

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - TUESDAY 13th APRIL 2021

ITEM NO: 9 – TRAFFIC MONITORING DEVICE AT NEW INN ROAD

This report concerns the installation of a traffic monitoring device on a BT post at New Inn Road and recommends a course of action following investigations into its origin

Information

This paper is not the basis for a discussion on Affordable Housing, but of recent activities in New Inn Road.

On Sunday March 21st 2021 the Parish Clerk received two emails from Cllr. Sylvia Wiggins regarding a ‘black box’ that had been attached to a BT Pole near her house. Cllr. Wiggins asked the Clerk if he was aware of the installation and if it related to investigations for a possible roundabout at Bartley Crossroads.

The Clerk undertook some initial ‘on line’ investigations which revealed that the box and its contents might potentially be for the purpose of traffic monitoring (speeds, volumes, directions, etc.).

The Clerk checked with HCC Highways who advised on Monday March 22nd that it wasn’t their ‘box’. They mentioned that it might relate to Hampshire Police or possibly a private company traffic survey.

On Monday, March 22nd, the Clerk contacted Hampshire Constabulary via email and they confirmed the ‘box’ was not theirs.

Considering what organisation might be interested in traffic volume, movement and speed etc, the Clerk then, on Tuesday March 23rd, contacted the English Rural Housing Association (ERHA) who responded to his enquiries and provided the following information:-

“The box is part of our engineers’ site appraisal work to monitor traffic movement on New Inn Road. It was erected last Friday and will be there for a week. A licence for this work is not required and our engineers are not typically required to seek permission to install temporary equipment on signs, bollards or poles. These sort of preliminary checks are useful in assessing the sites suitability.”

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Having established the origin of the device and the ‘owner’ of the installation, this raises some important questions about intentions and community liaison. It is clear that the ERHA is undertaking survey work in respect of possibility / potential for some form of development in the vicinity of New Inn Road.

Following previous survey activities in land adjacent to New Inn Road, an agreement was made a few years ago that the Parish Council and thus the Parish Community, would be at least advised of and at best consulted with in advance of any survey activity by the ERHA on potential development work in the Parish. A later discussion between the Chairman and an NFDC Member, now on the board of the Housing Association, resulted in an apparent understanding that the Housing Association would not be looking in Copythorne Parish at this time for a variety of reasons.

More recently, in December 2020, ERHA confirmed in an e-mail to the Clerk that they would “of course advise the Parish Council on any progress”.

It is clear that while we considered an agreement was in place to provide us with clear community liaison and consultation if any survey activity was potentially planned by ERHA in Copythorne Parish, this has not happened.

Proposal

The Parish Council should be rightly concerned about this apparent lack of notice and consultation of these activities within our Parish. Consequently, it is proposed that the Parish Council writes to the ERHA expressing it’s serious concern about this breach of an understanding that an agreement existed verbally for there to be full community liaison by ERHA with Copythorne Parish Council prior to any activity related to a potential development.

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Recommendation

That the Parish Council request the Clerk to write a strongly worded letter to the EHRA pointing out that we have not been advised in advance of this activity in breach of an apparent understanding that we would be fully advised in advance of and where appropriate consulted with about any activity of this sort.

Cllr. Steve Herra
March 2021