

## Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **12<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

### Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Claughton, Davey, Feacey, Heyes, Robey  
Mr J N Wedgbury

### Apology:

Mr S J G Koowaree

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Michael, Wood.

Toby Howe (Highway Manager East Kent – KCC Highways & Transportation (KCC H&T)), Lisa Holder (District Highway Manager Ashford – KCC H&T), Paul Jackson (Head of Environmental Services - ABC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

## 24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Claughton	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – Chairman of the Ashford Access Group	29
Mr Wickham	Code of Conduct – Personal but not Prejudicial – A Member of Pluckley Parish Council	27

## 25 Minutes

The Vice-Chairman said he would like to give an update on the Public Right of Way Crossing at Hamstreet Station. Following this issue being raised at the last Meeting and the Board agreeing to write to Network Rail about their future plans for the crossing, there had been a number of developments: - It had been discovered that Hamstreet Station was listed; Network Rail had confirmed that they were consulted on the plans for the Lancaster Close development and had asked for Section 106 contributions towards lights and gates at the crossing; KCC Councillor Mrs Tweed had highlighted the matter at the Annual Rail Forum at County Hall; and Nigel Whitburn of Sussex Community Rail Partnership had also sent a letter of support

and considered that the removal of the barrow crossing should be coupled with the installation of an 'over' bridge and signage for both the footpath and disabled access via the main road. Whilst there had been no action yet from Network Rail, there had been a recognition that something needed to be done and the Vice-Chairman considered it was important to keep up the pressure.

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **26 Transport Forum**

The Board received the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012. The Forum had discussed bus services, highways, trains and taxis.

The Chairman said he wished to raise a few points coming out of what had been a constructive meeting. Firstly there was the issue of the two Bus Gates at Godinton Road and Beaver Road, where the problems were well known and long running. The CTRL funding for a control system at Godinton Road seemed to have disappeared and he considered it was important to locate this and progress the system as soon as possible. Secondly was the lane markings at the Drovers Roundabout where bus drivers were having to brake sharply due to vehicles regularly being in the wrong lane and swerving in front of buses. On one occasion the sudden braking had caused injury to some of the passengers on board. The police may have said that the roundabout was safe but it was clear that the markings were wrong and this was a safety issue which Members considered should not be left unchecked. There may not have been any recorded accidents but there had been plenty of near misses. Looking ahead to the future, the Forum wanted to hold a special meeting in advance of the Thameslink Franchise being awarded where the bidders would be invited to come and give presentations to the Forum Members on their plans. It was hoped this Meeting would happen in January 2013.

With regard to Drovers Roundabout the Ward Member concurred with the comments on lane markings and said there was also confusion about some of the traffic lights and how close together they were, and grass on the roundabout which had been allowed to grow and was now affecting visibility. There were no substantial tailbacks at the roundabout and traffic was flowing freely so in that sense the scheme had been a success, but it was important that these points of concern were not ignored.

In relation to the Bus Gates a Member said that there was a need for some action. Godinton Road continued to be abused but the legislation was now in place to install controls. Money had been made available for this so he was keen to discover where that had gone. Whereas Beaver Road Bus Gate had been out of order for three or four months and after having so much money invested into it this must be false economy. Mr Howe said that with regard to the funding for a control system at Godinton Road Bus Gate, whilst they had been unable to locate the original CTRL funding he was pleased to say that funding had been identified and this would be progressed. With regard to the Beaver Road Bus Gate Mrs Holder explained that the

current issue was that particular vehicles (including the newer double-decker buses) were not being detected by the equipment because of their shape so the gate had to be made inactive as they could not have it working for some vehicles and not others. A detailed response on this had been provided to one of the Ward Members and she could make this available to other Members if they so wished.

Mrs Holder said that Officers could act immediately on the issue of the length of grass and visibility on the Drovers Roundabout and they would have a look at this tomorrow. The Cabinet Member said that safety and visibility was important but the roundabout was supposed to take the form of a wild flower garden so she hoped the roundabout would not be cut back too savagely just as the flowers were coming into bloom.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Ms Whybrow of the Ashford Independent Taxi Drivers Association spoke on this item in relation to the lack of taxi space in Ashford Town Centre. Six bus stop clearways had been proposed for Victoria Way but no provision had been made for taxis to stop there. More pressing though was the situation in Bank Street. There was no kerb space for taxis to load and unload passengers so nowhere safe to drop off disabled passengers. As Ashford Town Centre developed and new roads were being built, provision for taxis seemed to be being ignored in favour of other modes of transport and this was a problem for the disabled, some of whom relied on taxis. There was also an ongoing issue at Wilkinsons taxi rank where there was also nowhere to pick up or drop off disabled passengers. She said she would like to invite Cllr Cloughton and Mr Wilkinson to undertake these journeys in the shoes of a disabled person so they could understand the problems.

Mr Wilkinson explained that the issue of the bus stop clearways in Victoria Way would shortly be determined by a Panel of Members of this Board as there had been an objection and the Chairman endeavoured to invite Ms Whybrow to that meeting. He said that when the re-configured road space in the town centre was allocated amongst all user groups everybody had wanted more space, but it was felt that a fair compromise had been reached. Perhaps there was a need for further discussions about the issue at Wilkinsons as it appeared that kerb levels may be playing a role there. He said that the Civil Enforcement Officers did apply discretion where appropriate when it came to the dropping off of passengers by the taxi trade. The Leader of Ashford Borough Council said that in the Ashford 2030 Framework document the Cabinet had committed to looking at the town centre and the parts that did not work as well as they might. Arrangements for buses, taxis and access to the Station would undoubtedly be big parts of this. A Member who was also Chairman of Ashford Access Group said he had heard no particular comments from disabled people about this but he would raise it at the next group meeting and he would be happy to assist in this in any way he could.

**Resolved:**

**That the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the Meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2012 be received and noted.**

## 27 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions and the tabled paper which he had produced on the proposed traffic measures in Pluckley. He said that at the last meeting of the Board in March the area around Pluckley Station had been identified as priority number 1 on the proposed priority list for parking schemes, but there was now a need to urgently address a safety issue at this location. Following the witnessing of a conflict caused by on-road parking, the Police thought there was a genuine safety concern on this stretch of road and had issued a Form 1412A (commonly known as a 'pink peril') which commented on the safety aspects on this road and requested that suitable remedial action be taken.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Newman, Chairman of Pluckley Parish Council, spoke on this item. He said that the tabled paper summed up the issue well but he thought it was important to explain why the Parish Council had tolerated what, at face value, might be seen as inappropriate parking for a number of years. Because of the expensive parking charges at the Station (£4.50 a day) commuters in the main did not use the car park but instead parked on the roads around the Station. Southeastern trains claimed that usage of the car park was around 80% and they therefore did not see the need to reduce the charges, although local studies that had been undertaken indicated this was somewhat lower at around 50%. The Parish Council had opposed the proposed introduction of double yellow lines at this location during the informal consultation stage because they did not want to discourage use of the Station and there was concern that the removal of parked vehicles would result in vehicles travelling faster through the area as there were currently no speed limits. The presence of the parked cars actually contributed to making the area safer. Although they were not in favour of the lining scheme, the Parish Council had indicated that for it to be effective in safety terms it should be accompanied by the introduction of a 30mph speed limit.

The Chairman said that there was, in affect, one of two decisions to be made. Namely to do nothing and leave the situation as it was despite the receipt of the 'pink peril' as there had never been a recorded accident in this location, or to continue with the procedure for implementing the lining proposals by progressing to formal consultation. This second option could be accompanied by the suggestion for a 30mph limit along with the lining.

One of the Ward Members for the area said she agreed with Mr Newman's comments and whilst on paper it may seem strange and dangerous not to deter people from parking on the road there, people who knew the area knew that the parking presented few problems and there had been no recorded accidents. Parked cars tended to slow passing traffic down so she supported the proposal that if the lining scheme was to be implemented it should be accompanied by a 30mph speed limit so solving one problem did not cause another. There was also concern that a lining scheme might simply push the parking problem a little further along the road, rather than into the car park, although at the same time that would probably make the situation safer as it would be a straighter and more level piece of road.

Members considered that it was important to put pressure on Southeastern to reduce their car parking charges in addition to any other measures. The car park was clearly

less utilised than they thought and the excessive charge was encouraging people to park elsewhere. A fuller car park, even at a lower rate, would be an asset to the company and there was capacity in the car park to accommodate nearly all of the cars that regularly parked on the roads around the Station. The usage figures were important as Southeastern had previously said that if the car park was less than 75% utilised they would review the charges, although ultimately it was their car park and the Council could only try and influence as they had no power over the charging regime. Additionally, the Board agreed to approach KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste, Bryan Sweetland, with a suggestion that when the rail franchise was renewed in 2014, serious consideration be given to scrapping parking charges at the smaller rural Stations. A threshold would have to be set (perhaps car parks with less than 50 spaces) but people simply weren't using the car parks at places such as Charing and Hamstreet as well as Pluckley and perhaps this was something that should be built in to the bid. The Leader said that the Cabinet and Chief Executive would support that suggestion

In response to a question about the privet hedge which restricted sight lines accessing Station Road, it was explained that as it was on private land they could not compel the owners to do anything about it although KCC said they would write to the owner and ask them to consider cutting it back.

Mr Howe advised that KCC Officers would be meeting on site with the Police Officer concerned with this matter and issues such as a speed limit for the area and the validity of the 'pink peril' would be discussed. Members hoped that the Police would also be asked how much input they had sought from local people on this matter.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the Tracker be received and noted.**
  - (ii) the proposed traffic measures in Pluckley be progressed to the stage of formal consultation. The Board suggests that the implementation of any lining scheme should be accompanied by a 30mph speed limit.**
  - (iii) Southeastern be approached with a view to reducing car parking charges at Pluckley Station, based on actual usage figures of the car park itself.**
  - (iv) it be suggested to the KCC Cabinet Member that when the rail franchise is renewed in 2014, serious consideration be given to scrapping parking charges at the smaller rural Stations.**

## **28 KCC's Draft Freight Action Plan for Kent**

The report asked the Board to comment on KCC's latest draft version of the Freight Action Plan for Kent following the extension of the deadline for consultation responses to the end of June 2012. Authority was also sought to allow the Member Working Group on freight issues, set up by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to collate the comments and respond to the consultation on behalf of the Board. At the

last meeting the Board had suggested that the objectives listed in the plan should be re-ordered as some were considered to be more important than others, however it had subsequently been explained that although they were numbered they were not presented in any priority order. This had also been explained in the latest draft.

The Leader said that with regard to Operation Stack and overnight lorry parking the ABC Cabinet had agreed that they would work towards a solution with the other East Kent Districts and by way of the Locality Board which included KCC Members. They would welcome any report produced by the Member Working Group.

Members mentioned the proposal for charging freight entering the country and the 'Britdisc' which KCC were keen to put in place. This did not appear to have been mentioned anywhere in the draft document at present and the Board considered it should be.

The Vice-Chairman said that he considered the Department for Transport study into lorry parking spaces should be re-done before any firm proposals for new lorry parks were made, to ensure an appropriate level of provision was being proposed.

It was agreed that the Member Working Group would collate all of the comments and respond directly to KCC on this consultation. The final response would also be circulated to Members of this Board and the Cabinet Members. Members were reminded that should they have any subsequent comments on the document or the issue of freight in general, they could contact Katie Pettitt at KCC directly. A Member, who was also Chairman of the Ashford Access Group, said that their comments on the draft plan had also been forwarded to KCC.

**Resolved:**

**That the Board respond to the consultation by way of a collated response from the Member Working Group set up by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.**

## **29 Ashford Ring Road – Shared Space Scheme**

The report provided a brief update from KCC on the Ashford Ring Road Shared Space Scheme and its ongoing maintenance. Initial evidence had suggested that the scheme had been successful in its aims to reduce speeds and the number of recorded collisions as well as improving the street scene in the area. With regard to maintenance issues, a full investigation of these had been commissioned for the summer and once completed the necessary remedial works and permanent repairs would be programmed.

With regard to the Shared Space Scheme as a whole and the ongoing maintenance the following issues were raised: -

- The Scheme had been successful and had put Ashford on the map in many positive ways both locally and nationally. Investors were excited about Ashford's willingness to be innovative with schemes such as this one and, coupled with High Speed 1, this was attracting people to bring their businesses to Ashford. It must also be remembered that the scheme would

really come into its own once the development of Elwick Square was completed. There were still issues with the scheme though and it was important that these continued to be raised.

- Traffic continued to tail back at Elwick Road at peak times and this seemed to be due to the traffic light sequencing. This needed to be examined.
- The flume was a dangerous hazard for cyclists.
- The road leading from the 'Bolt' to County Square was confusing, particularly for visitors and better signage was needed here. Mr Wilkinson said he understood signage around the ring road was being examined and the County Councillor for the area had used some of her Member Highway Fund on a study into the matter.
- Issues remained when it came to the needs of some disability groups. There was still confusion at various pedestrian crossing points over when it was safe to cross and where there was confusion there was danger.
- Ongoing maintenance was going to be the key issue. The scheme had been a success but if three years down the line it looked a mess that success would be erased. It would be important to keep on top of this and Members sought assurances that the funding would be found to do this. Mr Howe confirmed that this was partly why the investigation was taking place and the funding would be found.

**Resolved:**

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

### **30 Highway Works Programme 2012/13**

Members raised the current works ongoing in the Lower High Street to replace and re-point the granite blocks there. There appeared to have been poor prior consultation over this scheme and businesses and residents were upset with how this had been dealt with. The Lower High Street appeared to be closed and although there had been some remedial measures the whole thing appeared to have been rushed through. The Chairman read a letter he had received on this issue from one of the Ward Members. The Member said he had received many complaints on the first day of the works (Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June) and dealt with them by contacting Toby Howe at Kent Highway Services who had been most helpful. After a long discussion regarding the complaints, adjustments had been made to the valances and railings and, as requested, a pathway had been created between Nat West Bank and the pavement on the other side. Mr Howe had agreed to meet with those people who made a complaint about the works and their details had been passed to him. The Member said he had been pleased with the help provided by, and the efficiency of, Mr Howe and would like to draw this to the attention of Board and pass his thanks on.

Mr Howe said that the works were a safety issue as the mortar was coming out from between the blocks and people were tripping over. Funding had become available and they wanted to do the job in one go by way of a permanent mortar repair, rather than piecemeal. It had also been deemed important to do it in a way that would not disrupt the Jubilee Weekend, but as quickly as possible before the Olympic Torch Relay passed through Ashford in July. He accepted that timing wise this had been a difficult issue, but in line with the Ward Member's comments he hoped that he had demonstrated his willingness to meet with traders and Members and put remedial measures in place if necessary. It was agreed that signs should be erected explaining that the Lower High Street was still open for business.

Officers agreed to feed back more information to Members on the following matters that appeared on the Highway Works Programme: -

- The creation of a new Public Right of Way linking Bockhanger Lane with the Eureka Leisure Park scheduled for 2012/13.
- The request for a weight restriction on the lanes linking the A20 to Pivington Mill, Pluckley.

**Resolved:**

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

## **31 Highway Tracker Survey**

The report informed the Board of the key results of the 2011 Resident, County Member and Parish/Town Council Highway Tracker Survey. The full survey had been published on the KCC website.

**Resolved:**

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

## **32 Winter Service Plan 2012/13**

The report outlined the arrangements that had been made by KCC to provide a local winter service in the event of an operational snow alert in the Borough.

The Board praised KCC for the good job they had done during last winter's severe weather. Roads and footways had generally been well cleared and gritted. The following points were made in response to questions/comments: -

- The Plan was still in draft so any footways that were not included and considered a priority, such as Godinton Road, could still be suggested for inclusion.
- There was also still time to make requests for salt bins. Parish Councils also had the option of purchasing their own bins and 'dumper bags'.



- The Government had made it clear that residents should be encouraged to clear snow and ice from outside their own homes without fear of being sued under health and safety guidelines. The direct.gov website did contain a 'Snow Code' which gave clear guidance on liability in public areas and what could and could not be done.

**Resolved:**

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

### **33 Bold Steps for Aviation – Discussion Paper**

The Chairman introduced the report which presented KCC's discussion document on the UK's aviation needs in the South East, "Bold Steps for Aviation". It made suggestions on how the UK's aviation capacity needs could be met without the need to develop a new hub airport in the Thames Estuary. It was intended to contribute to the national debate and was published in response to the recent proposals from Lord Foster and the Mayor of London. Members were encouraged to forward any comments on the document to [aviation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:aviation@kent.gov.uk)

During discussion the following points were raised: -

- The Ashford 2030 Framework sought to improve rail links between Ashford and Gatwick and promote Ashford as an international transportation hub. An hourly Ashford-Tonbridge-Redhill-Gatwick service had been proposed for the 2014 rail franchise and perhaps this goal should be reflected somewhere in the document.
- It was clear from the document that KCC was vehemently opposed to a Thames Estuary Airport. This would mean the closure of Heathrow Airport and the re-location of circa 100,000 jobs, not to mention the environmental and other impacts on the Grain and wider North Kent areas.
- It was acknowledged that it would be important to increase airport capacity in the South East, but there were numerous opportunities to build on existing infrastructure rather than constructing new airports. Manston for example could play a large role in this with some improvements to the surrounding road network and rail links.

**Resolved:**

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

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