

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **14th September 2010**.

Present:

Mr M A Wickham (Chairman);
Cllr. Burgess (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Clarkson (ex-officio), Cowley, Heyes
Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr J N Wedgbury.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Mrs Bell attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Claughton.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Claughton, Feacey, Woodford.
Mr M J Angell, Mrs E Tweed.
Mr T Reed – KALC Ashford Area Committee.

Also Present:

Phil Gilbert (Local Transport and Development Manager – KHS), Andy Corcoran (Local Transport and Development Manager – KHS), Carol Valentine (Community Delivery Manager – KHS), John Farmer (Major Projects Manager – KHS), Paul Jackson (Head of Environmental Services – ABC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), John Burns (Operations Manager Parking Services – ABC), Jeremy Baker (Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development – ABC), Kirsty Liddell (Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

Stephen Bourner (Sustainable Transport Projects Officer – Ashford's Future), Neil Bowsher (Optimum Consultancy).

171 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Mr Wedgbury	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Member of Kingsnorth Parish Council.	174

172 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 15th June 2010 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

173 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

A Member referred to minute number 467 09/03/10 and queried whether the Church Road crossing was being progressed by Section 106 monies that had been received as a result of the Hunter Avenue development. He had asked for the works to be progressed using his Members Highway Fund however had been told by Officers based at Henwood that this was being dealt with using Section 106 monies. Mr Gilbert advised that he was aware that there was a list of Section 106 monies that needed to be spent, however he would check the status of this project and report back to the Member.

Resolved:

That the Tracker Report be received and noted.

174 Ashford Cycling Strategy

A Member queried why cycle trees had been suggested as a form of cycle parking as this method was far more expensive than traditional bars, there also appeared to be a lack of cycle bars in the Town Centre. Clarification was also requested regarding the cycle route from Godinton Park to Orchard Heights and how the route would cross the railway line? Mr Gilbert advised that cycle trees and lockers were deemed to be more exotic options which had been favoured by respondents to the consultation. He further advised that he could not comment on the detail of the Godinton Park to Orchard Heights cycle route however he would take the question back to the report author and ask them to report back directly with a response.

The Member was disappointed that the report did not detail locations for cycle parking. Mr Gilbert advised that it had not been the intention of the strategy to go into such detail.

A Member drew attention to the recently launched cycling scheme in London and wondered whether a similar scheme could be run alongside the Park and Ride scheme that was planned in Ashford.

The item was then opened up for questions/comments:

- The strategy was welcomed and the hard work of the report author was noted.
- There was a need to guard against creating paper and talking about a scheme but it not coming to fruition.
- There were numerous cycle routes in Ashford that needed to be linked up as many just finished at a dead end.
- The cycle path suggested by Appledore Parish Council was fully supported by the Vice-Chairman and he asked for assurances that the scheme would proceed.
- The Cyclopark in Medway had proven to be successful; a similar scheme could be suitable for Ashford.

- A Member queried whether a Chilham to Canterbury cycle route was being investigated.

Mr Gilbert advised that he was aware that a Canterbury to Chartham and beyond cycle route was being progressed, he would enquire whether this route would be extended to Chilham and would report back to the Member.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Ashford Cycling Strategy is approved by the Joint Transportation Board;**
- (ii) the Strategy is reported to the Kent County Council Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval as Policy;**
- (iii) the Strategy be referred to the Ashford Borough Council Environmental Forum for consideration and their views be reported to the Executive.**

175 Payment of Parking Charges by Phone and Proposed Amendments to the On and Off Street Parking Places Order

Mr Burns introduced the report which detailed a number of minor alterations and updates to the On and Off Street Parking Places Order and included details on proposed 'Phone Parking' facilities in the Borough. The 'Phone Parking' facility would be made available in all Ashford Borough Council car parks and on street parking zones. The facility would overcome numerous issues experienced by motorists including delays returning to vehicles which resulted in Penalty Charge Notices being issued, as motorists would be able to 'top up' their parking ticket by phone without having to return to the car park. The facility would provide benefits to the Council which included less demand on machines which after a period of time would result in reduced maintenance costs. Mr Burns outlined both proposals in more detail to the Board.

The item was then opened up for questions/comments and the following responses were given:

- There would be no cost to the Council in respect of the 'Phone Parking' facility. Each visitor would be charged an administration fee per transaction, which was estimated to be 20 pence.
- A cost of 1.5 to 2.5% per transaction would be made by the Merchant for each credit or debit card transaction that was carried out, the Council was negotiating with the Service Provider regarding the cost of this.
- The variation of the hours of operation for the Civic and Stour Centre car parks had been necessary as the car park was closed from 12midnight until 5am and so the Off Street Parking Places Order needed to be amended to reflect this.

- Carbon metered parking was a long term database which would be compiled by the Service Provider which would be used to identify vehicles which used car parks or on street parking on a regular basis and had low emissions, and would enable the Council to offer them benefits such as reduced parking charges. It was emphasised that this was a long term objective.
- If the Council was unable to negotiate a 'no cost' contract for 'Phone Parking' in the Borough then the scheme would not be pursued.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Board recommend to the Executive that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to enter into a contract with the chosen 'Phone Parking' provider;**
- (ii) permission be given to prepare and advertise Traffic Regulation Orders to introduce various changes to the On and Off Street Parking Places Orders;**
- (iii) any unresolved objections to the proposed amendments be brought to the attention of a later meeting of the Board.**

176 Resolution of Objections Received to Proposed Disabled Person's Parking Bays During Informal Consultation

Mr Wilkinson introduced the report which sought the agreement of the Board for the introduction of a Panel, consisting of the Board Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the relevant Ward Member, to deal with objections received during consultation on informal disabled persons' parking bays. There had been an increase in the number of objections that had been received to consultations and it was felt that it was appropriate for Members to make the determination, not Officers. It had been deemed inappropriate for such matters to be discussed at meetings of the Board, as the meetings were held in public and sensitive information would need to be considered. Mr Wilkinson outlined the proposal in more detail to the Board.

The item was then opened up for questions/comments and the following responses were given:

- Approximately 10% of applications for informal disabled persons' parking bays were contested.
- It was proposed that the Panel would hear from both the applicant and the objector(s), however this would need to be looked at in greater depth once the Panel had been set up.
- When individuals who had informal bays either moved away or no longer required the bay it was often the case that they did not inform the Council.
- A maximum of 5% of bays in a single road were permitted to be converted into disabled parking bays.

During discussion the membership of the Panel was debated in great detail with the following suggested as potential options:

- (i) Board Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Ward Member
- (ii) Board Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Independent Member
- (iii) Board Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Member selected from Board
- (iv) Board Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Portfolio Holder.

The Board felt that the more appropriate option would be (iv) with the Ward Member as a non-voting Member, who provided the Panel with evidence and local knowledge where relevant.

Resolved:

That with immediate effect, a procedure be set in place by which all objections received during consultation on the proposed implementation of informal disabled persons' parking bays which cannot be resolved by Officers be decided upon by a Panel consisting of the Joint Transportation Board's Chairman and Vice Chairman and the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, along with the relevant Ward Member who would be a non-voting member of the Panel.

177 M20 Junction 9/Bridge and Drovers Roundabout and Victoria Way Improvement Schemes

Mr Farmer introduced the report which provided an update on progress with the delivery of both the M20 Junction 9/Bridge and Drovers Roundabout and Victoria Way Improvement Schemes.

The M20 Junction 9/Bridge and Drovers Roundabout scheme had been progressing well, the earthworks had been raised and duct crossings were being completed. The critical part of the scheme was the erection of the feature bridge over the M20, which had been set back due to the preferred supplier having ceased trading. There were two scenarios being considered regarding the closure of the M20:

- A 33 hour closure, from 20:00 Saturday to 05:00 Monday.
- A Friday, Saturday and Sunday night only closure.

There were traffic implications with both of these options however the contractor favoured the 33 hour closure. It was however a balancing act and both options needed to be considered along with potential diversion routes through the Borough.

Draft landscaping plans for the scheme were on display and would be left in the Members' Room for viewing after the meeting. These had been submitted to Ashford Borough Council's Strategic Sites and Design Manager who had made the following comments:

- Greater use of the embankment slopes near Junction 9 for planting would be preferred.

- More formality in the planting regime was requested from Warren Lane to Drovers Roundabout.
- Increased planting on Drovers Roundabout would be welcomed.

Mr Farmer emphasised that these were draft plans and invited further comments from Members.

The Victoria Way scheme had experienced some difficulties, which had not been anticipated when the contract had been let, these included contaminated land found under the abattoir site and the establishment of temporary facilities for Southern Gas. However, good progress had been made in recent months and the site team were focused on gaining time back. There was a possibility that the works would not be completed until May or June 2011 which was beyond the funding agreement deadline, however the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) were aware of the situation and had been supportive. Mr Farmer further advised that the HCA had agreed to the capitalisation of the enhanced costs of protecting the public realm asset for a 15 year period.

The item was then opened up for questions/comments and the following responses were given:

- The bollards in place around Drovers Roundabout were in place every day for consistency, whilst it may not always be obvious to motorists that work was being carried out it was deemed safer for the placement of the bollards to be consistent so as not to confuse motorists.
- It was necessary to adjust the number of lanes of traffic during peak hours to allow for a constant flow of traffic as there was a requirement set in place by the Highways Agency that traffic did not tail back onto the motorway.
- It was noted that there were concerns that the reinstatement of increased lane numbers was being delayed in the afternoon. Mr Farmer advised that some of the works that needed to be carried out had to be done within a specific window of time and this had caused delays in the reinstatement of increased lane numbers. He advised that he would discuss this matter with the site team.
- Concerns were raised about mud/dust from site lorries exiting the Victoria Way site onto Victoria Road. Mr Farmer advised that he would discuss this with the site team.

During discussion the closure of the M20 to allow for the bridge to be installed was debated in depth. Members had concerns regarding a 33 hour closure of the motorway and felt that when a diversion route was being planned through Ashford it should include two routes, one for London bound traffic and a second for coast bound traffic. It was also suggested that provided an advanced publicity campaign was employed then lorries should be diverted along the M2/A2 which would alleviate the impact of the closure on the Town Centre and other routes through the Borough.

Resolved:

That (i) the progress on both schemes be noted;

- (ii) **the Board recommend to the Ashford Borough Council Executive and the Kent County Council Cabinet Member that the finalised maintenance schedule and enhanced maintenance costs and capitalised funding arrangements agreed with the Homes & Communities Agency for Victoria Way be agreed.**

178 Station Forecourt Improvements Update

At the request of Mr Bournier, Mr Bowsher advised that there had been a stakeholder meeting the week previously to revisit the design options and to discuss the issues that had been raised by various parties and well documented in the media, however they had been unable to resolve these conflicts. An update had been presented to the Ashford's Future Partnership Board earlier that day which had resulted in the Board requesting time to reconsider the potential options and ways forward.

A Member, who had chaired the Stakeholder meeting felt that it had been unfortunate that the concerns raised by those involved in the process had not been resolved. Another Member felt that the initial handling of the project had been regrettable.

Mr Baker advised the Board that Ashford Borough Council Legal Services had not been consulted on the contents of the report and there were a number of points which required clarification:

- In relation to paragraph seven of the report which stated that Ashford's Future Company would be the 'client' for the project Mr Baker advised that this had not been agreed at the present time regardless of the outstanding question over its VAT status.
- Suggestions had been made that the 'client' could be a Local Authority; however he was unaware that either Kent County Council or Ashford Borough Council were in a position to act as the 'employer' of the contractor.
- The report identified that the land that was to be used for the Improvements was owned by Network Rail and SEEDA. It was therefore appropriate for either Network Rail or South Eastern Trains to act as the 'employer' of the contractor. If that were not the case, further complex arrangements regarding liability and risks, as well as a possible further planning application would be needed. Engagement with Network Rail regarding various issues, including its commitment to future maintenance, was proving difficult.

Mr Bowsher advised that a landlord and tenant arrangement was operated between Network Rail and South Eastern Trains, and that "Station Change" discussions had been taking place between them.

Resolved:

That the report was received and noted with reservations.

179 Park and Ride Site – Update, Layout and Planning Application

As the report author was not present Mr Farmer introduced the report. He advised that there would be a public consultation in October 2010 regarding the Park and Ride Site.

The following comments were made by Members, which Mr Farmer agreed to report back to the report author:

- Why was such a large amount of cycle parking provided? It seemed that this was excessive unless a park and cycle scheme would be run along side the park and ride scheme.
- Did Ashford need three Park and Ride sites? There had been doubts raised regarding the sustainability of the schemes.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

180 Highway Works Programme 2010/11 Update

A Member drew the Board's attention to Appendix D3 of the report and the amendment of lining to Chart Road, Ashford. He advised the Board that the centre line had been moved and appeared to have been painted on the highway in a 'snake like pattern' which was distracting to motorists. He further advised that the proposed sign had not been erected. Mr Gilbert advised the Member that he would take the matter back to the office for investigation.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

Mrs Valentine advised the Board that the Minutes of the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of Winter Maintenance had not been included on the agenda. The Board agreed that these should be included on the agenda for the December meeting of the Board.

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