

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in Committee Room 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **7th March 2023**.

Present:

Mr P Bartlett (Chairman) - KCC;
Cllr B Heyes (Vice Chairman) - ABC;

Cllrs Barrett, Feacey, Meaden, C. Suddards – ABC.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Cllr. Barrett attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Link.

Mr S Campkin, Mr D Robey, Mr C Simkins – KCC.

Mrs C Drury, Mrs A Hicks, Mr A Rogers – KALC.

Apologies:

Cllrs Cornish, T Heyes – ABC.

Mrs C Bell – KCC.

Also present:

Cllr Wedgbury – ABC.

In Attendance:

Safety and Wellbeing Manager; Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer;
Member Services Officer - ABC.

In Attendance (virtually)

Cllrs Ledger, Wright - ABC.

Mr M Hill – KCC.

Policy and Democratic Services Assistant – ABC.

Highway Manager (Ashford); Network Manager – KCC.

336 Declarations of Interest

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| Feacey | Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was on the Management Committee of UKLPG and Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre. |
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337 To approve the Minutes of the Meetings of this Board held on 6th September 2022 and 6th December 2022

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meetings of this Board held on the 6th September 2022 and 6th December 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

338 Stagecoach Verbal Update

The representative from Stagecoach was unable to attend the meeting but he provided a written update to the meeting, which was read out by the Safety and Wellbeing Manager. The details were as follows:

- Overall passenger numbers were still only at around 80% of pre-pandemic figures, with the elderly concession pass holders lagging behind at around 70%. Coupled with cost increases of c20%, the Ashford operation was still not sustainable; the current short-term government funding helped but would expire at the end of June. Stagecoach were starting now to look at what a sustainable network might look like.
- Stagecoach were participating in the national £2 maximum fare scheme which had also now been extended to the end of June.
- Local operational issues - the A2070 works had displaced traffic around the town at various times; other short term surprise roadworks had on occasion crippled the road network. The Stagecoach MD wrote a blog highlighting the difficulties faced with the explosion of street works recently and especially the attitude of utility companies and their contractors who did not always use traffic management/carry out the works as permitted by KCC. Stagecoach had seen significant anti-social behaviour, particularly in Kennington and Bridgefield. Buses had had to be withdrawn from both locations at times in order to ensure the safety of staff and customers. The failure to manage the bus gate in Beaver Road had seen widespread abuse of this illegal short cut although Stagecoach were assured that camera enforcement would be introduced here, possibly in early summer.
- Stagecoach awaited further camera enforcement at the Bridgefield - Finberry bus only link. It had not been possible to provide a service to Finberry because of this delay.
- Stagecoach noted the delay to the section 106 requirement to provide bus services at Chilmington Green and were dismayed to hear that ABC allowed the developer to block purchase parking spaces close to Ashford International on a temporary basis in lieu of the requirement to fund a bus service.

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

- In response to a question regarding the operation of the G-line bus service, the Safety and Wellbeing Manager agreed to seek clarification on the situation regarding the future of the service and potential termination date.
- A Member asked about the reduction in passenger numbers since the pandemic and the Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that, according to Matthew Arnold's update, passenger numbers were 20% reduced.

339 Highway Works Programme Update

Members noted the Update report from the KCC Highway Manager (Ashford) and the Chairman opened up the item for discussion. The following points/questions were raised:

- A Member said that he had had difficulty using the KCC website to check progress on street lighting repairs and that it was very frustrating trying to use the system. The Chairman suggested that he should write to the appropriate KCC Member and ask her to follow up on this issue. The Member also asked who was responsible for litter collection on the A28 and the Chairman advised that the Member should contact streetscene@ashford.gov.uk.
- The Chairman raised the issue of the A2070 National Highways project, which had been notable for delays, spelling mistakes and design issues. He asked Board members to authorise himself and the Vice-Chairman to contact the contractors/promoters of the scheme to ask for an explanation of delays to the project. He also asked colleagues to write to himself and the Vice-Chair to suggest points to be raised and any problems of which they were aware.
- In response to a question, the Chairman confirmed that the traffic lights would be intelligent.
- The Chairman also noted that there would be a closure of Church Road in Mersham to coincide with the beer festival in the area. He asked officers to investigate whether there could be a small delay in the road closure to avoid the festival.
- A KALC representative asked whether there could be a review of current requests for pedestrian crossings at a future meeting, and Members noted that there was an ongoing issue regarding the placement of a pedestrian crossing in Bethersden. The KCC Highway Manager (Ashford) was asked to note the comments and report back to a future meeting.
- A Member asked if frontline services were at risk due to budgetary pressures on highways. He wondered if this would have an adverse effect on the quality of the roads. The Chairman said that frontline services were not at risk and

he asked the KCC Highway Manager (Ashford) to liaise with David Brazier to give an assurance that this was not the case.

- A Member asked about the technology used to repair roads and the KCC Highway Manager (Ashford) was asked to provide a response in due course regarding the evolution of the technology used.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

340 Parking and Waiting Restrictions Update

Members noted the Update report and the Chairman said he was very pleased to see that 3 parking spaces had been provided in Tannery Lane.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

341 Moving Traffic Enforcement Update

The KCC Network Manager introduced the report and drew Members' attention to the key points. The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following points/questions were raised:

- In response to a number of questions, the KCC Network Manager advised that the commencement of enforcement was currently expected to take place late August when a service delivery provider would be in place. In the meantime, design works were being undertaken in preparation for enforcement to begin. With regard to Finberry, this was in the pipeline but it was necessary to provide justification for the scheme, together with evidence and documentation for any potential appeals. Preparatory design work was underway, together with legal discussions with National Highways. The KCC Network Manager explained that there was a complication with Bluebell Road Bridge over the A2070 because the bridge itself was owned by National Highways, but KCC owned the areas of land where the expansion joints were sited. It was possible for KCC to enforce either side of the bridge but not the bridge itself. This would be part of legal discussions with National Highways.
- A Member noted that on the bus service from Finberry to Bridgefield, there was a chicken and egg situation between Stagecoach and KCC regarding provision of bus service and provision of enforcement cameras. The Chairman suggested that if Stagecoach were to write to KCC and confirm that they were willing to extend the link if KCC would enforce the link, KCC might be willing to take that as evidence of sufficient demand for the service.
- A Member raised the question of allowing private hire vehicles through bus gates. It was noted that residents paid much higher fares for private hire

vehicles, which had to go round bus gates, than hackney carriages, which could use them. The KCC Network Manager said this was a contentious issue. KCC wanted to avoid any ambiguity about vehicle access through bus gates and considered that allowing private hire vehicles to use the bus gates could lead to confusion in the public's mind. He said this could be changed, if deemed appropriate, by senior management following consultation. A Member said the current arrangements could be considered discriminatory to passengers and some consideration should be given to allowing private hire vehicles through bus gates for this reason. The Chairman stressed that it was a driver decision whether to seek a licence as a hackney carriage or not, and that there were technical complications with allowing private hire vehicles access. He asked the KCC Network Manager to respond in due course to the points made by Members on why this particular approach had been taken and to identify the key decision-maker. The KCC Network Manager replied that this was the KCC Parking Manager.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

342 Kent Bus Stops and Enforcement

The Chairman introduced the report and opened up the item for discussion.

- Members noted that there were two particularly contentious bus stops in High Halden and Faversham Road. A Member asked whether KCC were required to consult residents on the use of bus stops and the Chairman replied that this was not the case. The Member said it would be interesting to know the criteria used by KCC to decide whether or not they would consult local residents as this was not covered in the report.
- A Member asked for it to be noted that a bus stop in High Halden was causing long queues and blocking the pub access road at peak times. He said he would provide photographs to the report author so the full extent of the problem could be seen.

343 Active Travel Update

The Chairman introduced this report and said it was positive news to see that KCC were taking forward route 5, although it was not known whether this would be approved nationally.

A Member asked about electric scooters and the Safety and Wellbeing Manager explained that Canterbury City Council were undertaking a trial on behalf of the Government, and for this reason scooters were permitted in parts of the city. However, outside of trial areas, including Ashford, the use of scooters was illegal. A Member questioned whether the trial in Canterbury was in the city centre only or the whole district. The Safety and Wellbeing Manager undertook to find out more

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details. In response to further question, she said that she believed this only covered hire scooters.

344 Involvement in the highway aspects of planning applications

The Chairman noted the report and opened up the item for discussion. The following points/questions were raised:

- A KALC representative said that it was essential to seek local feedback on planning applications as it was relevant to decisions taken. It was important that matters were debated fully. A Member said that he agreed with this viewpoint and that negating feedback from local residents was arrogant.
- A Member pointed out that the report stated that commercial viability was of the utmost importance to KCC and he questioned why this was not the case at Ashford. A KALC representative said commercial viability was not a material planning consideration under the National Planning Policy Framework.
- A Member raised point 1.13 and said that transport modelling was in crisis. It was non-existent or outdated. He considered that the report was whitewashing the modelling situation.
- The Chairman said he and other County Members would speak to the author of the report.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

345 Key dates for meetings 2023/24

Resolved

That the dates be received and noted.

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