

**Handbridge Park Ward
Community & Resident Association Representative Meeting**

Thursday, 15th September at 10am
St Mary's Handbridge Centre - Williams Room

Meeting Notes

Present:

Cllr Razia Daniels - Handbridge Park ward member, CW&C
Cllr Neil Sullivan – Handbridge Park ward member, CW&C
Karl Farrow - Area Engineer, CW&C
Chris Gaughan – Senior Tree Officer, CW&C
Jane Makin - Senior Manager, Communities and Engagement. Chester, CW&C
Colin Parker-Rich - Assistant Streetcare Manager, CW&C
Kay Parry - Principal Engineer, CW&C
Andrew Jones – Road Safety Cheshire Police
Andrew Redfern – Officer, Communities and Engagement. Chester, CW&C

Streetcare

Grass cutting

- The service was recently restructured.
- Still in the first year of the new structure.
- Teams were split into areas covering parks, cemeteries, verges.
- New posts, roles and ways of working were introduced.
- Frequency scheduling introduced to show what should be done and when.
- Self-serve frequency schedule online tracking will be available for residents to view on the Council website from April 2023.
- Streetcare welcome reports relating to areas that may have been missed off the new schedule.
- Appreciated grass cutting frequency is a concern to residents the planned schedule and self-serve measures will help to address these concerns.

Residents Comments & Questions

- Grass cutting on Westminster Park is sporadic and not regular, this is a long-standing issue.

Street Cleansing

- During Covid operating process were changed to meet the unprecedented challenge Covid presented.
- New ways of working, machines and frequencies were introduced during lockdowns which are now under review.
- It is planned for the self-serve frequency street cleaning schedule tracking to be viewable online via the Council website.
- In residential areas working from home increased, consequentially more cars present on these streets during the day making them difficult to clean.
- Options to address this include working with highways to undertake street cleaning and highway maintenance/repairs where the whole street is letter dropped to request cars are not parked on the street during the planned works. This was trialled in on the lower section of Hartington Street in 2018/19.

- We have consulted with other Councils, and many have the same issues with no easy answers.
- One option that is proposed is to ask residents to park on one side of a street when street cleaning is due on a street, which will be shown on the frequency schedule shown online. This will require an element of resident consultation – research is being conducted on how best to do this.
- Temporary advance notice street signs may be useful as a way of informing.
- One suggestion could be street cleaning at night, although this is not without complication.
- Highways work closely with Streetcare on street cleaning. Highways can assist in moving cars which obstruct street cleaning using a low-loader.

Residents Comments & Questions

- CRAG (Chester Resident Associations Group) suggested they would be happy to communicate this information to residents to help ensure streets are clear for cleaning.
- Suggestion - avoid a street clean on the same day as a bin collection to make life easier.
- Residents need to be informed but so do people parking cars from outside the immediate area, such as in lower Hartington Street.
- The street cleaning online schedule is welcomed in Belgrave residents do try and clear weeds themselves but the layer of moss growing on pavements now requires specialist machines only the Council has access to. In certain weather the moss does become a Health and Safety issue. It was stated the Councils appointed contractor to treat such areas had experienced staffing and internal structure issues after being acquired by another firm. The Councils commissioning officers are addressing this issue with the contractor.

Wildflower Planting

- The areas planted with wildflowers during the first phase of the Wildflower Strategy in Handbridge Park were within Westminster Park and on a section of Overleigh Roundabout.
- In partnership with Chester Zoo a special Cheshire wildflower seed mix has been developed.
- Although specific unique ground and environmental conditions will ultimately dictate the display from year to year at any one location.

Residents Comments & Questions

- Comment - wildflower planting has its place, but this too must be maintained.
- Friends of Dukes Drive also stated that they had developed a similar wildflower seed mix
- Comment – Overleigh roundabout is a key gateway to the city and should be treated as such. Wildflowers in this space need a greater level of care and attention.

Overleigh Roundabout

- It was agreed that as a gateway area along with other gateways into the city will be targeted for improvement.
- It was stated the layout Overleigh Roundabout is due to be reconfigured to accommodate increased traffic from the ongoing residential developments on Wrexham Road.
- Residents were advised to use the [Council Report It App](#) to report issues and keep track of issues reported.
- It was advised that hedges and trees can only be worked on outside nesting season without being fully inspected. Nesting season runs from April to August.
- Highways can also take action to ensure private owners of trees and hedges that obstruct roads and pavements take action to clear these obstructions within a reasonable timescale of 3-4 weeks. Residents can report such requests also using the [Council Report It App](#).

Residents Comments & Questions

- Would like to see appearance and maintenance of Overleigh Roundabout improved.
- A sculpture for the Overleigh Roundabout would be nice.
- It would be nice to see improvements to the formal areas of Overleigh Roundabout.
- There are some good examples of roundabout improvements in Chester. Rough Hill Roundabout - Hare willow sculpture and wildflower planting. Supertrees Roundabout. Both projects were led by the community group Forest City Projects.
- The sculpture on the Liverpool Road Roundabout by Morrisons was complimented.
- Trees surrounding the Overleigh Roundabout need a management plan. During the storms earlier this year many had blown down and fallen on each other.
- Some traffic lights on Overleigh Roundabout are obscured by trees.
- Comment - Traffic light phasing on the Overleigh Roundabout is not pedestrian friendly, so many crossings to get across the road tempts pedestrians to take a risk and walk or run when they shouldn't.
- Overleigh Roundabout is used by many children walking to school. These issues will be shared with the Traffic Signal Team. These lights form part of a complicated traffic system, but the issue will be considered.
- The placement of temporary A-frame signs (some no longer needed) also seems to add a hazard to all.
- Issue with encroaching hedging on Curzon Park North approaching Overleigh Roundabout, causing people to walk onto the grass verge which in turn is impacted by footfall.

Highways

Trees

- The task of maintaining and looking after the trees in the borough is major.
- The Council has a commissioned contractor that addresses tree issues relating to safety, either because the trees are dead, dying or diseased.
- Also trees which present a road safety issue are also addressed.
- Trees on all A-road routes are surveyed regularly.
- Surveying of all the boroughs trees elsewhere started in 2020 and the task continues to build a completed record.
- The tree policy was last updated in 2018 and is due a review – this is underway
- Produced in partnership with Mersey Forrest.
- For example, there is no mention of a policy on Ash Die-Back in the current policy.
- An undated tree policy should accommodate day to day works as well as annual works.
- Trees in a woodland or park setting need to be treated differently to trees in an urban street scene and there should ideally be separate policies for both.
- It was acknowledged different issues relating to trees appears in different sections of the Council website, it was announced that it was the intention to collate, review and consult on moving all the separate sections on trees into one main section on the Council website to make it easier for residents to find the right information, advice and support.
- It was stated it was good to have a new senior tree officer now in post. For a considerable time the Council was without this resource.
- The Council is now able to start work on updating the tree policy and move on from the 'dead, dying and diseased' to a more refined policy.
- Although due to resources it was acknowledged all the many issues including loss of light, falling leaves, sap issues, loss of tv reception and epicormic growth could only be addressed through a partnership approach with the community and individual residents.

- Ward members confirmed trees were a big issue for residents in Handbridge Park. It will be good to have a tree policy review to develop a policy that include more routine maintenance, responsiveness to day-to-day needs.
- It was acknowledged that during the recent storms there was considerable demand put on the service and the work undertaken during this time was appreciated.
- The Hornbeam trees in upper Hartington Street require pollarding
- As the Council does have a pollarding regime, it was agreed a tree officer would visit site and survey the trees and liaise with residents affected.
- It was stated that the review of the tree policy will include the pollarding regime.
- All work the Council undertakes on trees is undertaken by the commissioned qualified contractor and the work is done to national standards with the necessary insurance and traffic management where appropriate.

Residents Comments & Questions

- Many trees obstructing the pavement on Eaton Road, Appleyards Lane and the upper end of Hartington Street.
- Residents willing to contribute towards the cost.
- CRAG suggested the tree policy review could include sections on what the Council is able to do and what the community is able to help with to achieve a balanced approach, particularly regarding trees and hedges on boundaries. It would be good to include best practice examples of what can be achieved with community involvement.

Residents Parking

- Residents Parking Schemes are the responsibility of the Parking Services Team.
- Highways are consulted with during initial assessment on the suitability of any proposed Residents Parking Scheme.
- If an area is suitable to be considered for a Residents Parking Scheme residents likely to be affected by the proposed scheme are consulted.
- Two Residents Parking Scheme consultations have been undertaken in Handbridge Park, neither consultation gained the support necessary support from residents.
- The most recent consultation gained 48% support.
- 50% support for any proposed resident parking scheme is required.
- Without further development in Handbridge taking place that has the potential to impact on residents parking, it is not proposed to revisit residents Parking Scheme in Handbridge for a third time.
- It is felt that due consideration has been given to proposed Residents Parking Schemes in Handbridge.
- Information on the [Residents Parking Schemes](#) can be found here.

Residents Comments & Questions

- It was noted that some residents felt unhappy about the voting system the Residents Parking Scheme policy uses, this view will be conveyed to Parking Services Team.
- It was felt by these residents, those eligible to vote should need to vote if they want their vote to be counted.
- At present, if residents eligible to vote do not vote, this is taken to mean they are not in favour of the proposed Residents Parking Schemes.
- It was suggested that landlords instructed tenants not to participate in consultations for this reason.
- It was suggested that the former car park on land belonging to Cheshire College could accommodate 50 cars and could be used to alleviate parking issues in Handbridge. Although

this has been unused for many years the College have stated that they wish to use this space to expand their educational facilities. It was agreed to raise this suggestion again with the college.

Hough Green Pavement

Residents Comments & Questions

- Hough Green section of pavement between the entrance to Westminster Park and St Marks Road has an issue with litter including broken glass. Buses cannot stop due to trees and hedge growth. The issues got worse during Covid and have not improved. Highways advised all sections of the highway including pavements are surveyed regularly.
- The prescribed intervention level varies, well used sections of the highway within or near the city are surveyed monthly and more rural lanes would be surveyed less often on annual basis.
- Residents were advised to use the [Council Report It App](#) to report issues and keep track of issues reported.

Emergency Vehicle Access – Lower Hartington Street

Residents Comments & Questions

- A resident expressed concern that a fire engine would not be able access the lower part of Hartington Street in an emergency.
- It was advised Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service local teams know their areas very well, if they had any concerns relating to road access there are established channels to raise these concerns with the Council. However, it was agreed to raise the resident's concern with the Fire and Rescue Service for the necessary checks to be made.

Pavement Access – Lower Hartington Street

Residents Comments & Questions

- It is common for vehicles to park on pavements in and around Hartington Street area making it difficult for wheelchair users, parents with pushchairs and even wheelbarrows gaining access to the allotments.
- It was advised that it was not an offence for vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes to park on a pavement or verge, however vehicles thought to be either parked in a dangerous position or causing an unnecessary obstruction of the road can be reported to the police using the 101 number or using the Cheshire Police website. It was advised that improvements were made to the 101 number from 1 September.

Parking on Verges

- To address individual incidents of verge parking, residents can apply to the Council for verge marker posts outside their property, if appropriate the Council will install the posts for which the resident would have to pay a charge. More information can be found at [Verge marker posts | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- To address issues that affect a greater number of houses, it is possible for a TRO to be put in place to prohibit footway and grass verge parking. This has happened in other parts of Chester. If there is support for TRO because of a consultation, once the order is implemented those caught parking on these areas will be given a Penalty Charge Notice, which is a Council-issued fine.
- The TRO would impact on the look and feel of the streetscene as a lot of signage is required to be able to unforce the order.

Dropped Kerbs

- The issue of residents widening driveways but not dropping the kerb was raised.

- It was stated it was illegal to drive up a kerb that was not dropped.
- Dropped kerbs need to be done properly.
- Examples were given on Beeston View, where driveways had been widened but the kerb had not been dropped.
- The Council do not survey for such occurrences or serve letters.
- However, when repairs are required to a section of the highway close to where a kerb has not been dropped the Council will approach the resident and give them the opportunity to have the Council's contractor undertake the work involved in dropping the kerb because very often it's more cost effective to undertake the work at this time as the contractor is already on site, although the work would still be undertaken at the residents expense.
- All residents wishing to drop a kerb outside their property are required to apply for permission to do so from the Council in its role as the Highway Authority. There is a cost for such an application. More information on this can be found at: [Vehicle crossings and dropped kerbs | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- Residents will require planning permission to drop a kerb if the property fronts a classified road.

E-Scooters

- Trial is being undertaken by a company called Ginger Scooters
- The trial is being undertaken by Department for Transport
- The e-scooters have technology built into them that provide a good level of monitoring and data provision.
- This includes tracking.
- The e-scooters are only permitted to be driven by a single person.
- A full or provisional driving licence is required to access the e-scooters.
- The e-scooters are limited to certain areas of the city and certain speeds in specific areas.
- In the very centre of the city the e-scooters use technology to disable them, or the speed reduces.
- Report a rule breach directly to Ginger by email at: info@ginger.town. You will be required to provide the time and location of the breach and they will be able to track the user and take the appropriate action.
- The ultimate sanction would be to ban the user of the e-scooter at the time of the report.
- The trial has been extended to May 2024.
- The trial has been extended to May 2024 by the DfT and CW&C is currently looking into also extending the Council trial which is currently in place until November 2022.
- More information on the e-scooters and how to sign-up can be found at: [Chester e-scooter rental trial | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

Bicycles and E-scooters

- The Council is committed to active travel.
- It is beneficial for individuals, air quality and addressing the climate emergency.
- Any proposals relating to active travel are fully consulted on.
- The following link is for the Council's Transport Strategy: [Transport strategy | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)
- It is difficult to enforce these modes of transport.
- Many are used by delivery services within Chester.
- Privately owned e-scooters and electric bicycles operated by a throttle without peddles are illegal on public roads.
- Riders of electric bicycles with peddles must still obey the law.

- Riders of legal electric bikes can and are prosecuted for riding these bikes whilst exceeding the drink-drive limit.
- Those caught have their bikes seized and are also fined.
- It was stated the legal top speed of an electric bike is 15mph.
- Some users will be able to pedal so they go faster than this.
- Police do gather intelligence on these vehicles and do regularly track owners to their home addresses.
- All cyclists should also follow the Highway Code.

Residents Comments & Questions

- Increasingly the answer to improving cycle safety is to ask pedestrians to share space with cyclists. This is not ideal for pedestrian safety, particularly when pedestrians are allocated the section of pavement closest to hedges that are growing onto the pavement.
- How can cyclists be prevented from cycling along the pavement of the Old Dee Bridge into Handbridge?
- Could a white line be provided to demarcate areas for cyclists and pedestrians?
- Could signs be used to prohibit cycling on the pavement? It was advised, if this prohibition is signed on this bridge only, cyclists may assume they can cycle on bridges where it is not signed.
- It was stated that where pedestrians and cyclists share pavement space, signs should be in place announcing the start and finish of such areas.
- Residents sought clarification on driving and parking in a cycle lane
 - Rule 140 of the Highway Code states:
 - Do not drive or park in a cycle lane marked by a broken white line unless it is unavoidable.
 - You must not park in any cycle lane whilst waiting restrictions apply.
 - Vehicles must not drive or park on a cycle lane with a solid white line during its times of operation.
- It was felt that the Department of Transport [Cycling and Walking Investment strategy \(CWIS2\)](#) should be followed more closely.
- More should be done to reduce the conflict between the cyclist and pedestrian.
- CRAG stated a new pedestrian group had recently been established.
- It was highlighted that some of the bikes and e-scooters are very fast.
- Also, many of the faster riders do not wear helmets.
- It was commented these vehicles are favoured by those involved in illegal activity, as they cannot easily be identified and can cover long distances in short amounts of time.
- It was suggested that all cyclists should dress to be seen in bright colours and reflective clothing especially while riding at night.
- It was stated it was common for drivers of cars to be overtaken by cyclists in 20mph zones.
- A resident felt it was more dangerous and polluting to drive at 20mph.

Air Quality

- The Handbridge Park area is not included in CWAC's Chester City Air Quality Management Area - why is this? The area includes several schools and major roads and roundabouts but there is no monitoring of air quality. Please can we be informed of why our area is not monitored.
- The Air Quality Management Area only covers those areas where a national air quality objective is exceeded or likely to be exceeded. Monitoring selections are based on the application of a screening assessment, but simply we don't monitor where there is no risk of

an exceedance. Handbridge is not an area where any exceedances of relevant air pollutants is likely. Yes, there are considerable volumes of traffic along Wrexham Road and over the Grosvenor Bridge and it can build up at times on Overleigh Road and other feeder points onto the Overleigh Round-a-bout but there has to be both a receptor and a pollutant. If there is no receptor exposure, then there can be no exceedance of an air quality standard. If there is a receptor, then the exceedance must be over a relevant time period. So, somebody walking past a line of idling vehicles may be exposed to elevated levels for a 30 second period, but the relevant exposure period for that pollutant would typically have to be over an hour or a day. In short, the air quality in Handbridge is considered good.

Road Safety

20mph zones

- The 20mph zones are a Council policy rather than a Cheshire Police Policy, although Cheshire Police does not object to the policy.
- The zones should follow national guidance that it should look and feel like it is appropriate to travel at that speed within them.
- This approach can be subjective.
- Motorists can be fined for exceeding the 20mph limit, but the police do not routinely enforce these zones, where they do not meet the appropriate look and feel.
- The police advise on traffic calming measures to ensure the zones look and feel like a 20mph zone before enforcement.
- Traffic calming measures can include road humps, speed cushions, chicanes, mini roundabouts, road narrowing and give way to oncoming traffic signs to ensure the zones become self-enforcing.
- Overall, the police are of the opinion that the zones are working in the borough and reducing overall speeds to a degree.
- When the Council surveyed the roads considered for 20mph zoning, if an average vehicle speed of 24mph or less (30mph outside schools) was observed it was recommended for inclusion.

Residents Comments & Questions

- Based on the look and feel guidance, a resident suggested Brown's Lane should be include in the 20mph zone. This was investigated after the meeting, and it was found that Brown's Lane is included in a 20mph area already.

Handbridge Medical Centre

- It was stated that the NHS had not yet consulted on this matter, made any decisions or allocated the necessary funding.
- The CCG is exploring options including the car park opposite Queens Park High School and the football field off Salmon Leap, although the community would need to be compensated for any loss of green space amenity. A full consultation with residents will take place before a decision is made.

Residents Comments & Questions

- It was stated that Handbridge needs a good medical surgery.
- It was stated that the former car park on land belonging to Cheshire College could accommodate this, although this land was not currently being considered by the NHS.

Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan

- Has influence on future development in the area.
- Does not impact on the here and now.
- The established forum drafts the plan.
- The forum has good and wide-ranging representation.
- The impact of Covid has slowed down progress of the development of the plan.
- The forum is now picking up pace after earlier setbacks.
- Recently surveyed 2100 residents.
- The survey had a 15% response rate.
- Priority areas identified were business and commerce; a built design code, heritage, green space; sustainability; transport; parking; access to new development.
- Funding is now being applied for with the support of Cheshire Community Action.
- People can sign-up for email updates on the plans progress and also visit the plans website for more information: [Green Spaces & Conservation Working Group Proposed Approach – Handbridge Neighbourhood Plan](#)
- Views are welcome from residents, workers and visitors.
- Eventual step is to produce a draft plan.
- Present the plan to the Council and an independent inspector.
- If it passes inspection it is presented to residents who are asked to vote on its adoption as a planning document.
- The plan must secure a simple majority to be passed.

Any other business

- Cllr Daniels and Cllr Sullivan thanked residents, officers and partner organisations for attending.
- It was suggested this meeting could be an annual occurrence.