

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in Committee Room No.2 (Bad Münstereifel Room), Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **9th September 2014.**

Present:

Mr C Simkins (Chairman);
Cllr. Heyes (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Burgess, Davey, Feacey, Yeo
Mr M J Angell, Mr P M Hill, Mr D Smyth, Mr J N Wedgbury, Mr M A Wickham

Mr K Ashby – KALC Representative

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Apps attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Robey.

Apology:

Cllr. Robey.

Also Present:

Mr D Brazier – KCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

Cllr. Sims

Lisa Holder (Ashford District Manager – KCC), Ray Wilkinson (Engineering Services Manager – ABC), Jo Fox (Assistant Health, Parking & Community Safety Manager – ABC), William Train (Technical Administrative Assistant – ABC), Danny Sheppard (Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer – ABC).

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting the Chairman introduced Mr David Brazier, KCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, who was attending the Meeting as an observer and advised of a change in the order of the Agenda.

135 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Yeo	Made a Voluntary Announcement in respect of Agenda Item 5 as a member of the Transport Salaried Staff Association.	139

136 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 10th June 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

137 Proposed Bus Gate at Park Farm and Accommodation Bridge over the A2070

The Chairman advised that he had been asked to write to the Highways Agency asking about delays to the delivery of extended bus services to new developments at Park Farm South and East, because of uncertainties regarding the use of the accommodation bridge that spanned both the A2070 Hamstreet Bypass and the Ashford-Hastings railway line. That letter was attached to the Agenda papers and he had now received a response from David Brewer, Executive Director of Network Delivery and Development at the Highways Agency, which he read out in full to the Board. The letter apologised for the delays in the process but confirmed that there was no issue with the principle of using the bridge for bus traffic. Mr Brewer had also confirmed that the correct people from the Highways Agency were now liaising directly with the correct Officers at KCC and reassured that matters were now expected to be successfully and rapidly resolved.

Resolved:

That the letter and subsequent reply from the Highways Agency be received and noted.

138 Formal Consultation on Traffic Regulation Order - Park Farm Order 2014 – Bluebell Road and Violet Way

The Chairman directed Members attention to the tabled papers which included the comments of the adjacent ABC Ward Member and ABC Cabinet Member for Planning and Development, both in support of the proposals. These were read out in full by the Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

Mr Wilkinson introduced the report which detailed the results of the formal consultation conducted between 24th July and 15th August 2014 on a proposed scheme of parking controls for certain roads within the Park Farm South and East residential estates, Ashford. The proposed parking controls formed one of four effective steps in delivering the promised extension to the bus service into these estates; along with technical approval of the bridge's use by buses, on which progress had been made by the Chairman as discussed in Agenda item 12, the agreement of a subsidy from SPG6 funding, which was similarly in hand, and the agreement of a camera enforcement system for the bridge's use. The report presented Officer's analysis of the consultation results and further recommendations. The proposed scheme focused on two specific areas within Park Farm: – Bluebell Road, where restrictions had been requested by the bus operator to address

obstructive parking issues and facilitate the running of extended bus services into Park Farm East, on which the entire development was predicated; and in Violet Way where a formalisation and extension of advisory restrictions had been requested by the developer to address obstructive parking issues. No objection had been raised to the restrictions in Violet Way, and only 14 objections to the proposals in Bluebell Road had been received from 421 consulted properties. On assessment of the representations, the advice of Officers was that the benefits of the proposed scheme outweighed the merits of the objections received, and therefore implementation should be approved.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Mockford, a local resident spoke in objection to the proposals. He also submitted a petition containing 45 signatures and some photographs to illustrate the points he was making. He said that he represented a number of residents who occupied mainly Bluebell Road on the approach to the accommodation bridge between Park Farm South and Bridgefield. As a whole, they felt very strongly about the introduction of double yellow lines and the proposed widening of the carriageway to the front of their properties and they wished to oppose the proposals and offer alternative solutions to be considered. He said that they understood that the suggested bus route, over the accommodation bridge, was an extension of the existing Park Farm service which would connect Park Farm South to Bridgefield and eventually continue through Finberry towards Sevington on the road due to be completed in approximately two years. He asked if it would not be feasible, and possibly a cost saving, to use the existing bridge over the A2070? An alternative route through the village of Kingsnorth (via Hamstreet Road, Church Hill and Finn Farm Road) would not only provide a much needed service for the village but also completely avoid the need for a bus to travel on both Violet Way and Bluebell Road. He said that they also understood that the access to the accommodation bridge would be enforced by camera. If the bus route did proceed what reassurances were there that this system would work? Previous bus gates introduced in the town had been a constant issue and cause for concern. The mechanical bollards at Beaver Road were often broken and required constant maintenance. They were also regularly abused by rogue vehicles and he said there had even been a fatality as a result of a vehicle tailgating a bus. He considered that the traffic lights on Godinton Road also failed to control rogue traffic using this as a cut through. There would be high desire for traffic to use the bridge once it was opened up which would only increase as the Finberry development expanded causing great concern for many who had young families. Mr Mockford said that residents appreciated that the bus operator had requested the introduction of the parking restrictions on Bluebell Road to facilitate the movement of buses to the bridge however, the displacement of vehicles to other areas of the development must create real cause for concern where parking was already a precious commodity. He asked if it was not possible for the carriageway to remain as it was and the space to become shared like other areas of Ashford. He said that there were many existing bus routes that operated on single lane roads successfully, for example, Church Road in Willesborough, Beaver Road and Godinton Road. It was also noted that on the eastern side of the accommodation bridge a single lane road had been constructed. Would it therefore not be preferable to widen the road on the eastern side of the bridge where there were no houses that would be affected? This was just a small section of Bluebell Road but the impact of these restrictions would be far reaching and have unnecessary consequences on other residents nearby who

already struggled to find suitable parking for themselves. He said that under the Councils own Prioritisation Methodology the displacement of approximately 20 vehicles would cause unintended consequences. Their garages were too small and families with small children would struggle to safely remove them. Vehicles would be parked in tandem making it impossible for some residents to even access their parking facilities. There were no parking facilities for visitors, so where were they to park? He said there were safety issues that must be considered. In conclusion Mr Mockford said that at the very least, residents would like to suggest that Members of the Board made an official site visit so that they were able to see for themselves the reasons for their concerns.

Mr Train responded that the alternative bus route identified by Mr Mockford was unlikely to be commercially viable as it would require significant additional funding in order to provide the dedicated vehicles and would not provide a cost or time saving over running the service directly through Park Farm South and into Park Farm East via the accommodation bridge. Such a service would also not provide Park Farm South residents with the bus service that had always been intended to run through the development and would not provide the desired service uplift for residents in the older part of Park Farm. An alternative route via Violet Way from the A2070 Hamstreet Bypass had previously been considered, however this would be significantly more costly as the catchment of properties, and so passengers, would be limited until the service reached Violet Way. With regard to camera enforcement, examples were given where Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras were already in use to enforce Bus Gates and Bus Lanes and had proved effective for deterring contraventions. Whilst it was recognised that the existing Bus Gate control systems in Ashford did have flaws, the advantages of camera enforcement for new gates and as replacements for existing sites had long been recognised by this Board. With regard to the parking situation, Mr Train advised that vehicles had been observed parking on the footpath in Bluebell Road which was prohibited under the Highway Code and an offence under the Road Traffic Act. The areas of Bluebell Road where restrictions were proposed covered locations where parking should not take place including opposite or within 10 metres of a junction, on bends, on the brow of a hill and on pinch points. Whilst the road had been widened on the eastern side of the bridge to allow authorised vehicles to pass each other, it was still necessary to widen the approach on the western side to allow westbound authorised vehicles to pass waiting eastbound vehicles. Mr Train advised that the three 'single lane bus routes' mentioned by Mr Mockford were all straight roads with a clear line of sight between passing gaps and not directly comparable to Bluebell Road in that they were more suited to supporting on-street parking. It was also noted that they were all subject to parking restrictions and traffic calming measures in various forms. The public highway could not be considered as part of a household's parking amenity and it was hoped that persons looking to buy a house in any area would consider the suitability of any off street parking provision (such as garages) relative to their parking needs prior to purchase, rather than parking in unsuitable on-street locations. The suggested re-routing of the bus to avoid the properties adjacent to the accommodation bridge would entail buses passing the frontages of an increased number of other properties in the estate and would necessitate a similar or even greater level of restrictions being introduced in other areas. For example, running an extension to the existing B Line bus service through Park Farm South and into Park Farm East via the Finn Farm Road Bridge would entail a 1.1km longer route in each

direction than travel via the accommodation bridge. In contrast to Mr Mockford's statement there were dedicated visitors parking spaces within the rear parking courts to accommodate visiting traffic. The restrictions proposed would only prevent parking in locations where it should not take place and could be enforced against by the Police. He concluded by advising that the Chairman had visited the proposal site earlier that day and Officers and other Members of the Board were familiar with the site. The Board's membership included both the KCC Divisional Member and ABC Ward Member for the area.

The ABC Ward Member for the area spoke in objection to the proposals. He said that Stagecoach was an extremely profitable company and he was not convinced by their argument that alternative routes would not be viable. If there were questions about viability, perhaps a bus service was not the right way to go for this area at all. It currently took about 8 minutes to drive to the town centre from Park Farm and about 12 minutes using the new cycle route, whereas it took 45 minutes by bus. He could also not understand why technology and timetabling could not be used to ensure that buses never met in this area. The residents had been constructive and suggested realistic alternatives and he had long considered that this area should not be used as a bus route. In his view there had always been insufficient parking on this part of Park Farm. He said he had no objections to the proposals for Violet Way, but he had no choice but to move refusal of the scheme on the grounds of the issues at Bluebell Road and the accommodation bridge.

Mr Wilkinson responded that whilst timetables could be set with the intention of avoiding buses meeting at the accommodation bridge, disruption arising from traffic congestion along a bus route could not be predicted. Similarly, the times at which Emergency Service vehicles and Taxis would want to use the bridge could not be scheduled.

The KCC Divisional Member for the area said he would like to second refusal. Residents of Bluebell Road were quite happy with how they were living at the moment. He had gone to look at the site that past Sunday morning which had been a good time to assess the situation with people at home. In his view cars had been parked safely and sensibly and it was not necessary to widen the road. If the worry was about two buses passing each other surely this could be controlled by timetabling and traffic lights. He considered it was important for Board Members to have a look at the site before making a decision. In his view the parking areas behind the houses were not sufficient, convenient or fit for purpose. The suitability of the accommodation bridge was a separate point and he wondered if it would be worth talking to Stagecoach about alternatives. He accepted that this had been in the plans for over 10 years now, but a lot had changed in 10 years and families were now living and established in the area. It was important to build quality homes and places and not simply housing estates and to protect the amenity of the people who lived there.

The Board was advised that if they wanted to approve the proposed restrictions for Violet Way they could do so, without refusing the scheme in full.

In the course of the debate a Member expressed concerns about resident proposals that the bus service could run via Church Hill – in her opinion this road was not at all

suitable for buses. Members considered that an official site visit should take place on the site before any decision could be taken on the proposals for Bluebell Road and the accommodation bridge. The Board recognised the importance of the proposed bus service, but thought some of the suggestions put forward by the residents were worthy of further examination. There was however, full support for implementation of the proposals for Violet Way. As a result the motion to refuse the scheme was withdrawn by the proposer and seconder in favour of a motion to implement the Violet Way part of the scheme and defer the Bluebell Road elements for a site visit.

Resolved:

That following consideration of the results of the formal consultation, the restrictions proposed for Violet Way be implemented but those proposed for Bluebell Road be deferred pending a Members' Site Visit.

139 Transportation, Highways & Engineering Advisory Committee – 11th July 2014

In response to a question it was advised that the Chairman (of this Board) had been invited to attend meetings of the Ashford Quality Bus Partnership on behalf of KCC.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Transportation, Highways & Engineering Advisory Committee held on the 11th July 2014 be received and noted.

140 Disabled Persons Parking Bay Panel

The report detailed the recommendations of the Disabled Persons Parking Bay Panel regarding several contested disabled persons parking bay applications discussed at the Panel's most recent meeting.

A Member referred to one of the applications in the Isle of Oxney Ward and said that it was essential that a dropped kerb was installed before the bay was put in.

A Member said that it was disappointing that a previous decision made by the Panel, and endorsed by this Board had been overturned by unelected Officers at KCC. The Chairman said that he understood this was a matter of governance that was currently being investigated.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be approved.

141 Truck Stop Pilot Task Group and Update on Enforcement

Councillor Burgess said that as far as ABC was concerned there was no further update on Truck Stops. He understood that a report would be going to KCC's Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on the 17th September which would shortlist options for Truck Stops, so he hoped an update could be provided to a future Meeting of this Board.

With regard to enforcement Mrs Fox advised that ABC was continuing to work proactively with KCC and a process for enforcement action was being drawn up so that Local Authorities could apply to KCC to do their own enforcement on illegally parked lorries. A Member said that enforcement was key. Results were already being seen locally which was good, but it would be important to follow that through in the future if there was to be a strong deterrent. Mrs Fox confirmed that was the intention although there was an issue of timing in that to enforce too strictly too early, before proper alternative parking places were available, would simply move the problems from one area to another (potentially more unsuitable) area. She asked Members to continue to keep Officers informed about particular problem hotspots at parkingcustomercare@ashford.gov.uk

The Vice-Chairman advised that the activities of the Truck Stop Pilot Task Group had now been passed to the Transportation, Highways & Engineering Advisory Committee and he would be inviting a KCC Officer to come and update Members at their next meeting on 27th October.

In response to questions about whether lorry parks should be self-financing rather than using public money, Mr Brazier advised that it was intended the first lorry parks would be self-sufficient after three years and profitable after five years. Despite not being successful with their first bid for funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership, they would be bidding again next year and were confident of success in the future. Money may also be available from the Public Works Loan Board at a very favourable rate and European funding but he was confident that questions on funding would be addressed in the forthcoming Cabinet Committee paper.

A Member said he hoped that a campaign making it a requirement for en-suite toilet facilities to be installed on these vehicles would be supported. Many of the complaints related to the anti-social behaviour aspects of lorry parking and this could go a long way to alleviating that.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

142 Tracker Report

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the Tracker of Decisions.

A Member raised the long standing issue of proposed traffic calming measures in Bluebell Road and Roman Way, Park Farm and Church Hill, Kingsnorth, which dated back to 2006. He now understood that all of the Section 106 money had been spent, including £130,000 on resurfacing rather than for traffic calming and traffic management on the three roads as per the conditions of the Section 106 agreement and he had not been consulted. It was advised that James Hammond from KCC would remain in touch with the Member over this issue.

The following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- Post implementation reviews of parking schemes were programmed in to the prioritised list, but the timing was obviously dependent on resources.
- The safe and sensible street lighting scheme trial was for a period of 12 months and there would be a report at the end of the trial. That was likely to come to this Board in March 2015.

Resolved:

That the Tracker be received and noted.

143 Highway Works Programme 2014/15

The report updated Members on the identified schemes approved for construction in 2014/15. Mrs Holder advised of a correction to the first paragraph of page 97 of the report which should refer to “the end of September 2014” and directed Members attention to page 111 of the report which was a summary of matters arising at the last Board Meeting and KCC’s response to those points.

Mrs Holder agreed to feed back more information to Members on the following matters that appeared on the Highways Work Programme: -

- The exact programme date for the installation of additional gullies at Church Road, Ashford.
- Further questions on KCC’s Drainage Team’s current policy regarding roadside gullies and grips and a full explanation of the position ahead of the upcoming winter season for all Board Members.

In response to a question about communications and response times, Mrs Holder advised that this did depend on the nature of the enquiry that was logged. They did encourage the public to use the on-line fault reporting service and Parish Councils also had the option to use the Parish Portal. These did ensure that enquiries went straight to the appropriate team and allowed for a more prompt response. For non-urgent enquiries there was a maximum response time of 28 days. These were often dealt with more quickly than that though depending on the nature of the enquiry.

A Member asked for his thanks to be noted for the successful completion of work at the Bethersden Marble Path, Biddenden which had been long awaited and were welcomed.

Another Member said he was pleased to see the sheer amount of re-surfacing work that was currently taking place and thanked Officers for their hard work on this.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

144 Ashford Shared Space: Bank Street – Update on Works

The report outlined the current position for information on the Bank Street footway remedial action.

Board Members expressed their disappointment that having previously been told the work would take place in September, it had now been delayed to spring 2015. Mrs Holder advised that this was chiefly to do with a change in priorities in that KCC had been given an injection of Central Government funding to deal with weather damaged roads, but that funding had been time limited and therefore they had had to re-direct resources to undertake that valuable work. As a result this scheme had slipped down the priority list somewhat. They were also conscious of the need to avoid the busy Christmas period, notify the bus companies, consider the weather situation and the forward planning involved with booking the road space, which had taken them to spring 2015.

A Member re-iterated that Bank Street was only one part of the Shared Space that needed attention. There were other areas that needed more minor attention such as Forge Lane and New Street, which could be remedied relatively simply, and he hoped these would not be forgotten.

One of the ABC Ward Members for the area asked to be kept informed with developments.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

145 Christmas/New Year 2013/14 Storms and Floods

The report had been presented to the Board for information and provided KCC's Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee with a full review of lessons learned from the Christmas/New Year 2013/14 storms and flooding (as well as previous severe weather events). It also made recommendations for how KCC, in collaboration with its partners, could be better prepared to manage such future events and flood risk.

As KCC Cabinet Member for Community Services, Mr Hill said it had been an unprecedented mix of poor weather (rain and winds), focused on a holiday period and had required a big effort from all involved. He was particularly proud of the emergency response that had taken place. The report made 17 recommendations to KCC's Cabinet and, once agreed, work would begin on their implementation.

Another Member said he would like to recognise the contribution of Kent Fire & Rescue and its Officers who had come back to work during planned industrial action and done a fantastic job.

In response to questions Mrs Holder said she would feedback more information on the comments on highway drainage improvements in paragraph 6.15 of the report and the likelihood of forthcoming funding for the South Ashford Flood Alleviation Scheme scheduled for 2019.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

DS