

Thornbury Town Council

Town Hall, 35 High Street, Thornbury, Bristol, BS35 2AR

Town Clerk: Ms Kath MacConnachie, CiLCA

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14 April 2022

BY EMAIL

Councillor Toby Savage, Leader of the Council
South Gloucestershire Council
PO Box 1953
Badminton Road
Bristol
BS37 0DB

Dear Councillor Savage

Thornbury High Street Pedestrianisation Project

Thornbury Town Council feels that the Thornbury High Street pedestrianisation project has been handled appallingly by South Gloucestershire Council, in terms of consultation and implementation. This has resulted in unprecedented ill feeling and confusion across the Town, with a strength of feeling on both sides.

The public have been, and remain, confused by the responsibilities of South Gloucestershire Council versus the Town Council. This has resulted in a great deal of anger being directed towards Town Council councillors and staff, and reputational damage to the Town Council. Recently forty-eight unhappy members of the public attended a routine Planning Committee meeting, simply because there was an agenda item for South Gloucestershire Council Officers to provide an update to councillors. South Gloucestershire Council has not done anything to help clarify the situation, including responsibilities, to the public.

The Town Council have a number of questions regarding the plans for the Thornbury High Street Pedestrian Project. A number of these have been asked repeatedly with no adequate response received to date:

1. What are the plans for Rock Street realignment and when will this take place?
2. What were the results of any air quality tests on Rock Street?
3. The situation on Castle Court is unacceptable and dangerous. Whilst the Traffic Order means that road marks are not compulsory, so I understand, enforcement will be difficult as most of the parking issues are 24 hours. When will the yellow lines be reinstated?
4. Thornbury in Bloom own a number of hanging basket poles on the High Street, but these are currently being used by South Gloucestershire Council to place street signs. When will these signs be removed so that the hanging baskets can be displayed?
5. Local businesses use the old pavement to leave their dustbins and leave litter in bags. This has a negative impact on the street scene. Will this be addressed?
6. What is the plan for maintaining the planters?
7. Regarding the arrangement of planters outside the Malthouse, South Gloucestershire Council were going to review the design in that area. What progress has been made on this?
8. South Gloucestershire Council undertook to approach the community bus company to see if they would provide a bus service up the high street. Has this been progressed?

9. South Gloucestershire has cited national figures when talking about improving retail figures. Do you have any local evidence?
10. The recent update from Donna Whinham and Verity Britton said that the one-way system would be enforced by the police and use of CCTV. Please can you provide specific details on the how enforcement will work? What arrangements will there be for enforcement in the evenings?
11. The Prezzo outdoor space appears to have been abandoned. Have you engaged Prezzo, and other tenants regarding such spaces, and what is the outcome on this? If the retailers do not have any plans for this area, do you have any plans for licensing to other businesses?
12. At the last update provided by South Gloucestershire Council to our Planning and Town Development Committee on 29 March there was still no news on whether buses will return to the High Street nor how will they be accommodated if they do return. It is not acceptable to say, as was said at the meeting, that buses (if they do return) will simply stop in the middle of a one-way street with all the hold ups for other traffic that this would entail. To do so seems to risk (perhaps this is South Gloucestershire Council's intended outcome?) inviting the bus operators to decide not to return to the High Street. Will you be providing specific laybys for buses, so they do not block the roads?
13. South Gloucestershire Council's business case to obtain funding for the High Street project appears to assume that that an additional 2,000 walking/cycling trips of 1.1 miles to and from the High Street would occur as a result of the implementation of the scheme. Where is the evidence for this assumption and were any surveys taken prior to covid to form a base against which future walking/cycling activity can be judged?
14. South Gloucestershire Council seem to have assumed that a third of the £6 million claimed financial benefit from the High Street scheme comes from relieving traffic congestions at junctions elsewhere in the town. Whilst the Town Council have already asked for, and would welcome action taken, to reduce traffic congestion at junctions in the town, the reality of the situation is that the current level of congestion has been brought about by South Gloucestershire Council's decision to close the High Street to through traffic. Please give your view on this.

We look forward to a full response to the points raised above.

South Gloucestershire Council undertook to engage with the Town Council regarding the proposed changes to Thornbury High Street, but we do not feel that this has happened. Presenting/reporting plans to the Town Council is not engagement. Engagement should be a two-way process.

South Gloucestershire Officers sent to update Thornbury Town Council to date have had to deal with uncomfortable situations with irate members of the public. We would like to request that the Cabinet Members with responsibility for the scheme, Councillor Rachael Hunt and Councillor Steve Reade, attend our next Full Council meeting at 7.30pm on 24th May to address the Town Council.

Yours sincerely



Kath MacConnachie, CiLCA

Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
For and on behalf of Thornbury Town Council