

WHPC meeting 5th December 2023

Agenda Item 23/373

Remembrance Sunday 2023

Purpose: To receive an update on the event on Sunday 12th November 2023 and note any recommendations arising

Background

At the WHPC meeting on 6th June 2023, Councillors resolved that WHPC should be the named organiser of the Remembrance Sunday event on 12th November 2023. A budget of up to £300 was approved for hiring Highways-approved temporary road signs and the lengthsmen's costs. An additional £200 was approved for the purchase of walkie-talkies for the marshals. WHPC works closely with personnel from the RBL West Hill branch and is responsible for temporary road closures (TTRO application to the County Highways Authority, signage etc). The RBL is responsible for the Act of Remembrance at the war memorial. Usually a Councillor lays a wreath on behalf of WHPC and does one of the readings during the service in Church. Attendance by members of the public does not usually exceed 30.

Budget

The approved budget of £500 was **underspent**. The invoice from the lengthsmen for costs and signage was £183.47 – less than expected based on last year's costs. WHPC did not purchase walkie talkies – instead 2 were borrowed from Michael Cartwright. As with last year, the County Highways Authority did not charge anything for the TTRO application.

What worked well

- The statutory highways notices were posted in advance, in line with regulations, inside the closed sections.
- The road closures and event times were also advertised on the WHPC notice boards and website.
- The marshals and lengthsmen met at 9am in the RBL car park. This allowed more time for a briefing and for the signs to be dropped off at each agreed point with time to spare before starting the road closures at 9.30am promptly.
- The plastic portable fencing used by Martin was better than the cones used last year.
- The walkie-talkies worked well and facilitated communication between marshals. We also established that a mobile phone signal was available, thus providing a back-up if needed.
- The roads were reopened at 10.50am.
- Drivers were mostly good-natured about the closed roads and observing the diversions, BUT see learning points below.

Learning points

- A vehicle passed the war memorial (slowly) on West Hill Road during the wreath-laying service – this must have come from a property inside the closed zone.
- A few residents needed to access properties at the bottom end of West Hill Road near the Bendarroch Road junction – one may have been visible from the war memorial, although did not pass by it. Perhaps more promotion is needed with particular emphasis on 10.15am to 10.30am when the Act of Remembrance is underway, and appeal to residents inside the zone to not drive during that 15 minutes?
- There was a higher volume of traffic on West Hill Road (near Elsdon Lane) this year. A number of drivers chose to turn around rather than take the diversion via Elson Lane/Lower Broad Oak Road.
- A third walkie talkie would be useful – one for each of the three road closure points.
- The plan was for 3 WHPC marshals and 3 RBL marshals (so two people at each point). However, we learned at the last minute that one of the RBL marshals was unable to come, leaving one road closure point with one marshal instead of two (Alison, at the junction of West Hill Rd/Bendarroch). We could consider having a couple of reserves on standby, but they would need to not mind being called at very short notice. Any marshal could potentially call in sick at short notice.
- Some residents still seem confused by the Armistice Day/Remembrance Sunday timings and 20 turned up at the war memorial on Sunday at 11am expecting “a Remembrance Service”. They were directed to the Church. Some people prefer to pay their respects at the war memorial at 11am. Perhaps more publicity is needed (a board placed near the war memorial a few weeks in advance?)

Action

- a. Councillors to note the report.
- b. Councillors to formally thank RBL personnel and Martin Jelf for their assistance.
- c. Councillors to note that the Task & Finish Group, having achieved its purpose, now terminates.