**Lytchett Matravers Parish Council**

**Notes of a Meeting with Dorset Council Highways**

# Introduction

Councillors Rob Carswell and Ralph Watts met with Stephen Mepham of the Dorset Council’s Highways team on 13th May 2019 in the Lytchett Matravers Library. This meeting followed on from a meeting between members of the Parish Council and members of the Dorset County Council’s Highways team in the Library on 20th March (arranged by Peter Wharf). The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the Dorset Council’s Highways team’s involvement in the Lytchett Matravers Parish Council’s project to improve the Village Centre.

# Notes of the Meeting

The main reason for the meeting was to follow up on our meeting with DCC on 20th March, get some feedback from a recent meeting Stephen Mepham had had with Nigel Hughes (Tesco Store Manager), and discuss next steps. The following provides a summary of key points from the discussion.

Matthew Piles has been appointed as Head of the Place Directorate in the Dorset Council. This Directorate covers a number of areas, including Highways and Planning. Stephen said he expected the restructuring within the Dorset Council might take a number of months to complete, gradually working its way down from the changes made at the top.

Helen Jackson (whose title was Transport Policy Manager, Infrastructure when we met in March)reports to Wayne Sayers. Stephen said that Helen is responsible for new projects, including Transport Plans, Feasibility studies, etc.

Stephen is in the Community Highways team, and does not report to Helen. This team looks after the Highways which already exist (which includes pavements as well as the road surface). They carry out inspections, arrange for routine maintenance, are responsible for issuing licences for scaffolding and for skips to be parked on the road, are involved in considering dropped kerb requests (which the user has to pay for), etc.

Matthew Piles has asked Stephen to take the lead on our interactions with Tesco about the road and car park layout in front of the store.

When Stephen met with Nigel Hughes, Nigel told him that Tesco has an issue with their arrangement for vehicle unloading, in particular there are safety issues associated with operation of the tail lift in an area where there is public access. Nigel talked to Stephen about installing a dropped kerb near the entrance to the Tesco store, which would simplify the unloading arrangements. Nigel commented to Stephen that in reality Tesco Head Office is not likely to offer a financial contribution towards the modifications that the Parish Council are suggesting.

We discussed gathering some photographic evidence of Tesco lorries driving across the island, so that the Dorset Council can take a more formal approach with Tesco. Stephen said that such photos would certainly help.

Stephen said that as part of negotiating a financial contribution, the Dorset Council could say to Tesco that if they were not willing to make a financial contribution to the modifications proposed by the Parish Council, one option open to the Dorset Council would be to install features such as bollards around the island to prevent the Tesco lorries driving across the island and causing further damage to the highway. Given this as an option, Tesco might find it more attractive to engage with the Parish Council’s proposals.

If a formal approach to the Tesco arrangements for loading and unloading is taken, it may well lead to a requirement for Loading Bay legislation to be put in place, which would mean that the area concerned could only be used as a Loading Bay, not for parking. We advised Stephen that currently Tesco put out bollards shortly before a lorry is due to prevent people accessing the loading area. He replied that formally, people are not allowed to just bollard off the highway. Stephen said that in other places residents have complained about bollards being put out.

Stephen asked about parking provision in front of the row of shops. We replied that Tesco had told us they were not too bothered about the number of parking spaces, partly because a large proportion of their customers arrive on foot. Stephen said that the other shop owners would need to be consulted, since they may have a different view. We pointed out that the Parish Council intends to improve the parking provision on the other side of the road, next to the Recreation Ground.

We discussed with Stephen that perhaps the next step in discussions with Tesco would be to arrange a meeting with the same set of Tesco managers as the Parish Council met with in 2018, but with Stephen in attendance this time as well. At this meeting Stephen and the Parish Council could present Tesco with evidence of the damage being done to the Highway, and start further discussions with them about making a contribution towards the costs of modifications to prevent this continuing.

We asked Stephen if he had experience of similar situations where there have been negotiations with a company like Tesco to secure contributions to Highways work. He said no. However, the Council often gets involved in negotiations with landowners about cutting back hedges, etc which are obscuring the Highway or blocking signs. The Council sometimes ends up going down a formal process, with threats of legal action, sometimes having to take landowners to court, and then placing a charge against them. He warned that we should not expect a quick resolution to this situation.

Stephen said he would talk to Helen Jackson about getting a feasibility study carried out of the modifications to the parking area outside Tesco proposed by the Parish Council (we gave Stephen a print out of our preferred option D). Part of such a study would be to prepare an estimate of the costs, which would help in negotiations with Tesco. The feasibility study would include a swept path analysis.

After our meeting Stephen took a number of photographs of the area outside the Tesco store, and the damage that has been done to the island.

**Actions**

1. Stephen Mepham to discuss feasibility study for the Tesco Car Park with Helen Jackson.
2. Members of the Parish Council Village Centre Working Group to take photos whenever they see a Tesco lorry driving across either end of the island (please send all photos taken to either Councillor Carswell or Councillor Watts).
3. Councillor Watts to arrange a further meeting with Stephen Mepham, perhaps mid to late June.

Councillor Rob Carswell

Councillor Ralph Watts