

## Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **1<sup>st</sup> September 2009**

### Present:

Cllr. Burgess (Chairman);

Mr M A Wickham (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Clarkson, Claughton, Clokie, Davison Ellison, Heyes.

Mr M J Angell, Mr R E King, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mrs E Tweed, Mr J N Wedgbury.

Mr T Reed – KALC Ashford Area Committee

### Apology:

Mr P M Hill.

### Also Present:

Andy Phillips (Head of Transport – Ashford's Future Company), Tim Reynolds (SmartLink Project Manager – KCC), Phil Gilbert (Local Transport and Development Manager – KHS), Carol Valentine (Community Delivery Manager - KHS), Jamie Watson (Project Implementation Manager – KCC), Daniel McLeish (Transportation and Development Engineer – KHS), Paul Jackson (Head of Environmental Services – ABC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Matthew Hooper – (Quantity Surveyor – ABC), Hayley Curd (Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

## 186 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Burgess	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society	191
Clarkson	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society	191
Clokie	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Tenterden and Districts Residents Association	191
Davison	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Ashford Rural Trust and the Campaign to Protect Rural England	191

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
King	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society and the Campaign to Protect Rural England	191
Koowaree	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society	191
Wickham	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of the Weald of Kent Protection Society	191

## **187 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **188 Transport Forum**

The Board received the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The Forum had considered: - Industry Updates and Discussion (with particular attention to Bus and Rail Services); The Future of the Transport Board, and Ashford International Station Improvements.

A Member referred to the comment within the Chairman's Report that the attendance at the Forum meetings by Kent County Council (KCC) Officers was unsatisfactory and asked what had been done to ensure a better level of attendance by KCC Officers in the future. Mr Gilbert (KHS) reported that he had had discussions with Mr David Hall on this subject and that Mr Hall would be in touch with the Chairman.

With reference to page 4 of the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum, a Member corrected a reference to comments he had made at the meeting and confirmed that Para 5.4 should have read: "If the Forum was going to focus on one main agenda item per meeting in the future he considered the External Representatives might wish to suggest items for the agendas". It was agreed that these amendments should be brought to the attention of the Members of the Transport Forum at the next meeting when considering the Chairman's Report.

### **Resolved:**

**That, subject to paragraph 5.4 being amended to read "If the Forum was going to focus on one main agenda item per meeting in the future, he considered the External Representatives might wish to suggest items for the agendas", the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009 be received and noted.**

## **189 Recommendations on the Future of the Transport Forum**

The Chairman of the Transport Forum introduced the item which highlighted the recommendations of the Transport Forum following the discussion that had taken place on its future. There had been a decline in the interest and attendance at the Forum and discussions had taken place with Officers to make the Forum more strategic.

During the discussion it was confirmed that some elements of the recommendations were already being put in place, such as the appointment of Borough Council Members to the Quality Bus Partnership Group and High Speed Trains Task Group.

The Board agreed with the recommendations and Mr Phillips was asked to promote as many of the changes as possible, whilst it was understood that any changes to the Terms of Reference of the Forum would need to be considered by the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee.

### **Recommended:**

- That:**
- i) the Transport Forum be retained, but should meet twice yearly.**
  - ii) the Transport Forum take the role of an information exchange meeting, inviting six monthly structured updates from all transport providers and authorities with the option of receiving specialist presentations when relevant.**
  - iii) Borough Council Members be appointed to the Quality Bus Partnership Group and High Speed Trains Task Group.**
  - iv) the Terms of Reference of the Joint Transportation Board be amended to include the provision for some issues to be referred back to the Transport Forum to allow them to spend some time discussing them and drilling down into them, in a similar way that the Policy Advisory Group does for the Executive, before reporting back. Additional meetings to consider referred items would be arranged.**

## **190 Tracker Report**

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

There was some discussion as to the age of some of the items on the Tracker. It was confirmed that items stayed "live" on the Tracker until there was a follow up report. In the case of the Disabled Access to the Town Centre item, this was a historic item, but was not resolved. A Member reiterated that disabled parking was a very live issue and it was high on the agenda of the Ashford Access Group.

At the previous meeting of the Board, a Member had sought further information as to whether there had been any further progress on the “slow” road marking at the Thirlmere/Grasmere Road Junction (Min No 94/06/09 refers). The KHS Officer present at that meeting had undertaken to investigate this and give some feedback to the Member. The Member reported that this had not happened. Mr Gilbert undertook to chase the item.

A Member sought confirmation as to the current situation regarding the junction of Barrey Road and the A2070, as, in her opinion, this was a very unsafe junction and had been safer when the cones had been in place during the Junction 10 works. Mr Gilbert reported that there was a scheme worked up, but it was entirely dependent on external funding. Another Member confirmed that the Highways Agency had been approached regarding replacing the cones, but this proposal was not financially viable.

A Member had been surprised to see that there was not an item on the Agenda from Bethersden Parish Council regarding speed limits. The Chairman explained that the Parish Council had been informed that there would be a Speed Limit Review item on the agenda for the December meeting and that the Parish Council had agreed to wait to consider the report before taking any further action. Mrs Valentine confirmed that this was the case and that the view of Bethersden Parish Council may be altered by the results of the survey. A Member was hopeful that the views expressed by Members during consultation on speed limits would not be ignored. The KALC representative added that they were hopeful that as part of the review there would be a general discussion on the 60mph limit in villages, and that if there was not to be a reduction in speed limits in villages then they would wish to see better signage, warning of entering a village, financed by KCC. A Member asked if there was a national review on speed limits and Mr Gilbert reported that whilst he was aware of a government consultation on reducing the national speed limit to 50, he was not aware of a national speed limit review.

**Resolved:**

**That the Tracker Report be received and noted.**

## **191 Tenterden Improved – Town Hall Forecourt Improvements**

Mr Hooper – Quantity Surveyor, Ashford Borough Council, introduced the report of the Economic Development Manager setting out the new streetscape improvements for Tenterden. These improvements followed the implementation of the Station Road works, which were well within the Tenterden Improved project budget. The improvements included new fingerpost signage for visitors in the High Street, new heritage railings at East Cross and proposals to pave the forecourt outside Tenterden Town Hall. The report also provided details of the public consultation that had taken place in July 2009 in Tenterden, which showed positive public support for the schemes.

The Leader reported that there was overwhelming support for Option 1 as it would improve the image of the Town Hall and streetscape of Tenterden. He detailed the changes and reported that Tenterden Residents were very much in favour of the improvements and that these all formed part of the market town initiative.

A Member added that the Officer responsible for the report should be congratulated for producing such an excellent report and for ensuring such a full consultation was carried out.

**Recommended:**

**That the Executive be asked to:-:**

- i) Approve the Town Hall Scheme (Option 1).**
- ii) Delegate authority to Ashford Borough Council Officers to submit amendments to Traffic Regulation Orders to enable the implementation of the Town Hall forecourt improvements.**
- iii) Approve the Signage Scheme for Tenterden as set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.**
- iv) Approve the new railings at East Cross (Corner of Recreation Ground Road and the High Street) within the budgets of the Tenterden Improved Project.**

## **192 Chilham Square Parking and Traffic Review**

Mr Gilbert introduced the report of the Transportation Engineer which set out the details of various issues which had been identified by the Parish Council as affecting the historic village square. The main concerns which had been highlighted to Kent Highway Services were around vehicles using the square as a short cut; uncontrolled parking within the village square; the lack of footpaths from the car park; and large vehicles such as HGV's and coaches using the village square. As a result of the Parish Council's concerns and proposed improvements, Kent Highway Services had commissioned Jacobs to carry out a study of the village square and the report provided the results of the survey and conclusions drawn.

The report recommended that a scheme for Chilham Square be included in the Scheme Priority System (SPS) in a bid for priority funding in a future financial year. It suggested that the measures to potentially be included were: -

- Delineate the central parking area in Chilham Square by marking out parking bays.
- Subject to public consultation and the necessary Traffic Regulation Order, introduce "At Any Time" waiting restrictions at the entrances to the village square.
- The introduction of a number of disabled bays in the village square, subject to the necessary Traffic Regulation Order

- The improvement of the Taylors Hill car park signing and the introduction of the wording “Free” to the car park signs to encourage its use.

Mr Gilbert confirmed that the proposals to mark out parking bays could be carried out using lines of blocks rather than areas of block paving and as an alternative to painted lines. For disabled bays to be enforceable they would need to be marked out with the appropriate white markings.

A Member agreed that the matter had been looked at carefully and supported the proposals. It was confirmed that any scheme drawn up would be consulted upon.

**Resolved:**

**That a scheme for Chilham Square, including the potential measures set out in the report, be included in the Scheme Priority System (SPS) in a bid for priority funding in a future financial year.**

## **193 Ring Road/Shared Space Update**

Mr Watson introduced his information report on the progress with Kent County Council's proposals to re-configure the one-way A292 Ashford Ring Road into a series of two-way streets. The report also provided an update on the Bank Street and Elwick Road shared space projects. Mr Watson reiterated certain points from his report in particular the problems in Bank Street regarding problems with certain paved areas and the enforcement of the restricted parking zones, the works to be completed at the top of Church Road, and some of the problems being encountered with the Elwick Road Scheme. With regard to the Shared Space Workshop - Disability Group Issues report, the Officer had not been available and as such the report would be brought to the December JTB meeting instead.

A Member reported that he was happy to learn that the raised areas within the shared space were being marked as he was aware that there had been accidents. In addition, he agreed that the Flume in Elwick Road was letting down the impressive achievements of the scheme so far and as such did not compliment the ambience of the area. He had not, however, been impressed with the art contribution of electronic speakers playing a series of recorded messages of memories of life in Ashford, and considered that many people would not even know what the speakers were for. He also considered that the amendments to the signalisation of Forge Street had been successful and urged Mr Watson to prevent any time being taken off the light sequence.

In defence of the decision to install the “Flume” in the materials used, the Leader explained that it had been a difficult decision and that consideration had been given to so many users' needs. Sadly the final scheme had been more like a “rubber sole” and it was evidence of a scheme ruined by safety.

A Member added that they were concerned regarding the level of failing slabs within the pavement structures. He enquired if there had been impact tests carried out and replacement costs calculated and whether the supplier was prepared to meet these costs.

With regard to the safety improvements with the raised bus kerbs, and the clarification of the disabled bays, a Member was happy to see progress but was disappointed to learn that the findings of the shared space workshop, which had taken place 8 months prior had still not been presented in a report.

In answer to the various comments raised, Mr Watson gave the following responses:- “The Flume” – a cleansing regime would need to be established and cyclists should not be using it; the Art had been commissioned by Seeda; the signalling had been made as effective as possible in the current circumstances and there was no talk of any changes to green times being made but the issues would be discussed with the KHS Traffic Signal Team; the paving issues in Bank Street – the blocks were not intended to take the weight of parked vehicles and the damage was concentrated where vehicles were parking, negotiations with the supplier would take place and it was hoped some costs would be covered by them; with regards to the shared space workshop, he would speak with the relevant Officer regarding the next workshop.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## **194 SmartLink**

Mr Phillips and Mr Reynolds introduced their joint report which set out the progress to date on the vision for the proposed SmartLink Bus Rapid Transit Scheme, and set out the plans to submit a major scheme business case to the Department for Transport by the end of 2009 for funding from April 2011. The main aim of the Scheme was to reduce traffic numbers and the associated traffic problems.

Mr Phillips reported that the ‘Vision for SmartLink’ brochure distributed to Members was a draft and would be finalised at the end of the week with quotations from Messrs Clokie; Chard and Pyle in support of the scheme.

They then gave an informative presentation to the Board on SmartLink under the following headings:- “When is SmartLink needed?; How will SmartLink be funded; Where will SmartLink run?; Potential Priority Schemes; Securing the network’s efficiency; and the SmartLink Programme”. Mr Phillips confirmed that a final promotional document supporting the presentation would be available in due course.

There were split opinions on the proposals with some Members fully supporting it and encouraging other Members to visit examples of similar schemes and pushing the importance of dedicated “tracks” for the buses, whilst others had concerns with the details and the impact of the scheme on road users and the signalisation of roundabouts. The Chairman suggested Mr Phillips organise a trip for Members to see a similar successful scheme in operation as part of the consultation process.

Mr Reynolds reported that if the plans were to attract as much funding as possible, they had to achieve a good benefit/cost ratio. Separation and segregation were costly but effective so they were incorporating as much segregation into the scheme

as possible. He also explained some of the proposed routes and reassured the members on access for them.

A Member added that introducing plans for a Park and Ride was not new, but welcomed the proposals. He considered that this all hinged on the business case and questioned the sense of pursuing funding when the economy was so fragile?

Mr Phillips responded that they needed to be “ahead of the game” for the funding bid in what was likely to be a very tight funding round and assured Members that they had considered many options for the park and ride previously and linking it with the delivery of SmartLink offered the best opportunity for delivery. He also assured members that a number of options for Drovers roundabout improvements had been considered and he had concluded that signals offered the most effective way of controlling traffic and getting the buses through. Members were assured that they would be consulted on all aspects of the business case before it was submitted to the government later this year.

**Resolved:**

**That the Board:**

- i) Supported in principle the vision for the SmartLink Bus Rapid Transit Scheme, for the purpose of public consultation.**
- ii) Noted the progress made on the scheme to date and the programme for public consultation and finalising the business case bid to the Department for Transport.**
- iii) Noted that there would be a further report to the Borough Council’s Executive and Kent County Council in due course, seeking approval of the draft bid and business case before submission.**

## **195 Junction 9/Drovers Roundabout**

Mr Phillips introduced his joint report with Mr Watson on the M20 Junction 9/Drovers Roundabout Improvement Scheme. Capacity improvements would be required at a number of sites to the west of Ashford and a bid had been made for forward funding these improvements from a new Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF). The report set out the basis for using the RIF fund and sought the Board’s support, in principle, for the outline scheme.

Mr Phillips then gave a short presentation on the proposals and talked through the infrastructure schemes and costs and how all the schemes interlinked. He added that by doing as much work as possible in one go, it would overcome some of the problems encountered when large schemes were carried out in a number of phases triggered by progress on developments. He concluded that the recommendation was “in principle” and the plans would then go to full consultation and formal decisions would be recommended at a future meeting.



The main concerns raised were against signalisation of the roundabout which, it was considered by some Members, worked adequately without such measures, and that the whole scheme was being engineered to push people onto the buses. Mr Phillips confirmed that all of the schemes were intended to improve people's travel choices overall and encouraging new residents to Ashford to have a genuine choice of travel rather than only have the car. It was important to recognise that the growth of Ashford which had been fed into a traffic model and more road improvements would be needed without SmartLink. The modelling of the junction also showed that signals would be required with or without the SmartLink priorities but that the scheme proposed would be the best way forward and then in the future there would be the opportunity to use the signalling to prioritise traffic flow.

A Member considered that it was the school traffic and the numerous local developments which caused the problems at the Drivers Roundabout and any changes made would need to be right or the area would be gridlocked. The Leader added that it might be a case of trusting that signalisation was the best way forward and to trust the advice being presented. Mr Phillips agreed that getting the proposals correct was of paramount importance but explained that none of the schemes could progress without the land first being made available. Mr Watson assured Members that adequate capacity calculations were being carried out and the impact and "buildability" of any works on existing traffic was also being taken into consideration.

There was some discussion as to the knock on effect of the improvement scheme to the adjoining roundabout and Mr Phillips confirmed that whilst this area had not been designed for improvement as yet, it was likely that it would become a larger signalised roundabout also.

**Recommended:**

**That the Board support in principle the outline scheme for capacity improvements at M20 Junction 9/Droivers roundabout using RIF funding and recommends the same to the Councils' Executive for approval for public consultation in the Autumn.**

## **196 On-Street Parking Charges**

Mr Wilkinson, Engineering Services Manager, Ashford Borough Council, introduced his report on reinstating the link between on- and off-street parking charges. He explained that when the scheme was introduced within the ring road in 2000, parking charges on-street were set in line with that of the off-street (car park) charges in order to avoid providing a financial incentive to town centre visitors to monopolise the on-street spaces; thereby increasing the likelihood of residents and their visitors being able to park close to their properties. Subsequent off-street charge increases had not been matched on-street which had resulted in the on-street parking charge being lower per hour than the car park charge and this balance needed to be reinstated.

**Recommended: -**

**That the Executive be asked to resolve to bring on-street parking charges in Ashford Town Centre back in line with car park charges in order to safeguard the ability of residents and their visitors to park close to their homes and to maintain the balance between on- and off-street charges in the event of future charge increases.**

## **197 Ashford's Future Update (Including Victoria Way)**

Mr Phillips introduced his report which provided an update on the transport schemes that the Ashford's Future Company would be leading on over forthcoming years. These included Victoria Way; M20 Junction 9/Drovers Roundabout; M20 Junction 10a; Ashford Station Improvements; SmartLink Bus Rapid Transit incorporating Park and Ride. Member's attention was drawn to additional plans on the display boards within the Council Chamber showing the Victoria Way improvement scheme.

Mr Watson gave further details on the current situation and explained that there were some land acquisition issues, and detailed the process that would be followed if the objections to land acquisition were not negotiated. It was hoped that works would begin in April, but statutory undertakers may undertake works in advance of this date.

A Member raised concerns regarding the traffic signals at Loudon Way and what the proposed changes would be to this stretch of road. Residents feared a dual carriageway. Mr Phillips explained that the stretch of road between the Tank Roundabout and the Matalan store was being carefully considered for some limited improvement before the Victoria Way improvement was opened, or there was a danger of other routes becoming clogged. Loudon Way had been identified as the area where there could be congestion issues and the work to rectify this and improve capacity would be relatively small. He concluded by saying that any plans for dual carriageway works were some years away.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## **198 Highways Works Programme Progress 2009/10**

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

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Hayley Curd:  
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