

# Ashford Borough Council

## Report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012

### 1 Introduction

1.1 A Meeting of the Transport Forum was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

#### **The Borough Council Members present were:-**

Cllr. Feacey (Chairman);  
Cllr. Yeo (Vice-Chairman);  
Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Davey, Heyes, Wedgbury.

#### **Also Present:-**

Lisa Holder – District Highway Manager Ashford – Kent Highways & Transportation  
Ray Wilkinson – Engineering Services Manager – ABC  
Kirsty Liddell – Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC.

#### **The External Representatives were:-**

D Bruce – KCC Passenger Transport  
D Docherty – Stagecoach in East Kent  
C Evans – KCC Passenger Transport  
S Gasche – KCC Public Transport  
M Gibson –Southeastern  
V Kenny – Ashford Town Centre Partnership  
Y Leslie – Southern  
R Tandy – Stagecoach in East Kent  
S Whybrow – Ashford Independent Taxi Driver Association

### 2 Apologies

2.1 Apologies for absence had been received from:-

Cllrs. Claughton, Hodgkinson

T Read – KCC Transport Policy Manager.

### 3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 Councillor Feacey declared a Code of Conduct Interest (Personal but not Prejudicial) as he was the Managing Director of Energyshift Ltd who worked with members of the taxi trade.

3.2 Councillor Yeo declared a Code of Conduct Interest (Personal but not Prejudicial) as the President of the Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA).

## **4 Chairman's Report of the Transport Forum Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

- 4.1 The Chairman's Report of the Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011 was confirmed as a correct record.
- 4.2 The Chairman raised the discussion at the last meeting about CTRL funding for a control system at Godinton Road Bus Gate. Ms Holder advised the Forum that there were no longer funds available. A Member was shocked that the funding was not available and asked Ms Holder to investigate and to report back in a more detailed manner. Ms Holder advised that she would look into this.
- 4.3 With regard to the works at the Ore Tunnel, Ms Leslie advised that some speed restrictions on the line had been removed which had resulted in an improvement in performance.
- 4.4 Mrs Kenny advised that she had attended a meeting with Jacobs regarding the signage around the Town Centre. It was proposed to extend the signage to ensure better guidance for visitors. She had also received some complaints from residents in respect of refuse around the Tank in the Town Centre and along Station Approach. It had been hoped to hold a clean-up in the Town Centre prior to the Jubilee celebrations and the Olympics, however due to the hosepipe ban they had been unable to utilise the deep clean equipment. She had been contacted by BTCV who had indicated that they wished to help with a litter pick close to the Olympics. It was agreed that the Chairman would contact Network Rail to express the Forums concerns surrounding the amount of litter along Station Approach. Mr Wilkinson advised the Forum that immediately before the Olympic flame came to the Borough the route would be swept and litter picked.

## **5 Update from KCC Transport Policy**

- 5.1 Mr Gasche from KCC Public Transport reiterated Mr Read's apologies for being unable to attend the meeting. He advised the Forum that a long term objective was to extend bus services to the planned new developments. The commitment to smartlink was still there. The Rail Action Plan provided a unified view for the County. Improvements to the off peak HS1 service would be requested as part of the new franchise agreement in 2014. These improvements would include two trains an hour from Canterbury West and Dover, which would result in a doubling of capacity at Ashford.
- 5.2 Works to the Canterbury line would be phased and would result in the removal of speed restrictions. Phase 1 would be carried out between Ashford to Canterbury West which would produce a time saving of three minutes, and the second phase would be carried out between Canterbury West and Ramsgate which would produce a time saving of five minutes. It was hoped that phase 1 would be completed by April 2014.
- 5.3 Further to the announcement of Transport for London's (TFL) bid for the South East franchise, Mr Gasche advised that he had met with TFL and a broad agreement had been reached. This should be looked on as an opportunity not a threat. It was important to note that TFL and the Mayor of London did not have any authority to 'take over' rail services in Kent. Mr

Gibson further advised that such a scheme would have to be agreed by the Department for Transport, who at the present time had indicated that they were not convinced of the merits of the proposal. The Chairman added that local MPs were concerned by the proposal as there would be a lack of local accountability.

## **6 Industry Updates & Discussion**

### **Bus Services**

- 6.1 Mr Docherty of Stagecoach in East Kent reported that there had been improvements to services and the renumbering strategy had proven to be a success. There had been a bit of confusion with the renumbering strategy to begin with, however this had now been resolved. An extra journey in the morning peak time from Singleton had been added to the A-Line, with some evening journeys calling at the Station. An additional evening journey had been added to the B-Line and the afternoon 518 service would return via Victoria Way instead of Brookfield Road. Four Solo buses had been introduced to the C-Line, this had made a considerable difference to the punctuality of the service. The Solo buses were smaller and thus able to get around the route easier. The 123 Service to Biddenden had been extended to Biddenden Vineyard, this had been highly successful and an increase in passenger numbers had been recorded.
- 6.2 Mr Evans of KCC Passenger Transport said that there had been a successful retender for the Number 13 Service. He highlighted a number of routes that had been renumbered. The renumbering strategy would create a logical pattern to bus services across the County.
- 6.3 Mr Gasche of KCC Public Transport advised that they had investigated the Better Bus Area Fund, however it was only available to Urban areas with populations of over a quarter of a million people. 'Talking buses' were an aspiration and as with many things reliant on funding

### **Highways**

- 6.4 Mr Docherty raised some concern over the lane markings at Drovers Roundabout. Vehicles were regularly in the wrong lane and swerved in front of buses, in one instance this had resulted in a bus breaking suddenly which had caused injury to some of the passengers on board. Mr Gasche endorsed Mr Docherty's comments. Ms Holder confirmed that she would take the matter back and report to the next meeting of the Forum. The Forum requested that the matter be referred to the next meeting of the Joint Transportation Board.

### **Trains**

- 6.5 Ms Leslie of Southern advised that the services provided by First Capital Connect, South Central and some Southeastern services would be put out for tender in October 2012 with the preferred bidder being announced in May 2013, from July 2015 all of the Southern services would be included in this franchise. The consultation would be held in June 2012 and she felt that it was crucial for views to be put forward on the future franchise.

- 6.6 A lot of work had been undertaken to get ready for the Olympics. Network Rail had suspended all engineering works, with works at London Bridge to be completed after the Olympics.
- 6.7 In response to a question regarding the length of the train on the Ashford to Brighton service, Ms Leslie advised that the train consisted of diesel rolling stock of which there was only a small fleet available with no more being built. She advised that this feedback would inform the franchise and urged Members of the Forum to feed this information into the consultation process.
- 6.8 Mr Gasche advised that KCC had a long term objective to see a rail service from Kent to Calais, to realise this objective it would be critical to change the signalling system at Ashford. This would enable new international rolling stock to use the line at Ashford.
- 6.9 Mr Gibson of Southeastern said that performance was currently running at 92% on mainline services which was above target. There had been some timetable changes however there had been no major impact on local services. Services on HS1 would be affected by the Olympics, season ticket holders would be compensated. London terminals were expected to be extremely busy and as such workers in the capital were being asked to alter their working patterns if possible.
- 6.10 In response to comments regarding the availability of toilets on HS1 trains and issues with the lifts at Ashford Station, Mr Gibson agreed that neither situation was acceptable. In respect of the toilets this was an issue around management and he would report this. The lift had been reported to Network Rail, Southeastern took this issue seriously and apologised for any issues that the closure of the lift had caused. This issue was, however, ultimately outside of the control of Southeastern.

### **Taxis**

- 6.11 Mrs Whybrow reported that the taxi trade were concerned that there were no stopping facilities in Victoria Way. There should be provision made to allow for the collection and dropping off of passengers. It seemed to be that provision was made for buses and the needs of the taxi trade were not even considered. There was further concern expressed about the closure of public conveniences as was restrictive for taxi drivers, especially in the evenings. Mrs Whybrow drew attention to the lack of signage towards the taxi rank in and around the Town Centre. She felt that taxis could not be located and worse still there were limited places available for dropping off passengers.
- 6.12 Mr Wilkinson advised that six bus clearways were proposed along Victoria Way (Victoria Road/Leacon Road), only one objection had been received which would be debated by a panel consisting of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Transportation Board, the Portfolio Holder and the Ward Member(s). There were taxi bays located in the Town Centre, it was however important to remember that there were a number of users competing for limited space in the Town Centre. The needs of all users needed to be balanced. The Civil Enforcement Officers applied discretion, where appropriate, for the collection and dropping off of passengers by the taxi trade.

## **Other Issues**

- 6.13 Mrs Kenny advised that there had been a number of issues in Park Street with the highway being obstructed by deliveries, refuse bins and cages from Iceland. Mr Wilkinson further advised that Park Street was a problem area. He suggested that this issue could be looked into, however it would need to be approved as a scheme to be looked at and unfortunately there was already a very long list. It was agreed that the Transport Forum would write to the premises that were contributing to the obstruction of Park Street.

## **7 Date of Next Meeting**

- 7.1 The next Meeting would be held on Friday the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

Councillor P Feacey  
Chairman – Transport Forum

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Queries concerning these notes? Please contact Kirsty Liddell:  
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