

Extract from Minutes – Overview & Scrutiny Committee 22 June 2010

6. Kidlington Pedestrianisation Capital Bid

The Chairman welcomed Parish Councillor Betts, Chairman Kidlington Parish Council and Parish Councillor Pack, Chairman of the Kidlington Village Centre Management Board, the local district ward members, Councillor Williamson and Councillor Emptage and the county council ward member, Councillor Gibbard, to the meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Kidlington Pedestrianisation capital bid (value £25,000) had been referred to scrutiny for further consideration by Council in February 2010. The bid had been rejected as part of the 2010/11 budget process as it failed to reach the minimum score threshold for approval. However, the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Communication indicated that a supplementary estimate could be made if the scrutiny review considered that the project was justified. The Committee was advised that the expansion of pedestrianisation in the village is an aspiration of the Kidlington Village Centre Management Board and that it was also a Cherwell District Council service plan objective to deliver such a scheme.

The Chairman invited Councillors Betts and Pack to explain the background to the capital bid. They made the following arguments:

- The problem with traffic control in the High Street at Kidlington was a long standing and significant concern to the residents and shoppers and was identified as a key issue in the 2008 village health check.
- A project team had been established in 2009 to address the problem. This included member and officer representatives from the Parish, District and County Councils and from Thames Valley Police.
- Technically the High Street in Kidlington was already a pedestrian area with delivery/residential access but lack of traffic enforcement and the physical appearance of the street (paved and removal of curbs) had resulted in long term and widespread abuse of the traffic regulations. A recent survey revealed some 106 traffic movements in the High Street in a single one hour period. Recently there had been a near fatal accident in the area and there were significant safety concerns, particularly for the elderly and young families wanting to shop.
- These problems represented a threat to the commercial vitality of the village centre and lessened the benefits that could be derived from previous investment in the new shopping centre.

- The project was intended to enhance the pedestrianisation of the village centre for a core period (10 am – 4.30 pm) during the day;
- In the first instance pedestrianisation would be achieved through the use of traffic orders and improved signage.

The Chairman then asked the County Councillor for Kidlington and Yarnton and the District Council ward members if they wished to comment. They endorsed all of the points made by the representatives from the Parish Council and the Village Centre Management Board and stressed the importance of this project in addressing the perceived disparity between Kidlington and the other urban centres in the district. They commended the pedestrianisation scheme to the Committee on the basis that it would bring Kidlington in to line with the other urban centres of the district.

The Head of Finance informed the Committee that this capital bid had been excluded purely on the basis that it did not meet the minimum score threshold. She explained that approval of the scheme would result in a loss in interest income of £250 per year.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Urban Centres Development Officer explained that the £25,000 capital bid was to fund the public consultation and legal services on the preparation of the traffic order and that this was what was meant by the reference to contractors in the capital bid paperwork.

Members of the Committee cited the success of the bollard schemes in Parsons Street, Banbury and Sheep Street, Bicester and asked why a similar approach was not being advocated in Kidlington. The Urban Centres Development Officer explained that the wording of the existing traffic regulation order would not permit the installation of a bollard. A new and more tightly defined traffic regulation order was required before it would be possible to consider installing a bollard scheme. She confirmed that the installation of a bollard scheme would be one of the options presented in the public consultation. The Committee noted that the costs of a bollard scheme were of order £30,000 plus on-going maintenance. These arguments notwithstanding the Committee urged the representatives from the Kidlington High Street Pedestrianisation Board to pursue the possibility of installing a bollard as a priority as they considered that this was the only realistic method of controlling the traffic in the High Street.

Resolved

That the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Communication be recommended to make available a supplementary estimate for the Kidlington Pedestrianisation capital bid (value £25,000) in order to bring the village in to line with the other urban centres of the district.