

MINUTES OF THE KEELE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held on Monday 6th July 2020 at 7.00 pm remotely by ZOOM

Attendees: Parish Cllrs: Mr G Bibby (Chair), Dr R Studd, Ms V Newman, Dr D Hindmarch, Mr D Meakin, Mrs W Naylor,
Mr Aaron Bell MP

Clerk – Mrs C Withington

There was one member of public present for the meeting.

20/48 **Public Open Forum**

The Chair of Keele Village Hall thanked Mr Aaron Bell MP and the Borough Council for the Business Continuity Grant of £10k, along with the ongoing support provided during the pandemic.

20/49 **Apologies - None**

20/50 **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests – None**

20/51 **Introductions for Mr Aaron Bell MP – All were introduced.**

20/52 **Keele Parish Council's response to Covid 19**

Keele PC responded within a few days of the call to provide help from Mr Aaron Bell MP to the Chair by sending flyers out to all properties off campus. There are at least 40 volunteers who have been delivering prescriptions, shopping and providing support to the vulnerable and isolated. Demand for this has fallen in recent weeks. Pharmacy ability to deliver now reduced. Weekly/fortnightly basis. Response well received. Satisfied no one not overlooked outside campus, strong set of neighbour relationships.

Mr Bell MP stated that furlough staff returning to work is the next big challenge and minimising redundancies. Also the impact of social distancing on the operation of businesses. NBC will be chasing up the businesses which may be eligible for grant.

There is also concern regarding The New Vic going forward and all are hoping that they will be strong enough and supported enough to move forward.

20/53 **The Joint Local Plan and University Growth Corridor**

Mr Bibby stated that the history of strategic planning at Newcastle had been 'unlucky', in particular the development in the town centre which is locked in by the ring road. The Parish Council support Keele University and recognises its role which is central but not the only way to sustain the Borough. Keele University, Parish Council and Borough Council attended workshops regarding transport solutions to make housing development work. The Parish Council is worried the same mistakes will be made again regarding planning and without a robust, deliverable and sustainable transport plan this will have negative impact on development of the town.

There is concern that University transport alternative may not occur at this site, and in any case regarding futuristic transport hub. Will not solve the immediate problem of grid locked traffic to campus and Borough which will be worse as a result.

Mr Bell MP stated that providing a good offer to students was key. Mr Bell MP is also open to listening to suggestions to get a good outcome. We do need a JLP to ensure developers are held to account. He stated that we want to keep graduates in well paid and high skilled jobs and need executive housing and traffic improvements too. We need people to move into the centre – not just retail and provide a revised local economy and housing offer.

There was some concern regarding people not being able to ensure they will live and work in Newcastle, eg they may look to go to Crewe which is being boosted.

Mr Bell MP stated that he supported brownfield first, before green belt/countryside development. But that executive housing most likely to be countryside.

It was suggested that there are many brownfield sites in NBC and SOT, and the green belt is there to prevent urban sprawl at the expense of the urban centre. In Keele there are already 80 executive homes in Hawthorns – which was one reason for building on the Green Belt.

We must value the rewilded grassland in green belt golf course and the economic benefits for an eco-tourist park instead of housing. This is a local asset which we must retain for wellbeing reasons to obtain fresh air and exercise. The large numbers of cars parked up during the pandemic proves how much value this site has. The financial crisis should not be the driving force behind developing this land.

Consideration must be given to the national push to plant millions of trees.

The Parish Council would like NBC to genuinely discuss what is possible for that site. NBC already has a 5 year housing land supply however NBC have chosen the highest number of homes out of 3 options. It was noted that we already have 100 permitted properties at Pepper Street as well.

An online only consultation will be opposed vigorously and the Parish Council are expecting to make representations in the autumn.

20/54 **Traffic Regulation Order and Residents Parking Scheme to ameliorate parking issues in Keele Village**

Mr Aaron Bell MP has already had some lobbying on this issue from residents. The university has offered to pay for the schemes which the County Councillor has supported. A meeting was held in October 2018 with Highways officer and it was agreed the TROs would go ahead with the costs passed to University. Highways officers stated it would be in the spring of 2019, then promised Spring 2020. We have heard nothing. There is a history of community liaison not communicating. Letter of complaint sent to Leader and Chief Exec of Staffs County Council.

Original promises to be sent to Mr Bell MP. Mr Bell MP stated that the university could also be more imaginative about providing parking elsewhere to assist with the issues.

GB

20/55 **Any Other Business for future agendas**

Mr Bell MP surgeries are not open house at the moment, but people can make appointments for a Zoom face to face meeting. It is not likely to be until September when the drop in shop opens to the public opposite Castle House. There will be surgeries around the borough but no formal schedule as yet.

Meeting closed 6.50pm.

Date of next meetings:

21 July 2020 (Zoom), 18 August 2020, 15 September 2020