



Slinfold Parish Council

PO Box 315, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9XX

Tel:01403 785864 (Mobile 07733 359479)

Email:clerk@slinfold-pc.gov.uk

Louise Goldsmith, Leader, WSCC

26th October 2018

Dear Mrs Goldsmith

Velo Cycling Event

The Velo South cycling event has led to some strong opinions among Slinfold residents. Some people were strongly in favour and/or participating and willing to make adjustments on the day. Some were strongly opposed, mainly, it seems, because of the lack of prior consultation and what they felt to be excessive periods of road closure. Others

A number of businesses in and around Slinfold were also affected. While we are aware of one larger firm who were able to agree arrangements with Velo South to keep their business moving, we are aware of others who appear to have had no supportive response from Velo South. One local business which employs some Slinfold residents was expecting reduced takings and would have had to lay off employees for the day.

An overriding concern of Slinfold residents - expressed both by those in favour and those opposed - was of lack of prior consultation and information and of what they perceived as an abdication by West Sussex County Council. Velo South provided only sketchy information in advance, and some of that quite late in the day. Flyers were not delivered to individual houses until only a couple of months before the event. Residents who contacted the Parish Council pointed out that they had commitments planned many weeks or months before that would now be disrupted. A number of people with regular commitments - for example caring for relatives or livestock - would also be seriously affected.

Having sponsored the idea of a cycle race, and after the initial introduction by yourself in April and May 2018, West Sussex County Council left all major contact with the public to Velo South - even we, a fellow Council, were directed to them. When trying to make contact, our Chairman was told that Velo South would be making arrangements such as temporary car parking and escorted routes to help residents cut off by the closures. But it appears that none of this was done - the only mitigating arrangement we are aware of was for a major local business. Other residents complained of getting no meaningful response to their concerns.

Some of our residents are angry that West Sussex County Council have supported this event, and then seem to have left it to others to deal with the consequences. They complain that the Council seems to have been captivated by ideas put forward by an offshore company which stood to make considerable profit from the event. They are sceptical of the boost to the local economy that Velo South and the County Council were promoting **and that it was being sold as a Charity Event which clearly was not the primary objective.**

The County Council's approach to this event also put Slinfold Parish Council in a difficult position. We had no information from, or consultation with, the County Council prior to the decision to go ahead with the event. The first notable briefing document from Velo was mid-April and we used this to inform our residents, at the earliest opportunity, in our Parish Council News in June. This was at our own cost. Communications to residents and business should have been much earlier and the cost of doing so should not have fallen to Parish Councils. Velo promised to letter drop circulations in May 2018, there is little evidence that this happened in our parish.

We were not given any specific contact details of the relevant people in the County Council which we would have reasonably expected although we did contact you directly regarding some of our concerns. The County Council put the Parish Council in the position where our only response to contact from a concerned resident was to ask them to "contact Velo South". It is unacceptable that your actions should so disempower local representatives.

We also do not understand why roads had to be closed for so long during the day. Some roads around our Parish would have been closed from 07:30 to 15:00 - with a number of affected residents and businesses told that they should just stay at home for that time. We are aware of other mass-participation events where rolling closures have been used, yet this suggestion was dismissed out of hand by the Cabinet Member in a Council meeting.

If the County Council thinks about doing something similar in future then it must ensure that:

- Information is available far in advance of the event, which must make clear the expected benefits (in concrete terms) to the communities that will be affected by the disruption, and put in place an effective consultation mechanism;
- An event is fully risk assessed. The Risk Assessment should be shared with Parish Council's along the route and their views consulted upon;
- The organiser understands the vital need to provide access for local residents and businesses, and the County Council must be sure that the organiser will put in place suitable arrangements;
- Rolling road closures are used wherever possible, and closures are kept to a minimum;
- The County Council is clearly and constantly in overall control of planning for the event, and provides an effective communication channel for residents and businesses;
- There is transparency on financial aspects, and a clear and meaningful financial contribution from the organisers to benefit local communities.

We look forward to receiving your response, thank you.

Yours sincerely



Mary Burroughs

PARISH CLERK on behalf of Slinfold Parish Council