

Public Transport Liaison Task Group

Minutes of a Meeting of the Public Transport Liaison Task Group held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **9th October 2015**.

Present:

Cllr. Heyes (Chairman);
Cllr. Feacey (Vice-Chairman);
Cllr. Britcher.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllr. Britcher attended as Substitute Member for the Labour Vacancy.

Also Present:

Cllr. Sims

Dutch Docherty – Stagecoach in East Kent, Dimitri Bridgland – Stagecoach in East Kent, Steve Benjamin – Kent County Council, Derek Goodwin – Ashford Driving Instructors Association, Ben Ward – Southeastern, Sheila Davison – Ashford Borough Council, Jo Fox – Ashford Borough Council, Tracey Butler – Ashford Borough Council, Will Train – Ashford Borough Council, Rosie Reid – Ashford Borough Council.

Apologies:

Cllr. Pickering.

Michael Cloughton – Ashford Access Group, Stephen Gasche – KCC, Shane Hymers – KCC, Yvonne Leslie – Southern.

1. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the former Transportation, Highways and Engineering Advisory Committee of 16th January 2015 be approved.

2. Kent Connected/Transport Interchange Audits

2.1 Tracey Butler advised that this was a project undertaken by KCC. ABC still needed to meet with Network Rail to progress the public realm work.

2.2 The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points were raised:

- The Chairman raised the issue of the installation of additional drop off bays by removing 4-6 of the blue badge bays at the station forecourt, and said this was an extremely good idea.
- There was some discussion about the proposal to consider a new drop

off loop for private vehicles. It was generally agreed that many private vehicle users were not using the designated drop off area, but pulling up in front of the station and parking in the bus stop or on the lines opposite. This prevented buses from passing and also gave rise to a dangerous situation for bus users alighting from the buses. It was suggested that there should be a new system of correct and clear signage and subsequent enforcement.

- It was agreed that a comment was required from Steve Parish to go out with the minutes clarifying how much progress had been made on public realm work and proposed changes to the taxi rank. There was an expectation that the work would commence in early summer 2016. It was confirmed that the establishment of the new taxi rank would take place quickly, commencing in May and with expected completion by August. One Member reported that taxi drivers had been consulted and were very happy with the relocation proposals although they would like the waiting bays extended to three cars instead of two. (*Post meeting note from Steve Parish re Public Realm works: Phase 1 of the public realm works in Dover Place and around International House are now 99 % complete and the areas have been re-opened to the public. We are awaiting the installation of some pedestrian railings to the ramp down onto the International House car park and commissioning of the exterior lighting. The piece of public art commissioned for the entrance to International House is due to be installed in late November with an official opening ceremony proposed for early December 2015. Moving forward ABC is very keen to meet with representatives from Network Rail and Southern Trains to bring forward the installation of the pedestrian zebra crossing which has been designed for Station Approach to channel pedestrians on a safe route through the new public realm between the station and town centre.*)
- It was confirmed that Network Rail were responsible for the road markings and enforcement.
- It was noted that the mini-roundabout over the bridge was being ignored by many drivers, which was causing dangers to pedestrians and taxi rank drivers.
- One Member noted that the area from the disabled parking to the station was such that it added unnecessarily to the walking distance for disabled travellers.

3. Rural Bus Provision

- 3.1 Sheila Davison introduced this item. She explained that the report brought attention to areas of the Borough which were not well provided with public transport. She queried whether this was an issue the Task Group wished to consider, and emphasised that it was early days in the project. She was seeking preliminary feedback from the Task Group, and any project would be undertaken in conjunction with the existing bus service. She said this was an opportunity to look at how to supplement the bus service across the board, rather than trying to resolve problems with individual services. During the

subsequent discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was agreed that Sheila Davison would provide Dutch Docherty with a list of areas which had been raised as concerns. He explained that there may not be an easy solution in problem areas because it was not viable to put on a bus service for only a few people.
- A Member said that this was an issue about social inclusion. This was a very rural Borough and he considered that some people felt isolated and lonely.
- There was a suggestion that in rural places school buses could be used during the day when they were not transporting school children. There were various complications to this suggestion, so it would need to be introduced as a pilot to establish how to deal with any difficulties.
- It was noted that the voluntary sector could have a great deal to offer and they should be included in any consultations and research. Consultation with the public would also be needed via community groups, such as parish councils.
- It was agreed that Sheila Davison would collate information and this item could be reconsidered at the next meeting.

4. Industry Updates

Stagecoach & Ashford Driving Instructors Association

- 4.1 Dutch Docherty reported that the E and G-line services had been launched and the 517 service had been terminated. This new arrangement had been running for 10 months and the service had improved 100%, with greater customer satisfaction. The H-line service had also been a huge success and had taken over customers from the C-line. There had been problems with the A-line service to begin with, but the timings had been adjusted and the line had now improved. The B-line service had been removed from the railway station after 9am, and this had improved punctuality. There were delays on the Canterbury to Tenterden service, caused by congestion in Wincheap. The 666 service had been launched between Ashford and Faversham and was proving successful. The 925 and 926 bus service between Ashford and St Anselms was adversely affected by the bad behaviour of the school children. It was noted that the E-line had become much more reliable since it had stopped going to Bank Street. Dutch Docherty advised that the service would return to Bank Street in due course, but Stagecoach would be keeping a firm eye on timings. There was a problem with cars pulling into bus stops and delaying bus timetables, but KCC were in the process of painting enforceable bus clearways to prevent motorists continuing to do so.

- 4.2 The Chairman noted that the timing between Bank Street and the railway station in peak hours was inadequate. The traffic lights at Vicarage Lane continued to create problems and delays. Dimitri Bridgland explained that the journey between Bank Street and the station was kept to the minimum time possible for two reasons: firstly, to prevent buses laying over at the railway station unnecessarily; and secondly, the Vicarage Road traffic was so variable that one journey through the lights could be very swift and another similar journey the next day could be delayed by two cycles of red lights. No two journeys were the same. Derek Goodwin noted that button pushers were adding to the problems at automated lights and suggested that automated lights should override the button where pedestrians had already crossed.
- 4.3 Derek Goodwin pointed out that the bus service between Godinton Park and Waitrose was direct to Waitrose, but went via Willesborough on the way back to Godinton Park. Dutch Docherty agreed that this was a valid point. He also confirmed that the bus shelter outside the Godinton Park shops would be removed and replaced on Springwood Drive on 10/11 November.
- 4.4 Tracey Butler asked everyone to send her details of specific problem areas which she would discuss with Highways Engineers at the next meeting with them.

Southern and Southeastern

- 4.5 Benjamin Ward introduced this item and circulated an update from Southern. Timetable changes would be coming in in 2015 and the consultation process had already been completed. Engineering works would be taking place over Christmas.
- 4.6 The Southeastern leaf-fall timetable had been implemented, which took account of additional autumn running times due to leaves on the line. Damian Green would be coming to visit the Ashford simulator on 16th October to get a better understanding of how leaves on the line affected the railways.
- 4.7 The £10 admin fee had been removed on ticket refunds if applied for before the date of travel. The limit had also been removed on the number of duplicate season tickets which could be applied for.
- 4.8 Performance had taken a slight dip over the last couple of months. There was no single underlying cause but it was likely to be down to infrastructure-related issues which Southeastern were currently working with Network Rail to resolve. 30% of delays were within Southeastern's direct control and a Joint Performance Improvement Plan had recently been implemented.
- 4.9 A large project of engineering work would be taking place in December in the London Bridge area. From Christmas Eve until 3rd January there would be a large blockade in the London area, and no trains would be stopping at Charing Cross, Waterloo East, Canon Street and London Bridge. Alternative services would run from other London stations to mitigate against the closures. Services would shut down around 5 – 6pm on Christmas Eve.
- 4.10 Rail delay compensation was now paid in cash.

- 4.11 It was noted that Southeastern's offers were not as attractive as they appeared. There was no advantage of using railcards with the discount offers. Benjamin Ward undertook to speak to his marketing team about this issue.
- 4.12 The Chairman asked about the Kent Route Study. Benjamin Ward said that Southeastern were not against the electrification of the Marsh Link. They would look to run a service if they could and source additional rolling stock. However, this was ultimately a decision for the Government and Network Rail.
- 4.13 One Member remarked that it would make sense to mark on the platform where the doors of the train would open and close. Benjamin Ward responded that the position of the doors depended on the length of the train, so the position varied from train to train.
- 4.14 It was noted that the customer satisfaction survey was very low. Benjamin Ward said that the last two services had seen an improvement in customer satisfaction. A lot of work was being undertaken to improve results and Southeastern were aiming for 85% satisfaction by 2018.
- 4.15 The Ashford to Canterbury trains varied in length, which often led to delays as customers struggled to board the correct carriages and earlier announcements were needed. Benjamin Ward said he would take this request back to Southeastern, although this information was already available on the CIS board.
- 4.16 The Chairman said he was disappointed in the change to the Redhill service. It was no longer possible to get a direct train from Redhill to Southampton and Portsmouth. The consultation link had been sent to the wrong person, so he had not been able to make representations regarding the proposed changes.
- 4.17 The Chairman also noted that there was a lack of information at Gatwick regarding trains and destinations. There were no details of where trains were stopping. He would contact Yvonne Leslie to discuss further.

5. Date of Next Meeting

- 5.1 25th April 2016 at 9.30.