

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **11th December 2012.**

Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Cloughton, Davey, Feacey, Heyes, Yeo.
Mr M J Angell, Mr P M Hill, Mr R E King, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mrs E Tweed.

Mr K Ashby – KALC Representative.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Robey, Mr J N Wedgbury.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Bell, Clokie, Link, Michael, Mortimer, Sims, Taylor.

John Farmer (Major Capital Projects Manager – KCC Highways & Transportation), Jamie Watson (Major Projects Manager – KCC H&T), Steve Darling (Traffic Engineer – KCC H&T), Toby Howe (Highway Manager East Kent – KCC H&T), Debbie Watkins (Highway Operations Assistant – KCC H&T), Paul Jackson (Head of Environmental Services – ABC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Sarah Paul (Technical Administrative Assistant – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

251 Declarations of Interest

| Councillor | Interest | Minute No. |
|------------|---|------------|
| Feacey | Announced an 'Other Interest' as a Governor of Towers School. | 257, 260 |
| Mr Wickham | Announced an 'Other Interest' as Vice-Chairman of Pluckley Parish Council. He would hand over to the Vice-Chairman of the Board to Chair the discussion on parking at Pluckley Station. | 258 |
| Yeo | Announced an 'Other Interest' as President of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA). | |

252 Minutes

A Member said that at the last meeting he raised the issue of the bus gates at both Beaver Road and Godinton Road and had requested an item on the next Agenda updating on the situation and the funding for enforcement. This had not happened and he asked when the Board was likely to receive a report. Mr Howe confirmed he would ensure an item covering this matter would be on the next Agenda in March 2013. Funding was available and there would be full details within that report.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 11th September 2012 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

253 Transport Forum

The Board received the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the Meeting held on 16th November 2012. The Forum had received an update from KCC Transportation and discussed Eurostar; rail franchising; bus services, trains; parking charges at rural stations; taxis and the various winter preparations.

The Chairman of the Forum said he wished to raise a few points coming out of what had been an extremely constructive meeting. Firstly he wanted to apologise for the late circulation of the notes. In terms of the meeting itself the two bus gates had again been raised and it was explained funding for enforcement had been found so it was important to get this moving as soon as possible. The presentation from KCC had mentioned the 'New Ways 2 Work' initiative which could help with some of the parking problems at both the Eureka Park and the hospital to be discussed later at this meeting. A Member mentioned the boarding and alighting arrangements for disabled passengers using buses in Bank Street. He was pleased Mr Southgate at Stagecoach had offered to forge a link with Ashford Access on this matter and he would be invited to a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the report of the Chairman of the Transport Forum for the Meeting held on the 16th November 2012 be received and noted.

254 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

Resolved:

That the Tracker be received and noted.

255 Update from Member Working Group on Lorry Issues

The Vice-Chairman of the Board provided an update on the work being undertaken by the Working Group. It was explained that a feasibility study into the options for commercially operated lorry parks had been commissioned by KCC and they were currently seeking a consultant to carry out that work. Meetings would continue over the coming months and it appeared that some progress on this whole issue was beginning to be made which was extremely welcome.

Resolved:

That the ongoing work of the Member Working Group on Lorry Issues be noted and supported.

256 A28/A262 Safety Improvement Proposals

The report set out the outcome of a combined consultation into safety improvement proposals for the A28/A262 junction between High Halden, Biddenden and Tenterden, and a separate proposal for an experimental closure of Oak Grove Lane. Following the consultation it had subsequently been decided not to proceed any further with proposals for Oak Grove Lane at this time.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Audsley of High Halden Parish Council spoke on this item. He said that firstly, the Parish Council was pleased to see the proposal to close Oak Grove Lane had been withdrawn, but they had been pressing for some sort of safety measure to be installed at the junction for six years now. However, they strongly opposed the proposals for traffic lights. Traffic lights were not needed at this junction and if Oak Grove Lane was to remain open there was even less need. There were better ways to achieve a safety solution at the junction and traffic lights would have a detrimental environmental impact on this rural area and cause unnecessary delays which would encourage people to seek out alternative routes on the back lanes and cause even more danger. The use of average speeds in the report was misleading as traffic generally drove at or under the speed limit with a small number of drivers driving quickly and skewing the figures. He said he was also concerned that the police had said they would object to the speed limit being lowered to 40mph. In his view the wider 50mph speed limit would not slow the traffic down sufficiently and not make a significant enough reduction to accident levels to be cost effective. The proposals would cause considerable inconvenience to local people and the costs would be disproportionately high. He urged the Board to reject the proposal for traffic lights and ask KCC to look at other ways to make the junction safer.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Pearson, Chairman of Tenterden Town Council's Highways Committee spoke on this item. He said that the proposed 50mph speed limit was illogical and unnecessary as mean average speeds were already well below 50mph because of the nature of the road. He said he would be interested to see the accident record of the junction before it was "improved" as in his view the previous changes had not been an improvement. The road was now narrower than previously and vehicles could not position themselves in a manner that made it

obvious where they were intending to go. The Town Council suggested an alternative solution in that all access roads to the junction should be subject to a 40mph limit. The representations against installing traffic lights at this junction had been ignored and their installation, along with the complementary street lighting either side that would be necessary, would blight the area. If traffic lights were to be pursued, could they be trialled for one month? If they worked without problems, that would be great, but there was a lot of suspicion locally that they would not and the significant sum of money could be better spent elsewhere. It would be foolhardy to blindly press ahead with such unpopular plans. He asked the Board to support the decision not to proceed with proposals for Oak Grove Lane, but to reject the unnecessary installation of traffic signals and the 50mph speed limit and for KCC to re-examine these matters.

A number of local ABC Ward Members and KCC Division Members spoke in support of the points raised by the two speakers and called for alternative traffic calming measures to traffic lights.

Mr Darling said it was important to point out that Officers had looked at a wide range of measures and in his view the current proposed safety scheme would prevent the most number of crashes happening at the junction.

The Board considered that the proposals for traffic lights were unnecessary and excessive and were likely to simply push the potential for accidents elsewhere. They supported the recommendation not to proceed any further with proposals for Oak Grove Lane at this time, but the proposals for traffic lights at the junction should be rejected. The proposals for reducing the speed limit to 50mph at this time were supported, but Officers were asked to take the whole scheme away, look at it in the round and work up a new proposal which would find favour with local residents, Parish Councils and Members. This should include alternative traffic calming measures at the junction and the possibility of installing a 40mph speed limit.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the decision not to proceed any further with proposals for Oak Grove Lane at this time be noted.**
 - (ii) the installation of traffic lights at the junction of the A28 and the A262 be rejected.**
 - (iii) the new 50mph speed limit for the A28 and the A262, as originally advertised under ‘The Kent County Council (Various Roads, Borough of Ashford) (20mph, 30mph, 40mph, 50mph Speed Limits and Restricted Roads) Amendment No.6 Consolidation Order 2012’ be endorsed, however, Officers should take the whole scheme away, look at it in the round and work up a new proposal which will find favour with local residents, Parish Councils and Members. This should include alternative traffic calming measures at the junction and the possibility of installing a 40mph speed limit.**

257 A2042 Faversham Road, Ashford – Proposed Waiting Restrictions

The report set out the outcome of a consultation into safety improvement proposals for the A2042 Faversham Road, Ashford.

The KCC Division Member for the area said that she was torn on the proposal as she had pushed for something to be done regarding the parking problems, but she also had to listen to the concerns of local residents. Although parking had been a problem, the road was also long and straight and there was a perception of speeding which had also been difficult to resolve. Therefore she was concerned that removing parked vehicles may actually increase the likelihood of accidents because it could encourage people to drive faster. In a way the parked vehicles did help to slow down traffic somewhat. She understood that some accidents had been attributed to the presence of parked cars but she asked if Officers could look at this scheme again. She understood it had taken up a lot of Officer time but it would take up even more if they did not get this right, and she did not think simply putting in double yellow lines was the answer. The ABC Ward Member concurred with those comments and said that double yellow lines on the Faversham Road were not the answer. Traffic did exceed the speed limit currently and that would only be increased if these restrictions were implemented.

Mr Darling explained that the proposals had been proposed with increasing safety in mind. He said he would be reluctant to class parked vehicles as 'traffic calming', particularly as parked cars had been the cause of some of the accidents in the area and obscured the view of pedestrians. There had been a pattern of similar types of accidents caused by parked cars and in his view that could be mitigated by traffic engineering. He understood the perception of speeding on this particular piece of road but speed surveys had shown that where double yellow lines were put down in an area, average speeds only rose by 1 or 2mph. It still remained his view that the proposed scheme was the best way to tackle the safety issues in Faversham Road, along with more road safety education and communication with the Towers School and this was expected to reduce the number of incidents in Faversham Road.

The Board was concerned that the aims of the scheme would not be met by the current proposals and they may in fact cause additional problems. Perhaps a reduced scheme in the vicinity of the school could be pursued at a later date but there was not support to proceed with the scheme as proposed.

Resolved:

That the Board rejects the proposal to proceed with the new parking restrictions shown in Appendix B to the report, and as originally advertised under 'The Kent County Council (Various Roads, Borough of Ashford) (Waiting Restrictions and Street Parking Places) (Amendment No. 27) Order 2012'.

258 Amendment 22 (Smarden Primary School, Pittlesden (Tenterden) and Pluckley Station) Highway Safety Schemes

The report set out the results of the recent formal public consultation on the Amendment 22 Traffic Order which was made up of three different parking schemes at Smarden Primary School, Pittlesden (Tenterden) and Pluckley Rail Station, for the consideration of the Board. The Chairman advised that the Board would consider each of the three reports separately.

Smarden Primary School

No comments

Pittlesden (Tenterden)

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Parsons, a local resident spoke on this item. He also tabled some photographs of the current parking problems in Pittlesden. He said he had been a resident in Pittlesden for 60 years and he had been continually raising the issue of inconsiderate and dangerous parking since 1987. Cars and large vans parked on bends and this prevented normal access to Pittlesden including for emergency vehicles. At times vehicles were actually parked across the footpaths which meant pedestrians, including children and mothers with prams had to walk out between cars and in the road. He said Members would see this in the photos. This also caused issues with visibility as the road was on a slight hill and it was not always possible to see oncoming traffic. There had also been issues for delivery drivers and people had become abusive when confronted. He said he would like to thank local Members for their support with this scheme and urged the Board to support the proposals.

Both the ABC Ward Member and KCC Division Member spoke in support of the proposals. They considered the scheme had been needed for some time. It would assist residents and only adversely affect commuters to Tenterden who were currently attempting to park for free.

Pluckley Station

The Chairman said as he was Vice-Chairman of Pluckley Parish Council he would defer to the Vice-Chairman of the Board to Chair this item.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Newman, Chairman of Pluckley Parish Council, spoke on this item. He said the Parish Council had not been supportive of the lining scheme as they did not think it would achieve the aim of making the area safer. There was a danger that it would increase traffic speeds and simply move the parking problem elsewhere. However, given that the concurrent 30mph speed limit was going ahead, the Parish Council was prepared to accept the lining. They asked for one change in that the lining did not extend as far as adjacent to the garden of The Dering Arms and hoped that Officers would agree to have further discussions with the owners of the pub. There was also support for the restrictions at Station

Approach although there perhaps needed to be further investigation as there was already hatching here which was currently ignored. He said that the Parish Council also urged the Local Authorities to continue dialogue with the rail companies in an attempt to bring down the parking charges at the Station. At present these were just exacerbating the problem.

Mr Wilkinson said he was happy to look again at the length of lining outside the pub and include the Parish Council in that dialogue. With regard to the hatching, this did need to be replaced with a proper enforceable restriction as the status of the current hatching was not clear. It had not been put down by KCC or ABC.

Recommended:

- That (i) the proposed Smarden Primary School Safety Scheme be approved for implementation.**
- (ii) the proposed Pittlesden Safety Scheme be approved for implementation.**
- (iii) the proposed Pluckley Station Scheme be approved for implementation, subject to the restrictions in the vicinity of the garden of The Dering Arms being shortened.**
- (iv) subject to consultation with The Dering Arms, the installation of edge of carriageway marking along the frontage of The Dering Arms forecourt in The Grove, Pluckley, be approved.**
- (v) a formal consultation on the potential introduction of 'no waiting at any time' restrictions to protect the corner at the junction of The Grove and Station Approach, Pluckley be approved.**

259 Willesborough Lees Highway Safety Scheme (Amendment 26) Update Report

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Bailey, a local resident spoke on this item. He said that in his view tonight's meeting seemed to indicate that local Members and residents had a better idea of what was needed in terms of these schemes than some of the experts. He said that the update report was misleading and seemed to try and paint him as a 'lone voice' in the area when he spoke for many people who were opposed to the current scheme. The number of responses, although not stated in full in the report, indicated a clear rejection of the scheme yet the report gave the impression that the responses were confused. There appeared to be criticism of the pre-populated objection letters, but in his view they were not difficult to interpret and the Council should accept that there has been a total public rejection of the scheme and get together with the residents to talk about this properly. Local people felt very strongly about this and would be prepared to stage protests at the hospital if necessary. He asked the Board to halt what he called a flawed and unacceptable scheme that was not wanted by residents.

Mr Wilkinson explained that as requested by the Board in September, the Council had gone out to consultation on this scheme. Officers were struggling to interpret the response to that consultation; some responses appeared to conflict within the same return and others covered every possible permutation. They had worked with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman as well as the ABC Portfolio Holder, who had seen the returned forms, and all had agreed that this was the best way forward and it had been proposed to defer consideration until a special meeting in February 2013 rather than attempting to make assumptions. Nothing was being hidden; it was a simple case of trying to seek some extra time to seek clarification from those respondents where there was doubt over their response. There was no question of dismissing these letters, they had and would continue to be given every attention, but some of them were genuinely unclear and they were trying to be fair to everyone. There had also been further discussions with the William Harvey Hospital and Mr Wilkinson circulated copies of a letter from the Deputy Director of Estates and Facilities which explained that the hospital intended to submit a planning application for additional staff parking in the New Year. A planning consultant had been commissioned to support the Trust with its application.

The KCC Division Member for the area said he was disappointed that the Board was not in a position to make a decision this evening as this had been a longstanding problem that was getting worse. He said it was clear that a large number of people did not support the current proposals and he endeavoured to spend the time between now and February 2013 talking to residents properly and coming up with a majority view which he would support. Mr Wilkinson agreed to arrange for him to come in to the office and look at the responses.

One of ABC Ward Members said that he was pleased to hear the hospital was trying to do something to address its parking problems, but they would still be asking staff to pay to park which it appeared they were either unable or unwilling to do, so would this solve the problems? He also said that it was important to make the consultation as clear as possible and consultees needed to clearly understand all of the issues and options available.

A Member said that in her view part of the solution could lie with Stagecoach and their attempts to improve bus services to the hospital. An enhanced bus service from Kennington, to the hospital was being pursued and this could also link up with the Julie Rose Stadium and Conningbrook. She was keen to work with the hospital to provide better bus services and include their existing staff shuttle within this. In her view it was important to pursue this as part of the package along with the parking safety scheme.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

260 Goat Lees Highway Safety Scheme Update Report

The report explained that at its last meeting the Board had recommended the rejection of the set of proposals for a safety scheme in Goat Lees that had been presented, and that a process to find a solution for Goat Lees be re-started. The

report outlined the progress on this process to date. Mr Wilkinson explained that a meeting had taken place between Officers, the Ward Member, County Member, ABC Portfolio Holder for the Environment and the Parish Council looking at implementing a more extensive scheme, and proposals were now awaited.

The County Member said he could confirm he had now secured Member Highway Funding to proceed with the scheme, the Parish Council had confirmed they would also provide additional funding, and he looked forward to moving this forward as quickly as possible.

The ABC Ward Member said he was also pleased this was moving forward and the emerging proposals would provide a good solution for the area. He said that the Parish Council had also agreed to fund the ongoing maintenance of the scheme and talks would continue with the businesses on the park to find more parking as the park grew.

Resolved:

That the actions outlined in the report be endorsed.

261 Highway Works Programme 2012/13

The report updated Members on the identified schemes approved for construction in 2012/13.

The Chairman said Mrs Mytton, Chairman of Bilsington Parish Council, had registered to speak on this item but had been unable to attend. Officers had received an email which outlined a number of transportation issues in the village which the Parish Council considered needed examining. The KCC Division Member was aware of the situation and outlined these issues in more detail including: - parking causing obstruction; the need for some designated parking; speeding; better signage for single lane traffic; and the need for Highway Officers to come and visit the village with Parish Councillors present. He hoped these matters could be progressed with Officers and Member Highway Funding if necessary, without the need for a petition and he would endeavour to arrange further discussions.

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

- The carriageway scheme at Crowbridge Road, Ashford between Newtown Road and the humpbacked bridge.
- The access road and new signalised access at The Warren Site B.
- The current status of the former Ashford's Future Partnership Board's delivery of Smartlink and the Ashford International Station access.

A Member said that on a general point he was concerned about the Police not appearing to be prepared to take action against dangerous drivers. The Local Authorities were in turn having to take defensive action and spend a lot of money on

schemes to try and solve the problems themselves. Surely the Councils should be trying to get the Police more involved in working in partnership and actually undertaking some positive enforcement. Another Member concurred with these comments and said that in undertaking canvassing for the recent Police & Crime Commissioner elections, speeding and dangerous drivers were one of the main themes that had been raised again and again. Ongoing enforcement was vital.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

262 Drovers Roundabout

As a result of comments made at the previous meeting of this Board, John Farmer, Major Capital Projects Manager at KCC, had attended to listen to comments and answer questions. He said he recognised that there remained ongoing concern and he had read all of the comments made at previous meetings and had viewed the operation of the junction on several occasions. He thought now was a good time to review the operation of the roundabout and just over a year of operation. The junction was unusual with five dual-carriageways meeting at one point, and the fifth of these, Simone Weil Avenue, did complicate matters somewhat. The signings and road markings did seem reasonably logical and while the layout was unusual he considered that overall it had been a success. Having said that he thought there might be scope for minor adjustments to lane and destination marking to give more support to drivers and reduce any unnecessary lane changes. The rationale for louvres on a set of central lights was uncertain and it might be possible to remove them. It was understood that relatively minor changes at Junction 10 were considered a success. He recognised that despite short cycle times, there were also occasions when traffic backed up on the roundabout itself and blocked exits/entrances and although this was partly a consequence of the imposed layout of the junction he would also review the traffic signal timings. He undertook to review these three issues but there was a timing issue in that the contract with the current consultants was coming to an end in March 2013. The Board agreed it was better to wait a bit longer for the new consultant so they could take an independent look at this. Mr Farmer said he would provide an update on this to the next meeting in March, with results of the wider review coming back later in 2013.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted and an independent review of the operation of the roundabout be programmed for 2013.

263 Maintenance of Ashford Shared Space

The report gave an update from KCC on the Ashford Ring Road Shared Space Scheme and its ongoing maintenance.

Mr Howe said there was disappointing news in that KCC had gone out to tender for an independent consultant to look into this matter and there had been no response.

KCC were now proposing to take this forward to their new consultant who would be appointed in April 2013 as they would be independent from the process and it would also be cheaper. He said he would provide an update on this to the next meeting in March, but the study would not have commenced by then as stated in the report. When commenced later in 2013 a full report on the background of the scheme would be produced along with an identification of reasons for the failing condition of the Shared Space and recommendations for remedial options.

The ABC Portfolio Holder said she was bitterly disappointed as she had originally been promised that a review on this would commence in summer 2012. She understood the reasons behind this latest delay, but the condition/maintenance of the Shared Space was letting Ashford down at present and she was hopeful this would be rectified sooner rather than later. Mr Howe assured the Board it was a high priority and it was in his interests to achieve a long term maintenance solution.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

264 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

That an additional Special Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board take place on Tuesday 19th February 2013 at 7pm in the Council Chamber.

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard:
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk
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