**Minuted Report of the Meeting held on**

**Monday 24th April 2017, 7.30pm at Great Witley Village Hall**

**With**

**Jon Fraser of WCC re VeloBirmingham**

Present: Councillors: Geoff Goodman, Frank Chapman, Roger Perkins, Charles Shaw, Bill Dallow, Adrian Symonds and Jo Evans Clerk

Joined by County Councillor Ken Pollock

And members of the public

Acting Chairman, Geoff Goodman (GG) welcomed Jon Fraser, (JF) and introduced the reason for calling this meeting to those present. Concerns over the lack of consultation from CSM Active, London organisers of the VeloBirmingham event to be held on Sunday 24th September 2017.

JF, who was happy to attend this meeting, outlined that Worcester County Council, (WCC) were approached around 18 months ago by Birmingham City Council, (BCC) regarding the proposal for this mass participation cycling event. The event would be centred around Birmingham and the surrounding rural areas of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. BCC appointed CSM as organisers of the event who then approached WCC to start discussions.

WCC agreed that they were interested, in principle, to considering CSM’s proposals. WCC would require a full consultation process. It was assumed by WCC that a ‘rolling road’ closure would operate to accommodate the 15,000 entrants of all abilities. Before any agreement was made, CSM went ahead and launched a website and invited interested cyclists to sign up and pay the entrance fee of £75.

In principle WCC were happy to make temporary road closures but, again, before any agreement was reached CSM carried out a sporadic leaflet drop and announced the route. This amounts to around 9 hours of road closures, something which is felt to be considerably unacceptable in the rural Worcestershire area and not agreed by WCC.

Contrary to what CSM have stated, they have not demonstrated that they can manage safety issues or that they have indeed carried out 1:1 consultations with local businesses, such conditions set out by WCC, and therefore, WCC will not grant the road closures if these are not met.

Because of their ‘wall of silence’, many local businesses and members of the public have contacted WCC, and specifically Marcus Hart (MH) and Ken Pollock (KP) to report their dissatisfaction over the handling of such a majorly disruptive event. It should be noted that many local businesses will suffer loss of earnings should these road closures be granted.

Both WCC and HCC have written to CSM for answers to their concerns asking for a response by the end of April. JF believes CSM are unlikely to reply within the required timeframe and therefore WCC and HCC will refuse their request for road closures during the event and their support will be withdrawn.

It is thought that 15,000 tickets have been sold at £75 each. CSM’s publicity for the event does not seem to be very consistent. Many residents in the affected areas have found out about VeloBirmingham by mistake, or word of mouth.

The parish of Great Witley is likely to be ‘hit’ twice by the suggested road closures, affecting the A443 and Stourport Road. Road closures of this type is clearly unpractical.

CSM has promoted accommodation available for Birmingham City but no such publicity for Herefordshire or Worcestershire. They have already advertised that this will be an annual event and invited entrants for 2018.

JF on behalf of WCC has requested the support of GWHHPC in refusing this event in Worcestershire and GWHHPC are happy to do this.

GG, who attended a recent presentation given by Jim Bellinger, reported two examples where a mass event of this type has worked in the city but not in the surrounding countryside. Namely, London and Surrey and Cardiff and Gwent.

Frank Chapman (FC) suggested that if there had been a consultation process then shorter road closures and alternative routes could have been discussed.

JF will report back to GWHHPC in a couple of weeks when the deadline for CSM to reply has passed.

No diversions have been suggested, the emergency services have not been consulted, contrary to CSM claims, therefore the Police have stated that they will not be supervising the event.

Charles Shaw (CS) warned that due to the anger within the local community disruptions, confrontations and the possibility of violence should not be ruled out.

GG reported that CSM is a profit-making organisation and that entrants and the wider public may be misguided into believing that this is a wholly charitable event.

A member of the public highlighted the worrying concerns that in the small print of the terms and conditions, as set out by CSM, the route can be changed or the event cancelled without notice and no refunds of the entrance fee of £75 will be made. It was then questioned if the whole scheme might not be a scam; making it impossible WCC and HCC to agree to support this event and thereby making them the scapegoats if entrants are forced to lose their fee. CSM tactics seem to be aggressive. Steaming ahead without confirmed support from WCC or HCC. Responding to all enquires with a ‘wall of silence’ and even stating that any vehicles parked on the roads on the route will be moved. The village of Clifton-on-Teme was used as an example where many homes do not have off road parking. Are CSM going to remove all cars parked on the road in this village? FC informed the room that CSM have no legal right to remove such vehicles.

KP reported that he has spoken with an entrant who appreciates the obvious flaws in this event plan and that neither himself or MH are backing VeloBirmingham.

GG closed the meeting by thanking JF for his attendance and for clearly answering the concerns of the parish of Great Witley and Hillhampton.