

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **8th December 2009**

Present:

Cllr. Burgess (Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Clarkson, Claughton, Clokie, Cowley, Ellison, Heyes, Woodford. Mr M J Angell, Mr P M Hill, Mr R E King, Mrs E Tweed, Mr J N Wedgbury.

Apologies:

Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr M A Wickham, Mr T Reed (KALC Representative).

Also Present:

Cllr. Naughton

Andy Phillips (Head of Transport – Ashford’s Future Company), Phil Gilbert (Local Transport and Development Manager – KHS), Steve Rivers (Community Delivery Manager - KHS), Liz Wedgwood (Transport Planner – KHS), Jamie Watson (Project Implementation Manager – KCC), Paul Jackson (Head of Environmental Services – ABC), Richard Alderton (Head of Planning & Development – ABC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Jeremy Baker (Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

323 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clokie	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Tenterden and Districts Residents Association	328 & 329

324 Minutes

A Member said that the KALC Representative had made quite an issue at the last meeting that Charing Parish Council had agreed that the existing stretch of Charing Hill with a 60mph limit should remain, rather than making it 40mph for the whole length, and he was surprised to see no reference to that in the Minutes. The Member said that when this matter was reported back to the Parish Council at their next meeting following the JTB, the Parish Council voted to support that the whole of Charing Hill be 40mph.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 1st September 2009 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

325 Transport Forum

The Board received the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the meeting held on the 20th November 2009. The Forum had considered updates and discussion on: - Train Services (with particular reference to the proposed Southern Railway timetable changes) and Bus Services.

The Chairman advised that the bulk of the discussion at the meeting pertained to the next item on the Agenda.

Resolved:

That the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the meeting held on the 20th November 2009 be received and noted.

326 Recommendations from Transport Forum in Relation to Southern Trains Timetable Consultation – Proposed Withdrawal of Direct Ashford to Brighton Service

The Chairman of the Transport Forum introduced the item which highlighted the recommendation of the Transport Forum in relation to Southern's proposed withdrawal of the direct Ashford to Brighton service. The Forum had received a presentation from Southern Railways in relation to their proposed timetable changes and Members had objected to the proposals because passengers from the Ashford end of the line seemed to be losing out. The present direct Ashford to Brighton service taking 1 hour 50 minutes was being discontinued and there would be five extra stops and a need to change at Eastbourne which would add 19 minutes to the journey, plus the time needed to change train. Southern's contention that the proposal would create better connectivity with High Speed 1 was in his view a façade and whilst there was a need to alleviate some of the overcrowding, all of the benefit seemed to be going to people between Hastings and Brighton. He urged the Board to support the recommendation that they respond to the consultation on behalf of Members from both Councils asking that the direct Ashford to Brighton service be retained.

Other Members supported the view of the Chairman of the Transport Forum. This was a very popular service and the 0715 train from Ashford could currently get passengers into Brighton just after 0900 which was extremely useful. Two extra carriages between Eastbourne and Brighton would not be the panacea to the issue of overcrowding as this would only bring the train to the level it should always have been at. A Member said he had asked at the Transport Forum that the overcrowding be kept under constant review but he had not been given that assurance.

The Chairman (of the Board) said that a number of people from the Appledore area were very keen on the new proposals. The opportunity to connect to St Pancras in just over an hour was very attractive so there was a bit of a split on the merits or otherwise of the proposals.

Other Members said that on the issue of High Speed trains, they were worried that this was the thin end of the wedge and the start of plans to exclude Ashford. KCC had formed a Group which would be crucial to the High Speed network involving train operators from the UK, France, Holland and Germany and which would try to protect the interests of passengers. Initially people from the South Coast had objected to having to drive to Ebbsfleet to catch HS1 as they wanted to come to Ashford so any moves to diminish rail services for Ashford should be treated with suspicion. Ashford was a hub for High Speed 1 and Eurostar and no obstacles should be put in the way of those people who wanted to use it. There was concern from Members about what may happen with the High Speed trains come the 2012 Olympics and the possibility that Ashford may be by-passed in favour of quicker services to Ebbsfleet so the initiative of setting up the aforementioned group was welcomed.

Resolved:

That the Board respond to Southern Railways Timetable Consultation asking that the direct Ashford to Brighton service be retained as part of the new proposals.

327 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

A Member referred to the petition regarding on-street parking received via the Kennington Community Forum and the request for a "slow" road marking at the junction of Thirlmere/Grasmere Road, and was concerned that nothing seemed to have happened regarding this issue since December 2008. At the last meeting in September Mr Gilbert had undertaken to chase this item so was there any positive information? Another Member said he had recently received an e-mail indicating that the request for a marking had been refused and would not be considered further due to the lack of a crash record. The Member who originally raised the issue said that this was disappointing as Inspectors had been out to the site on numerous occasions to ask residents to cut foliage back and surely it would be cheaper in the long run to put down some "slow" markings rather than keep paying call out fees. Mr Gilbert said he would check the status of the request and report back. Members expressed disappointment that decisions over potential road safety improvements seemed to be increasingly predicated by the number of accidents. A lot of what people were asking for was based on good traffic management and road improvement sense and action should not only be taken after accidents had happened.

Resolved:

That the Tracker Report be received and noted.

328 Proposed Alterations to the Waiting Restrictions in East Hill, Tenterden Area

The report detailed the results of the recent consultation in respect to the implementation of safety restrictions in East Hill, Tenterden and additional minor amendments to restrictions in neighbouring roads. Mr Wilkinson outlined the proposals in full and a summary of the objections received.

In response to a question Mr Wilkinson said that they would endeavour to use primrose yellow for the lines rather than the more strident shade of yellow. The lines may appear quite bright initially but they did fade over time.

Resolved:

- That (i) **the amendments to the waiting restrictions be implemented as proposed with the exception of the removal of an existing 9 metre length of double yellow line on the south-western side of Beacon Oak Road to the north-west of the Green Hedges access.**
- (ii) **subsequent to the removal of the reference to the above mentioned 9 metre section of double yellow line in Beacon Oak Road, the Kent County Council (Various Roads, Borough of Ashford) (Waiting Restrictions and Street Parking Places) (Amendment 14) Order 2009 be made.**

Recommended:

That the implementation of the scheme be funded through the Transport Initiatives Reserves (on-street parking surplus account).

329 Proposed Alterations to the Waiting Restrictions & Parking Places in High Street, Tenterden

The report detailed the results of the recent consultation in respect to the implementation of changes to the waiting restrictions and parking places in the vicinity of Tenterden Town Hall, High Street, Tenterden in order to accommodate the agreed implementation of a forecourt area as part of the Tenterden Improved works. In addition the proposed traffic order amendment contained a number of additional minor amendments to restrictions relating to the High Street parking bays utilised by the Friday Street Market. Mr Wilkinson outlined the proposals in full and a summary of the objections received.

In response to a question Mr Wilkinson said that restrictions would be marked by single yellow lines and the nearby signs would clearly show the day and time when restrictions applied.

Resolved:

- That (i) the amendments to the waiting restrictions and parking places be implemented as proposed.
- (ii) the Kent County Council (Various Roads, Borough of Ashford) (Waiting Restrictions and Street Parking Places) (Amendment 15) Order 2009 be made.

330 M20 Junction 9/M20 Bridge and Drovers Roundabout Improvement Schemes – Progress and Approval

Mr Phillips introduced the report which updated the Board on progress with the schemes and in particular the Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) funding agreement, land acquisition negotiations, design and public consultation for both schemes. The Board was asked to note the progress being made and recommend the approval of the scheme designs to the Executive. He confirmed that there was £15.1m of RIF investment allocated (a repayable loan rather than a grant) and informal agreements with two developers for a total of £5.4m funding. The various legal agreements would need to be concluded and signed before the works orders were placed and this was due for March 2010, so there was a tight timescale. Mr Phillips also showed a short video clip demonstrating modelled traffic flows at the new signalised Drovers Roundabout including the bus priority lane through the middle of the roundabout. Members considered this graphic gave an excellent illustration of the proposal and hoped to see things presented in a similar way in the future.

The following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- The bus priority lane would not be implemented fully for operation until Park & Ride and Smartlink were up and running but the initial works had to plan for this as they would be criticised if subsequent works were needed in a few years time. The bus priority lane would mean that they did not have to have additional stop lines or signals at the roundabout.
- It was hoped that by signalling the roundabout this would control the speed and make it safer than a free flowing roundabout. There would be a lot more traffic in the area in the future so something did have to be done.
- The design for the footbridge would consider disabled users and there had been discussions with the Ashford Access Group and they had taken away comments about ramps, gradients, level resting areas, seating, safety balustrades, handrails and the contrast of edges.
- The Highways Agency had been involved on the Steering Group for this project so there was a co-ordinated approach in terms of the Drovers Roundabout and the one underneath Junction 9. There were concerns about the current state of Junction 9 and the increasing number of instances of cars queuing back onto the motorway but it was envisaged that signalisation there would allow more traffic to get off the motorway and slip road than at present.

- The A20 exit on to the Drivers Roundabout was currently a key queuing point but it was hoped that queuing would be distributed more evenly when the new roundabout was operational.
- There were illustrations of the proposed footbridge available and these could be provided to Members on request.

Recommended:

- That (i) the progress being made and the results of the public consultation on the schemes be noted.**
- (ii) the schemes layout plan no. B0973500/001 be approved, but without prejudice and subject to planning permission (or development consent order) being granted for the M20 bridge (and a development consent order being granted for the Junction 9 scheme if necessary).**

331 Victoria Way Major Highway Scheme – Initial Phase

The report updated the Board on progress with Kent County Council's proposals to provide a transport link between Victoria Road and Leacon Road through a combination of improvements to the existing Victoria Road and Leacon Road coupled with the construction of a 0.58km length of new single carriageway. Mr Watson ran through the scheme as outlined in the report including aspects of art, engineering and public realm. The complete Victoria Way regeneration scheme would be delivered in phases and this report referred to the initial phase (Phase 1) which would be implemented with the approved Community Infrastructure Fund funding.

Mr Watson then gave a short presentation which included the plans for Victoria Square and impressions of the likely completed design including materials, finishing and public art. He also explained that there were potential parking alterations for residents and businesses in Victoria Road and Victoria Crescent and copies of the letter informing them of the changes, along with an information leaflet which would also be sent out, were tabled for Members information.

The following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- Mr Watson would endeavour to find out the cost of the proposed lamp columns and the existing ones in Elwick Road. He accepted the point about the new ones potentially not matching the more elaborate and expensive columns used around the former ring road and that some of the money spent elsewhere in the scheme could be used to provide higher quality lamp columns. In terms of using "cheaper" materials they were looking for a "halfway house" between good quality materials and ones that could be properly maintained. This was on Phase 1 of the scheme so they did not want to go with anything too elaborate that may need to be replaced later on in the scheme.

- The proposed pavilion in Victoria Square was fairly small and whilst there was the potential to develop it for further uses in the future, it would initially just be used as a shelter. If that was not the desire that would need to be looked at again. In terms of whether the pavilion could be used as a kiosk and Victoria Square as some sort of performance area, this was possible but was not in the initial plans. Mr Watson said that the public art elements consisted of the hoardings and pavilion. He took on board the comments about the design of these and that Victoria Square “lacked vision” so he would go back to the design team to see what else could be produced. Victoria Square would not be suitable as a viewing area for the railway as it lay some 9 metres below the level of the track.
- Mr Phillips said there was a need for some caution regarding plans for Victoria Square. During Phase 1 there would not be any other development around it apart from the existing primary school and electricity sub-station. Zed Homes was scheduled for later so initially it would not be an area that attracted people to it, it would be for passing through but not really stopping or dwelling. Smartlink would not be operating there for at least another two years so it was important to bear in mind the two visions – the initial function and the emerging plans for the whole Victoria Way corridor.
- The final vision for Victoria Way would include cycling facilities but this would not be for the entire length of the road up to Brookfield Road but only the eastern element.
- There was no shared space element to this scheme. Footways and cycleways were totally separate from the carriageways.
- Officers were examining what works could be done at an earlier stage to speed the project up. Tenders were already out and they were hoping to award the contract by February. There might be an opportunity to do prior utility works in places such as Victoria Road and Leacon Road.
- There was a legal obligation to report back to this Board any objections received to the parking arrangements.
- It was not known at this stage if the whole stretch of road would be named Victoria Way when completed, but this was the working title during the project.
- In terms of safety there would be a controlled pedestrian crossing at the learning link and there would also be enhanced lighting and CCTV in the area.
- Traffic flows in Brookfield Road and Elwick Road would reduce but probably by less than 10%. Victoria Way’s main purpose was to serve the traffic coming in from the south west of the town rather than circulating around it.

Whilst supporting the overall Victoria Way scheme, Members expressed general concern about the public art aspects including the bespoke lighting columns and design of the pavilion. Rather than asking Officers to come back to the Joint

Transportation Board and risk delays to the overall scheme, the Board agreed to bring the areas of concern to the attention of the Executive.

Recommended:

That the Executive continue to support the scheme but that the concerns about the design of the bespoke lighting and the pavilion in Victoria Square be noted.

332 Draft Ashford Cycling Strategy

Ms. Wedgwood introduced her report which set out the purpose of the draft Ashford Cycling Strategy and clarified that she was asking for Members' support to take the draft out to formal public consultation.

Members were very supportive of the draft strategy and congratulated Ms. Wedgwood for the work she had undertaken thus far.

The following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- Officers had been working with schools and the Primary Care Trust to promote the health benefits of cycling and were hoping to have a series of launch events involving the schools.
- In developing the strategy Ms. Wedgwood had been working with Strategic Sites Officers in an attempt to get developers to put more secure cycle parking into new developments, and she was pleased to say this was starting to happen.
- They were looking to promote "Bike to Work" Schemes amongst more local businesses.
- Unfortunately it appeared that the bid for the Willesborough Dykes cycle link had been unsuccessful at present.
- Improving the "pinch point" at Blackwall Lane was the number 1 priority in the strategy. This was recognised as an unsafe area. The project was ready to go and awaiting funding.
- There had been a lot of work undertaken surrounding the maintenance budget available for cycle routes. A special separate budget had been achieved but this needed to be worked through properly to identify areas for priority. Provision for litter picking would also be put in place.
- The potential for using the A20 from Charing to Ashford as a cycle route would be examined.

Resolved:

That the draft Ashford Cycling Strategy be taken out to formal public consultation.

333 Ashford Town Centre Streets – Disability Workshop Update

The report updated on the first workshop with disability groups that reflected part of the ongoing monitoring of the Elwick Road shared space scheme.

A Member reported that a further workshop had taken place during the previous week and both had been informative and constructive. Whether the Design Team would address the matters raised at the workshop was another matter but he said he was cautiously optimistic. The full shared space scheme had been in place for just over a year now and, without being complacent, he was pleased to say there had been no reported accidents despite the initial outcry the concept had caused. He had also been encouraged by a comment from a representative from one of the organisations for the blind who had flatly denied the assertion that Ashford was a no go area for blind people.

A Member asked if there was any update on when the Department for Transport were likely to approve the no parking signage for Bank Street as visually impaired people were finding it difficult to negotiate around the vehicles there. Mr Watson said this was a significant issue and he was pleased to say that the signing and lining would be put in place during January in time for enforcement to begin in February. There would be communication to those people who used Bank Street informing them that the area would be properly enforced from February 2010.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

334 Highway Alterations to Latitude Walk Development, Ashford Town Centre – West Street/Godinton Road

Mr Phillips introduced his report which provided an update on progress with Kent County Council's proposals to complete the highway alterations to the frontage of the new Latitude Walk development in West Street/Godinton Road.

A Member said that this area was close to a part of the shared space where there was still huge traffic congestion at the West Street/Forge Lane and Lidl's junction. He sought re-assurances that this proposed work would not make the situation any worse. Mr Watson said that the works would all be off carriageway and it was not envisaged that it would have any significant impact on traffic flows.

Another Member said there was still confusion at West Street and "The Bolt" as traffic did not realise they had to stay right to go straight ahead. He said that better signage was needed as he had seen lots of cars cutting back in at the last minute

and this was dangerous. Mr Watson said that there would be improved signage both approaching, and immediately at "The Bolt", although that was not part of the Latitude Walk scheme.

Recommended:

That the Executive continue to support the scheme.

335 Ashford Station Forecourt Improvements

Report withdrawn for further discussions with Ashford Borough Council's Policy Advisory Group in the New Year.

336 Highways Works Programme Progress 2009/10

The Chairman introduced this information report updating Members on the identified schemes approved for construction in 2009/10.

A Member said that he had been in contact with KCC's Public Rights of Way (PROW) Officer concerning Orlestone Forest and the opportunity for introducing seasonal access permits because of the number of off road vehicles damaging the area. He asked that this be added to the programme as it would require public consultation. Officers agreed to bring this matter to the attention of the Mid Kent Community Delivery Manager and the PROW Officer.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

337 Response to Petition Submitted Regarding a Bus Service at Brisley Farm, Ashford

The report explained that a petition was submitted to Ashford Borough Council's full Council meeting on the 8th October 2009 regarding a lack of a bus service serving the Brisley Farm Estate, Ashford. The response letter from Kent Highway Services was set out for information.

A Member said he was concerned that the petitioner had been advised to submit this petition to the Borough Council when it was clearly a County Council matter. It was noted that the petition had been forwarded to Kent Highway Services immediately but surely this had simply added an unnecessary layer to the process.

Another Member said he was concerned about the proposals as the number 13 service which was proposed to be extended in to Brisley Farm only ran during the week as an hourly service and currently served an important market. Extending the service to Brisley Farm would add to the journey times of those people. The residents of Brisley Farm could easily walk to other existing routes within five or ten minutes and any extension to the number 13 route was not the best way forward.

After discussion the Board agreed that as this was a tendered service and ultimately within the responsibility of Kent County Council, they would note the actions of Kent Highway Services but recommend that if it was possible, an extra bus should be put on to serve Brisley Farm so that the current number 13 service was not disrupted.

Resolved:

That the response to the petition from Kent Highway Services be noted but if it is possible to add an extra bus to serve Brisley Farm, rather than disrupting the current number 13 service, then this should be pursued.

338 Kent Highway Services Update

The report was an update for Joint Transportation Boards across Kent following the KCC Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 10th November 2009, to cover highways and transport issues across the County.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

339 Date of Next Meeting

A Special Joint Transportation Board Meeting had been arranged for 14th January 2010.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:
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