

## **Ickleford Parish Council (IPC) Meeting – Public Session 4 March 2010**

Huge thanks to everyone who attended the meeting of the Parish Council. We think there were approximately 40 members of the public there... standing room only!

These are notes (not a definitive summary) of the public discussion which went on for 50 minutes rather than the allotted 30 minutes. We thank Chairman Cllr Philip Crowe for allowing us extra time. To ensure fairness and accuracy we have forwarded a copy of this document to the IPC for feedback. **Please note that additional comments and questions not made at the meeting but considered relevant since are written in red.**

- IPC confirmed the speed humps were a ‘fait accompli’ by Hertfordshire Highways and that the village were not given any other option. Cllr Miles Maxwell stated that the village was given “Hobson’s choice”. Speed humps were all that was on offer for traffic calming. **Why then did the IPC waste the expense and time on an irrelevant survey on traffic proposals in 2008? Was this to make the residents feel that their opinion mattered when in fact it was irrelevant?**
- IPC confirmed that the Questions on the 2006 Parish Plan questionnaire were devised by members of the Parish Council and a steering group - without reference to any expert advice. This would explain why their very first question to the whole village in this process was “Speed is considered a major concern, do you think speed is a major concern?” **This is clearly a leading question but was not acknowledged by the IPC.**
- IPC confirmed that they were confident in the accuracy of the results of both surveys and **had relied on them in their decision making.**
- IPC confirmed that the results of their Parish Plan Questionnaire in 2006 were **not independently checked and/or verified.**
- Adrian went through some of the results of the Parish Plan Questionnaire in detail. IPC confirmed that 679 out of 789 households Parish Plan Questionnaires were returned. (Note that for the Parish Plan all adults living in the same household had to share the same view).
- Adrian queried their Parish Plan results document [http://www.icklefordpc.com/Questionnaire\\_results\\_summary\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.icklefordpc.com/Questionnaire_results_summary_booklet.pdf) which states “road surfaces were thought to be inadequate by 295(57%) and 245(57%) felt pavements should be improved”. Adrian queried why two different numbers, 295 and 245 both produced 57%.
- Adrian also queried why if 679 questionnaires were returned, 50% of 679 would be 340 – so why do 295 and 245 produce 57%? The IPC said that was because not

everyone answered every question. This would mean that of the 679 who returned their surveys, 161 didn't answer question 4, for 295 "YES" responses to be 57%. It would also mean that a staggering 249 didn't answer question 5 in order for 245 "YES" responses to be 57%. This seems highly unlikely.

- **NOTE On closer examination, the accurate answer to this question is that in order to inflate their percentages for "YES" responses, the IPC did not report anyone who specifically answered "Don't Know" to any question however they failed to acknowledge this point under questioning. Although briefly mentioned in their results document, the non-mathematically minded would probably not appreciate the significance of IPC's omission of this important data.**
- IPC confirmed that the questions on the Traffic Survey Response form were devised by members of the Parish Council and the Hertfordshire Highways Department. IPC Cllr Maxwell confirmed that these questions could have been regarded as 'leading' and may not have offered the villagers a real choice about traffic calming measures.
- IPC were unclear about where or if additional comments made by residents on their questionnaires had been collated or recorded. We requested this information.
- IPC confirmed that the results of the traffic calming survey were collated and checked by the Parish Clerk, but **not double checked or independently validated** before they were sent to Highways.
- IPC were asked to get Highways to halt installation of the road humps. They stated that this was not possible.
- IPC emphasised that money for the speed humps came from capital expenditure and money for general road and pavement maintenance came from a different budget. Therefore money allocated for speed humps could not be used for the much more essential basic road maintenance desperately needed in the village.
- **NOTE Since the meeting IPC Cllr Thurstance has told Adrian that painting the two Ickleford roundabouts was being paid for out of this current block of money allocated for safety. A few days later he emailed us again saying "Just established that an order was raised Dec 2009 for road markings throughout the village, where needed, to be re-painted. This is out of the Highways Maintenance Budget". We are very pleased about this and hope the Bedford Road roundabout will be painted very soon as the roundabout and stop lines have completely gone making this junction even more dangerous than usual.**
- Cllr Philip Crowe declined to apologise for what were considered his inappropriate comments printed about the owner of Pixies in the Comet (25

February 2010). Cllr Crowe did not accept that it is his responsibility as chair of the parish council to support local businesses.

***NB: [www.mostsimply.com](http://www.mostsimply.com) offers a formal apology to Cllr Colin Thurstance for accidentally naming him as co-author of the Comet letter referred to above rather than Cllr Miles Maxwell. This was a genuine error for which we take full responsibility and apologise unreservedly.***

***We encourage anyone with comments, feedback, errors, omissions on the [www.mostsimply.com](http://www.mostsimply.com) website to let us know immediately at [hump@mostsimply.com](mailto:hump@mostsimply.com).***

- The Local PCSO Community Policewoman (name unknown) stated that members of the public had been approaching Parish Councillors ‘in the street’ and ‘harassing them’ about road humps. Some Parish Councillors ‘had a discussion’ with her about this. No one had made a complaint. The Policewoman then stated “If anyone is rude or aggressive to members of the Council, they would be dealt with by the police”. Many people at the meeting perceived this as ‘**A Threat**’ and were unsettled by those comments.

Other Points that came up:

- A local paramedic, Chris Martin, emphasised that the road humps being installed DO cause problems for ambulances and that both the response times and patients bouncing around in the back of an ambulance will be detrimental to patient care. IPC acknowledged they had not considered the impact of their decision on the emergency services, they just took the advice of Highways.
- A resident from central Ickleford stated that the noise from the raised zebra crossing could be heard in their house, which is quite some distance from the zebra crossing.
- Many people were in accord that the Traffic Survey questions were flawed and were designed to optimise the vote in favour of traffic calming.
- A member of the public stated that our rural village had been given a town solution.
- A member of the public stated that the speed cushions currently on Bedford Road, Letchworth (identical to those being put in Ickleford) are disintegrating and causing damage to the inner walls of tyres. They are not being maintained. IPC stated they could not guarantee that the road humps in Ickleford would be maintained.
- A member of the public asked why the lower part of Arlesey Road from The Green Man to Bowman’s Bridge had not been included in the traffic calming

measures. Cllr Philip Crowe said “I won’t say it was forgotten.... But..... Highways allocated the money for the scheme before they realised that part of the village had been missed”.

- A member of the public stated that “The humps are not progress”.
- Georgina of Pixies asked when the roads were actually going to be closed. She is concerned that once again the road works will have an impact on the run up to Mother’s Day, a very important day in her florist’s calendar. Cllr Philip Crowe appeared dismissive. His comment “Mother’s Day is on a Sunday and they won’t be working on a Sunday” indicated a lack of understanding of the devastating impact the road hump work is having on local businesses. He made an almost identical comment at the previous month’s meeting concerning Valentine’s Day.
- It was emphasised the IPC have not been proactive in supporting local businesses, they have only been reactive when parish members have demanded support for their business. Cllr Miles Maxwell gave the impression that businesses were lucky the Parish Council had acted at all.
- There was overwhelming support for resident Mike Palmer’s comment that the fundamental problem is that the Parish Council has not acknowledged the opposition to road humps. Quite simply, the ‘right question’ was not asked of residents. If the Parish Council had used unbiased objective and informative wording in their surveys then they would not have got support from residents.
- A member of the public explained that his wife has a neck injury and is going to have to drive over speed humps (causing pain and discomfort) every time she goes out.
- The village voted for traffic calming NOT speed humps.
- Cllr Maxwell sought to dismiss the concern about the flawed statistics with words to the effect that in an election there is never more than a 60% turnout.
- The members of the public felt strongly that the Traffic Calming ballot was not valid because there was only a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ option. ‘All or nothing’. IPC gave the impression this was entirely appropriate.
- Cllr Goldie asked the assembled members of the public what they would rather have. Residents suggested cameras, chicanes, nothing at all – anything but humps. It was felt that the raised crossing is enough. Nothing more is needed for traffic calming aside from occasional police speed checks, and better quieter road surfaces.
- Results of regular speed checks are apparently reported to the Parish Council. We requested this information along with all their raw data from both surveys.

- Adrian asked the IPC what percentage of their Parish is elderly but this question was ignored.
- A member of the public told the Parish Council “Nothing is too late – get off your backsides and do something about it”.
- That point was overwhelmingly approved by the members of the public in attendance.

Residents had much more to say and many more questions but as we had already had 50 minutes rather than the allocated 30 minutes, and so Cllr Philip Crowe brought the public session of the meeting to a close.