physical bollard as in Newark. This proposition made little headway it being argued by VIA that the remote operation in Newark was very unreliable. However, it was made clear that the employment of STC councillors on a permanent basis was not an option and that STC employee operation would inflict costs which would not be welcomed.

9.However, logistics apart and accepting that there would be legal/formal hoops to jump through, the scheme seemed to have gained momentum.

10. At the STC/VIA/NCC Meeting on 20/02/24, Jamie Earls (County Highways Manager Notts CC) announced that he had studied the proposals for a Saturday closure and concluded the scheme was inappropriate. He explained that NCC take a view that a scheme which is based on full, permanent closure is preferred. This would allow access for King Street residents and accommodate loading/unloading for traders. He sees such as being an 'inclusive scheme' and the area becoming essentially 'a permanent pedestrian zone'. It was acknowledged that such would require significant funding, involve research on traffic surveys and an examination of network implications and widespread community support.

11. A member of the professional team present predicted appreciable opposition to such a scheme, based on her experience

12. Cllr Jackson felt that such a scheme could only be pursued with evidence of community support in the town and the wider environs. He mentioned that there is a possibility of accessing 'levelling up' funding.

13. It was agreed to present a proposition to full council on 20/03/24, though JEM/MB pointed out that considerable time and energy had already been expended on this matter to no apparent avail.

Hence the proposition to full council is that the 'inclusive scheme' proposed by NCC is supported in principle. However, it is suggested that prior to further effort being expended by STC on such, NCC offer a written, perhaps conditional commitment to deliver the scheme, give outline details of proposed characteristics, indicate the preparatory work they would be prepared to undertake and what might be expected of STC (eg consultation with the local community)

Moreover, if such a scheme is to be explored and time/effort spent on such, there has to be a realistic possibility of realising funding. Cllr Jackson may wish to comment further on this.

JEM/MB 12/03/24