

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **13th December 2011**

Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Claughton, Heyes, Robey, Yeo.
Mr M J Angell, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mrs E Tweed, Mr J N Wedgbury.
Mr R Butcher – KALC Ashford Area Committee.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Davey, Feacey, Mr P M Hill, Mr R E King.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Galpin, Michael, Wood.

Andrew Burton (Project Manager – Kent Highways & Transportation (KH&T)), Lisa Holder (District Highway Manager Ashford – KH&T), Paul Jackson (Head of Environmental Services - ABC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

261 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Mr Wedgbury	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – His wife worked at Henwood Industrial Estate but had off road parking	265
Yeo	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – President of the Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA); and Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Daughter worked at Henwood Industrial Estate but had own parking spaces.	263 265

262 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 20th September 2011 and the Special Meeting on the 11th October 2011 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

263 Transport Forum

The Board received the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the Meeting held on 18th November 2011. The Forum had considered: - winter preparations and discussions on bus services, highways, trains and taxis.

A Member said that in the absence of the Transport Forum Chairman he had been asked to raise a couple of points. The Forum had been extremely disappointed that work to the Ore Tunnel would mean the complete closure of the Ashford to Hastings line for 9 weeks from 9th January 2012, and that Southern were not proposing to offer at least an Ashford to Rye service instead of a full bus replacement service. If the journey was to take two and a half times longer, then it was considered that passengers should be adequately compensated. It was important not to push passengers back into their cars as a result of these works and then not return to the train. A letter had been written to Southern making these points. The Chairman of the Board said that similar points had been raised at a recent Marshlink Steering Group meeting he had attended and he would be interested to hear Southern's reply.

Additionally another letter had been sent to Stephen Gasche at KCC regarding the Kent Rail Action Plan, expressing the Forum's support for including Ashford in a potential direct Kent to Gatwick rail link when the franchise came up for renewal in 2015. The Leader of ABC said that this fit in with the Cabinet's strategy and he would be happy to add their weight to those calls.

Resolved:

That the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the Meeting held on the 18th November 2011 be received and noted.

264 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

Mr Jackson said it was worth taking some time to discuss parking reviews across the Borough as this was an issue that needed some clarification. There was an ever growing list of requested parking schemes, particularly being raised by Members and Parishes, and it was getting increasingly difficult to manage those requests and ensure that they were prioritised correctly. Some parking schemes had already commenced, some were crash remedy schemes, some concerned bus access, others were backed up with KCC Member Highway Funding, whilst others were supported by Borough or Parish Members but did not have any funding. So there

was a whole body of schemes on the table but they had to go through the proper process. It was also worth noting that if there were similar schemes it was always preferable if they could be grouped together to achieve economies of scale and it was important to make sure work could be resourced properly by engineers. Without going through the individual issues at the meeting, because they all had their merits and competing Member interests, it was proposed to go through the 2012/13 suggestions with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and bring a report to the March 2012 meeting of this Board in an attempt to draw up a priority list.

In response to a question Mr Jackson advised that funding was a key issue so if a scheme already had the support of Member Highway Fund monies, it was likely to be pushed further up the priority list.

A Member advised that the parking scheme agreed at the last Meeting in October for Furley Park Primary School was already paying dividends. The vast majority of people were much happier with the situation now and it had made the area safer for all road users.

A Member mentioned the proposed traffic calming measures in Bluebell Road & Roman Way, Park Farm and Church Hill, Kingsnorth. This issue dated back to 2006 and he had recently had a site meeting and discussions with local residents as the problem was getting worse. He knew that Section 106 money was sitting somewhere and some design work had been done, but he asked Mrs Holder and Mr Burton to investigate this further. He understood a BT junction box may have to be moved which could cause complications, but the money for the works was there and the junction needed to be made safer. Mr Burton endeavoured to bring an update on this back to the next meeting of this Board.

Resolved:

That the Tracker be received and noted.

265 Amendment 19 – Proposed Highway Safety Scheme in Henwood Industrial Estate: Update Report

The report advised that at the Special Meeting of the Board on the 11th October 2011, the decision was taken to approve the Amendment 19 Highway Safety Scheme in principle, but defer implementation in order to allow further discussions with businesses/employers with a view to providing alternative parking solutions for their employees and visitors, and for an examination of the charging regime in Henwood Car Park. This report updated Members on the progress made to date on those issues.

Mr Wilkinson advised that there had been a meeting with one of the largest employers on the estate (Kent Community Health NHS Trust) and a survey had been letter dropped to all businesses on the estate in order to request details of their parking demand and off-street facilities. The response rate to the survey had been poor and the results had been questionable as they seemed to suggest a much higher level of on street parking than was actually taking place. A further 'beat'

survey had taken place to establish how many vehicles parked on street and the length of time vehicles parked and a peak of 90 vehicles had been observed between 10.45 and 11.15. An average of 83/85 vehicles were observed during the rest of the day with the number falling away towards the late afternoon. Therefore it was clearly long stay car parking by employees coming to work. The Scheme as proposed would provide 50 safe on-street parking spaces so it was reasonable to assume there would be a shortfall of around 40 spaces if the Scheme was implemented. The capacity of Henwood Pay & Display Car Park was 61 spaces, with only 3 or 4 being occupied at present. The implementation of parking restrictions would also inevitably bring about some behavioural changes (such as car sharing and public transport use) so he would expect the shortfall to be lower than 40, although it was difficult to quantify exactly how much.

Mr Jackson said that the meeting with the NHS had been extremely useful. They had identified that they had around 23 off road parking spaces and whilst they had around 150 staff, over 100 of those were clinicians who simply visited the office between visits to clients and did not park for any length of time. Therefore, perhaps the NHS was not the main contributor to the problem as previously thought as a number of other businesses had un-met parking demand. The meeting had also given them a better insight into how the NHS operated as an organisation (both at Henwood and other sites). He said it was important to point out that many of the businesses were being inconvenienced by the on-street parking on the estate and were asking the Council to push ahead and get this scheme done.

One of the Ward Members for the area said he would like to thank the Officers for the hard work they had put in on this Scheme. He said it would surely be preferable to have a full Pay & Display car park with customers paying a reduced rate than a car park with only 3 or 4 cars in it paying £4 a day. At present the car park was basically a redundant asset. Officers agreed that this was one potential solution to the problem. At present people could park on street for free and if they could do this, they would not pay to use the car park. They would probably even prefer to park on-street if they could if the car park were free so that they were closer to their own units. That was why it was important to get the parking restrictions in place and look at a sensible level of charge for the car park.

The ABC Cabinet Member re-iterated that it was the businesses who had asked the Council to do something about the parking situation on Henwood. KCC had made funding available but it would not be available for ever so it was vitally important that they got on and started to implement this and she hoped it would be done by the spring at the latest. The Cabinet was looking at options to reduce the daily rate at the car park, but it was important to not make it so low that they encouraged people in from outside Henwood. The Leader said the Cabinet was keen to facilitate businesses operating in and around Ashford so would certainly entertain the idea of flexible pricing. He said the Cabinet had also already stated that the Council would be looking to dispose of all idle assets, so it was important to find a solution involving the Henwood Car Park if possible.

In light of those comments, the Board proposed an amended recommendation. The scheme was already agreed in principle and the only major outstanding point to agree seemed to be the pricing structure for employees on the estate using

Henwood Pay & Display Car Park. Therefore, rather than waiting three months for the next meeting of this Board, it was proposed that, in consultation with key Members, a report be submitted directly to the Cabinet detailing a proposed pricing scheme for the Henwood Pay & Display Car Park for employees on the Henwood Industrial Estate. It was explained that there may have to be some sort of permit scheme introduced to ensure that only employees benefitted from the lower rate.

Resolved:

That in consultation with key Members, a report be submitted directly to the Cabinet detailing a proposed pricing scheme for the Henwood Pay & Display Car Park for employees on the Henwood Industrial Estate, which would be implemented with the already agreed Amendment 19 Highway Safety Scheme.

266 Highway Works Programme 2011/12 – Including Victoria Way, Drovers Roundabout and Eureka Skyway – Post Opening Update

The report updated Members on the identified schemes approved for construction in 2011/12 as well as a post opening update on the major capital projects – Victoria Way, Drovers Roundabout and the Eureka Skyway. Mrs Holder introduced the report and explained that both she and Mr Burton (regarding the Major Capital Projects) were available to answer Members' questions.

There were a number of comments about the Drovers Roundabout and the current works on the A20 past Repton Park and Orchard Heights.

In response Mr Burton made the following points: -

- The current works on the A20 were Developer Funded Schemes separate to the Drovers Roundabout Scheme. The cones and lane closures were there to purposely slow traffic down, but he did not realise they had been causing congestion. The site hut should also not be obstructing the footway and he was surprised as the roadworks had received a 4 star accessibility approval from the Roadworks Inspector, but he apologised if this was the case and said he'd be happy to speak to the KALC Member about this outside of the Meeting. The works would only last for one more week but he would go back and check these points. Perhaps the lane closure did not have to stretch quite so far as it did currently.
- There had been no accident data since the Drovers Roundabout had become fully operational as data came in after 12 weeks. Suffice to say that the Police were currently happy with safety issues at the roundabout.
- There were still a large number of defects that had to be remedied by the contractor. It was extremely embarrassing but he made no apologies for continuing to pursue them with the contractor and said they would make sure that they stayed there until the work was done. The contractor would be making a loss now for every extra day they spent on site so he did not know

what else could be done. Therefore it was difficult to give a definite end date for a total completion and this was extremely frustrating.

- He was unaware of the email circulating from the Ashford Driving Instructors about the lane markings and signage at the roundabout but would appreciate a copy. Members still had serious concerns about misleading advice when approaching the roundabout, especially when using the fourth lane and turning right and the potential for this to cause accidents. Additionally, although the sequencing of the traffic lights had improved, there were still times when, because the lights were so close together, they did not allow a lot of traffic through and it did cause tailbacks and obstructions on the roundabout. Mr Burton said that after the last meeting of the Board an Independent Safety Auditor had again looked at the operation of the roundabout and no hazards had been picked up, although he accepted it could be dependent on how the junction worked at a particular time. The lights on the roundabout itself should change fairly quickly, precisely to stop traffic tailing back dangerously so he would go back to the engineer to make sure the system was working properly. The system was such an exact science that even a slight adjustment may make a significant difference.

Members were keen to point out that their dealings with Andrew Burton throughout these Schemes had been very good. He had often found himself in a very difficult position but had always responded promptly and honestly to Members' queries.

In terms of the rest of the Works Programme the following issues were raised: -

- The County Member for the area said that he was delighted that the missing link of the John Wallis Academy to Park Farm cycleway would be completed. He asked to be informed outside of the meeting how much had been paid for the necessary land and where that money had come from.
- A County Member asked about Magpie Hall Road and whether a weight restriction could be placed on it as it was a C Road. In the past they had been informed that this could only happen when an additional highway had been provided running east to west, and now with the opening of Victoria Way, that was in place. Mr Burton said there was no likelihood of KCC funding any additional weight restrictions and whilst it could be funded from Member Highway Funding, it would not be enforced by the Police.
- Gully cleansing was needed at nos. 17 to 27 Romney Road, Willesborough and nos. 199 to 201 Kingsnorth Road, Ashford.
- The Leader and one of the Cabinet Members had attended the Ashford Town Centre Management Board earlier that day and concern had been expressed about Ashford and Ebbsfleet becoming 'giant car parks' during the course of the 2012 London Olympics, and the knock on affects that may have for day to day car park users. It was noted as something for ABC to keep an eye on.

- A Member mentioned the phasing of the traffic lights at Junction 10 of the M20 and asked if this could be looked at as quite often there were tailbacks at some junctions and nobody at all waiting at others
- At Somerset Road turning right to Lidl there were two lanes turning right and a County Member said these were extremely narrow. There had recently been an accident involving a lorry and a car as the lorry had had to stray across both lanes to turn right. She wondered if it was sensible to have two lanes turning right here or whether the junction could be engineered differently.
- The potential resurfacing of the M20 between Junctions 8 and 9 by the Highways Agency in 2013 was raised, as many local people had been campaigning for years for a quieter surface. Mr Burton said that as he understood it there were no resurfacing plans, but he would check that point.

DS

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees