

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **12th March 2013**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Mrs Blanford, Claughton, Davey, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Robey.
Mr M J Angell, Mr P M Hill, Mr R E King, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mrs E Tweed, Mr J N Wedgbury.

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

Mr K Ashby – KALC Representative.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Yeo.

Also Present:

Cllrs. Michael, Mortimer, Sims.

John Burr (Director of Highways & Transportation – KCC), Behdad Haratbar (Head of Programmed Work – KCC Highways & Transportation), John Farmer (Major Capital Projects Manager – KCC Highways & Transportation), Chris Hatcher (Project Manager – KCC Highways & Transportation), Lisa Holder (Ashford District Manager – KCC Highways & Transportation), 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).

363 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Claughton	Announced an 'Other Interest' as he lived near the Drovers Roundabout.	372
Heyes	Announced an 'Other Interest' as he lived near the Godinton Road Bus Gate.	371
Wedgbury	Announced an 'Other Interest' as he worked for the London Fire & Rescue Service.	369

364 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 11th December 2012 and the Special Meeting held on the 19th February 2013 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

365 Petitions

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.1 Mr Wickham advised that he had been passed a petition from residents in Chilham in his Division regarding the installation of a 20mph speed limit. Mr Wickham passed the petition to Mrs Holder who would take the petition back to Kent County Council.

366 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

Mr Wilkinson advised that following discussions with both the KCC Division Member and ABC Ward Member for the area, the Ashford On-Street Parking Review – Middle Zone 11 should be removed from the Tracker. They did not want any review to proceed unless off-street parking could be provided and the likelihood of this was extremely low.

Resolved:

That subject to the above, the Tracker be received and noted.

367 Update from Member Working Group on Lorry Issues

The Chairman advised that the Working Group was meeting the following day so there was no update to report. An update would be provided to the next Board Meeting.

368 Joint Transportation Boards – Agreement and Governance

Mr Burr introduced the report which set out the updated JTB agreement and provided flexibility for a JTB Chairman to vary the number of Parish representatives on the Board. This flexible approach had come about following a variety of requests from Districts for changes to the agreement, but a desire to not have varying agreements across the County. There were also some small administrative changes suggested to bring the agreement up to date with current practices. It was understood that the Kent Secretaries Group would be reviewing the Agreement in terms of its legalities, but endorsement of the recommendations in the paper was sought.

Members considered the current Board worked well and adding more members would only complicate matters. The Parishes knew they could feed comments through the KALC Representative, or their Local KCC or ABC Members, as could the Community Forums.

Recommended:

That the revised draft JTB agreement be approved and adopted, subject to the outcome of the Kent Secretaries review.

Resolved:

That Ashford's JTB retain the status quo re. Parish representation (i.e. one non-voting Member appointed by KALC).

369 Willesborough Lees Highway Safety Scheme

The report brought the Board up to date with the enormous amount of work that had gone into this Scheme over several months. The Board had taken the decision at its meeting of 19th February 2013 to defer decision on the Willesborough Lees Highway Safety Scheme in order to allow further discussion between the various parties with a view to agreeing some minor reductions to the proposed lengths of restriction. The report detailed the results of that discussion and presented a revised scheme to the Board.

Mrs Paul introduced the report and explained that a final meeting had been held the previous day running through the requests received and trying to arrive at a final revised scheme. Using slides, Mrs Paul ran through each of the locations where revisions had been requested and gave the rationale behind the proposals to either implement the request, implement part of the request or not go-ahead with the request and implement the proposal as it was. This information was also included within the report on a location by location basis. She said that initially this safety scheme had been designed to be light touch and target areas where issues of safety due to inappropriate parking had been raised. Therefore, there had not been a great deal of flexibility to alter the scheme without losing its original aim and integrity. She hoped that the issues they had been able to look at and in some cases amend slightly, had improved the situation and addressed some of the points raised.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Pile, a local resident spoke on this item. She said that she lived in Blackwall Road South and the road had been blighted by overspill parking from William Harvey Hospital staff. Suggestions for single yellow lines had been rejected, but residents did not want double yellow lines, especially across their driveways. She said she had spoken to some of the staff at the hospital and it was of concern that they were being advised to use the roads of Willesborough Lees as an overspill car park. She understood that prices for annual permits for staff were increasing from £400 to £600. Many of the nurses carried drugs etc in their cars and this was a security issue for both them and others. There was already parking on the streets day and night and residents were unable to offer the spaces to visitors or use them themselves, single yellow lines would allow this.

Double yellow lines across driveways were also not favoured - could white 'dog-bone' markings be considered? She said she acknowledged the work that had gone into this scheme but asked the Board to again consider the matters she had raised.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Bailey, a local resident spoke on this item. He understood the meeting the previous day had agreed that the majority of the scheme be implemented, but there remained huge opposition locally despite the compromises that had been made. The resident's survey called for the hospital to provide a solution to this problem and if that was not possible then a single yellow line scheme should be pursued. During the consultation a large percentage of respondents had objected to double yellow lines and he considered that the scheme put forward by residents would still address the safety concerns without unnecessarily inconveniencing residents. He did not think the problems with the refuse trucks had happened for several months now. He said he was pleased with some of the changes that had been proposed but still considered it unreasonable that residents would have to live with double yellow lines 24/7, including across driveways and he was hopeful that Members would look at this again. He considered the scheme as it stood would only push the parking problems further into local streets and urged the Board not to agree it.

The comments of Mr Wratten, a local resident had also been tabled for the Board's attention.

Mr Wilkinson said that double yellow lines were only being proposed in locations where it was already unacceptable to park (around roundabouts, within 10m of junctions etc.) and to do so would cause a significant danger or obstruction (or both) to other road users. It would be wrong to remove those just to allow residents or visitors to park there rather than commuters – this was still illegal and dangerous. The proposal in front of Members now was considered the bare minimum. He also showed some pictures of the problems refuse trucks had encountered in negotiating parts of the area and the 'Autotrack' diagrams of the manoeuvres they had to make.

One of the ABC Ward Members for the area said he thanked both Officers and Members for their patience in bringing this scheme to fruition. He felt there were lessons to be learned for future consultations. The root of the parking problems remained with the hospital and this was where the responsibility to find an ultimate solution lay, particularly with regard to the amount they charged their staff to park. He also asked the Board to write to the Hospital Trust to seek confirmation that it intended to build a new car park and when it was going to do so. However, he did think some further compromises could be made with the proposed scheme such as the white 'dog-bones' across the driveways rather than double yellow lines as well as a 12 month deferral of implementation of the scheme to see if the hospital did provide extra car parking.

The KCC Division Member for the area said that as the 'paymaster' for this scheme he wanted to listen to the views of the residents and he could not ignore their objections. He proposed a one year deferral of the scheme in order to continue to place pressure on the hospital to take responsibility for this problem. It was clearly their issue to solve as there were no parking problems in the area on a Sunday for

example. He said he could not support a scheme that so many local people objected to.

The ABC Cabinet Member said that Members had spent a lot of time going through this scheme and she considered what was now proposed was a pure safety scheme which would ultimately benefit the local residents. She agreed that pressure should continue to be placed on the hospital and there should be a relatively quick review of the scheme (one year) to see the effects, but she supported immediate implementation.

Other Members said they were disappointed there had been no developments between Stagecoach and the hospital with a view to improving bus connections between the town and the site.

Mr Wilkinson said white 'dog-bones' had not been recommended as they would still allow parking where it was not appropriate. He agreed that a letter from the Board to the East Kent Hospital University Foundation Trust may be beneficial in bringing to their attention the concerns of Members and highlighting the urgency of the matter. Officers had yet to see the final package of measures or a planning application at this stage. There had been complaints from both the bus company and the waste contractor about obstructions from inappropriate parking and they could not be ignored and if any further delays to the safety scheme resulted in an accident, it would be difficult to defend. There had been numerous instances of people parking on the corners of junctions etc and the reality was that this was no longer a priority for enforcement by the Police so without lines there would be no reasonable opportunity to bring those people to task.

Resolved:

- That (i) the Board approve the revised Willesborough Lees Highway Safety Scheme for implementation.**
- (ii) the Board sent a letter to the East Kent Hospital University Foundation Trust to highlight the concerns of Members and the urgency of the parking issues.**

370 Prioritised List of Requested Parking Controls for Investigation and Possible Implementation

Mr Wilkinson introduced the report which presented an updated list of requested schemes for investigation and which the Board was asked to endorse. The report also detailed the methodology employed for assessing scheme requests and determining priority status within the list as well as providing an update on progress made on all the schemes in the agreed 2012/13 list.

In response to the queries on the individual schemes the following comments were made: -

- With regard to the Cobbs Wood Industrial Estate scheme there would be full consultation with both Ward and District Members before going out to public consultation. Officers were aware of the potential displacement issues and double yellow lines would not be excessive, only where necessary to make the area safe. Many of those locations where double yellow lines would be proposed were currently subject to single yellow line restrictions so would not result in any additional working day displacement. The scheme would also include restrictions in Loudon Way to address overspill parking.
- There was no intention to double yellow line large sections of Sir John Fogge Avenue. There was one pinch point on a kink in the road where inconsiderate parking took place as well as a need to respond to requests from the bus operator to help maintain bus access. In addition to this there were plans to introduce four formal bus stops with clearways to serve the E-Line bus service.
- The wording related to the Goat Lees scheme had been left open so as not to be too presumptuous about the decision of the Board.
- All schemes in the list were for investigation and possible implementation.
- The scheme at Tannery Lane was initially a review of the current parking restrictions and practices in the vicinity of the Sorting Office to assess whether some parking could be safely accommodated or whether there was a need to introduce a 'no loading' restriction.

Resolved:

That the proposed priority list for investigation, consultation and where subsequently agreed, implementation, be approved and adopted.

371 Beaver Road and Godinton Road Bus Gates and Bus Lane Enforcement

The report gave the background to the long running issues surrounding the two bus gates in Ashford and the possibilities going forward.

One of the Ward Members for the Godinton Road Bus Gate said that this issue had been being discussed at this Board and the Ashford Transport Forum since 2003 and this latest update report was underwhelming. He wanted to see a plan of action and for camera enforcement to be pursued as soon as possible. The other Ward Member said as far as he understood the funding was there and the legislation was in place so he could not understand why cameras could not be in place at Godinton Road this year.

Mrs Holder said she understood this was being taken forward by Officers but due to the legislation it was difficult to place an exact timescale on when an enforcement system could be in place. Mr Wilkinson said he understood there was some Political reluctance to allow District Councils to take on the enforcement of bus lanes and this

might be the cause for some of the delay. Cameras would create a deterrent and significantly reduce the amount of contraventions, but the system would not be self financing and would need some underwriting in terms of funding from KCC. Mr Burr said that he strongly refuted the suggestion that KCC were delaying the process. The legislation was extremely complicated and needed to be worked through properly, but they had shown their willingness to pilot a scheme with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to introduce camera enforcement at a particular location, and if Ashford wanted to take this forward this was something the two Authorities could do together.

Resolved:

That KCC and ABC should work to develop a scheme for the introduction of camera enforcement of the traffic restrictions at Beaver Road and Godinton Road.

372 Drovers Roundabout

Mr Farmer attended to give an update on issues raised regarding Drovers Roundabout. He said he was limited in what he could say as the independent review which had been agreed at the December 2012 Board meeting would commence shortly after KCC's new highway consultants started work on 1st April 2013. He had, however, looked at some of the more specific issues on signals, louvres on traffic lights and the possibility for installing yellow boxes at the roundabout. The signals had been set up under the SCOOT system and were considered to be working effectively. However they were being operated under another system, MOVA, as a trial to see which was the most effective system for this junction. This was a big signal junction and would always be monitored proactively. The intention was to re-validate the signals which meant looking at the underlying foundation of the set-up in terms of approach flows and lane use distribution. It was a complicated junction with five dual carriageway arms and the layout was always a balance between a variety of constraints and so they were limited in what they could do to change things, but all efforts were being made to make the signals as efficient as they could be. He understood the frustration about the louvres and whilst some adjustments might be possible, the underlying reason was driven by safety and to avoid drivers being held on red on a preceding stop-line and seeing a green/amber signal and believing they were free to move forward. Installing yellow box junctions to prevent junction blocking would be difficult because some of the boxes would be large and this was likely to create uncertainty, hesitation and affect capacity. Mr Farmer said he knew that issues around lane and destination markings were key concerns and these would be amongst the main focuses of the independent review but would also include further investigation of the yellow box issue. The results of that would be reported back to the Board in either June or September 2013.

A Member said that the Drovers Roundabout had become a topical issue due to recent press coverage. Many correspondents had said that they would like to see the traffic lights removed but she considered this would be a backward step as she remembered how dangerous the roundabout had been to enter before they were put in and that the delays were a lot longer. The traffic was definitely moving around the roundabout a lot better now. One of the keys would be to engage with the Police to

get some improved enforcement at the roundabout as in her view the biggest single problem was motorists jumping red lights. This caused blockages and overhanging and had nothing to do with the design of the roundabout.

The ABC Cabinet Member said that the stop-start nature of the lights did cause frustration, especially in the event of an accident at or near the roundabout.

Post Meeting Note from Mr Farmer – Although we still refer to it historically as a roundabout, this was now an anomaly as it was designed and operated as a traffic signal junction.

Resolved:

That the latest update be received and noted and a further report be received following the independent review of the roundabout.

373 Ashford Shared Space - Maintenance

The report gave an update from KCC on the Ashford Shared Space study to investigate maintenance issues. The review had commenced and a progress report would be provided to the next Board Meeting in June.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

374 Highway Works Programme 2012/13

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

Mrs Holder said they had not included details on the 'Find and Fix' pothole repair initiative because she wanted to give Members an up to date position statement. To date £160,000 had been committed in the Ashford Borough and 150 repair locations had already been identified. They would be undertaken in a priority order but work had got off to a slow start because of the weather. Officers were still taking suggestions and reports so if Members knew of any additional sites they were encouraged to get in touch. A Member said that whilst he knew how much work was going in to finding and repairing potholes, the recent inclement weather was only going to make the situation worse so he considered there should be a pro-active publicity campaign explaining what KCC was doing and what was and wasn't possible.

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

- Why the floodlighting in Elwick Road/Elwick Square already had to be replaced.

- The rationale behind proposing new sections of 50mph speed limit on the A28 Ashford Road at Great Chart, Bethersden and High Halden, as this seemed quite high.
- The traffic signals at the Elwick Road/Station Road junction which were still causing excessive tailbacks.
- Beckett Road, Appledore had not been resurfaced for its whole length as stated in the report and the part that hadn't was badly pot-holed. Additionally a section of the bank and ditch had collapsed back in December 2012 and there was a danger of further collapse undermining that road. It was an important diversion route but would not be able to take a lot of traffic in its current state. Work urgently needed to be done here but it was understood that the results of ecological surveys were awaited.
- When were the interactive warning signs on the A20 Sandyhurst Lane (Potters Corner) going to be installed?

A Member said that on a general point he was concerned that the new developments coming on board were creating enormous pressures on the movement of people and vehicles. He considered the Board should be more involved in advance of these developments so they were aware, informed and able to input to infrastructure needs. There needed to be a better dialogue with planners in the future.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

375 A Common Sense Plan for Safe and Sensible Street Lighting

Mr Burr introduced the report which provided details of KCC's plan for safe and sensible street lighting and requested Members' views on the proposals. He explained that the proposals had come about as part of the wider budget saving initiatives from KCC Highways & Transportation and most Highway Authorities across the country had already taken some decisions on street lighting rationalisation. There were around 120,000 street lights and 30,000 lit signs/bollards in Kent and the annual energy costs for these was around £5.8m, a cost which was expected to rise in line with the rise in fuel prices. There was no legal requirement for the County Council to provide street lighting except when linked to road safety, however it had become established practice over time and almost all street lights in Kent were continually lit during the hours of darkness. There was a fitted light sensor in each column which automatically turned the lights on at dusk and turned them off at first light. Additionally, to generate the energy required to illuminate the street lights in Kent, 29,000 tonnes of CO₂ was produced and all Local Authorities were subject to the Government's Carbon Reduction Commitment. The proposals were in two parts, firstly a trial switch off of surplus lights (around 3100 across the County) and these were detailed in the report. The locations would be monitored for a period of 12 months and then a decision taken on whether to switch them on again or leave

them off permanently. This part of the proposal would save the tax payer around £150,000 and reduce carbon emission by about 1000 tonnes every year. Part two of the proposals would see part-night lighting which would involve installing a light sensor in each column with a built in timer. This would mean that the column would turn on automatically at dusk, turn off at 12:00 midnight, turn back on at 5:30am and stay on until first light. Mr Burr outlined the specific exclusion criteria to this proposal as detailed in the report.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Burr explained that the ongoing consultation was about the hours rather than the individual lights. They would be flexible on this where they could. He accepted it was one of those projects that would divide opinion but he hoped the report made the rationale clear and dispelled many of the initial fears. One of the main fears was a perception that crime may increase and that there would be more accidents, but there was no evidence of this in areas where the switch off had taken place. Both solar and LED lighting had been examined but the pay back period was often not economic. As with all emerging technologies, the costs were coming down, so it may be a longer term solution, but at the moment it would not be a cost effective option.

Resolved:

- That (i) the sites selected for the trial switching off of surplus lights be supported.**
- (iii) the exclusion criteria used for the part-night lighting initiative be supported.**
- (iv) the hours of switch off for part-night lighting be supported.**

DS