

Joint Transportation Board

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held in Committee Room 2, Civic Centre on the **1st March 2022**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Cornish, Feacey, Forest, T. Heyes, Krause, Spain – ABC.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Cllr. Forest attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Burgess.

Mr. S Campkin, Mr C.Simkins – KCC.

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

Apologies:

Cllr. Burgess – ABC.

Mrs C Bell, Mr D Ross – KCC.

Also present:

Cllrs. Brooks, Michael, C. Suddards, Wright – ABC.

Mr M Hill, Mr D Robey – KCC.

In Attendance:

Economic Development Manager – ABC, Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC, Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC, Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager – ABC, Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing – ABC, Member Services and Ombudsman Complaints Officer – ABC

Senior Highway Manager – KCC, District Manager – Ashford – KCC, Street Lighting Manager – KCC, Street Lighting Maintenance Team Leader – KCC.

Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar

307 Declarations of Interest

Mr Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he lived adjoining the Sevington Inland Border Facility site.	313
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Mr Campkin	Made a Voluntary Announcement as South Willesborough was affected by the HGVs and he was a Member of South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council.	315
Cllr Cornish	Made a Voluntary Announcement as the A2070 road was in her Ward.	317
Mrs Drury	Declared an Other Significant Interest as she had a personal interest.	315
Cllr T Heyes	Made a Voluntary Announcement as the A2070 road was in her Ward.	317
Mr Rogers	Made a Voluntary Announcement as South Willesborough was affected by the HGVs and he was a Member of South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council.	315
Mr Robey	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was Divisional Member, but he had no connection with the proposals.	316

308 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Board held on the 14th December 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

309 Petition for vehicular waiting spaces outside the Royal Mail sorting office, Tannery Lane

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.1, Mrs Roberts, a local resident, presented a petition to the Joint Transportation Board calling for the provision of vehicular waiting spaces outside the Royal Mail Sorting Office, Tannery Lane. Mrs Roberts spoke on this item, and her speech, as supplied in advance of the meeting, is attached to these Minutes at Appendix A.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Roberts for attending and acknowledged receipt of the petition. He advised that the petition would now be passed over to officers, who would provide Mrs Roberts with a formal response in due course.

Resolved

That the petition be received and officers provide a response in due course.

310 Eurostar Service to Ashford

The Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar introduced this item. He drew attention to the key points within the report and gave a presentation, which covered:

- Eurostar's covid impact and recovery
- Impact of Omicron restrictions
- Recovery financial trajectory
- Consequences on Eurostar services
- A major mid-term risk
- Non-EU passengers border crossing under EES
- Green Speed: Eurostar/Thalys merger

The Economic Development Manager – ABC confirmed that this had been a challenging commercial period for Eurostar but it was hoped that the coming year would be more favourable in terms of returning services. He considered that there was a clear commercial case for Ashford to put forward, particularly in light of the recent announcements about Newtown Works and Brompton, which highlighted Ashford's location in terms of international services and interconnectivity into Europe. He added that a high-level meeting was likely to take place in May to include key Members, the Leader ABC, KCC and the Borough MP.

A Member asked whether Eurostar had approached the Government to seek support to enable continued provision of services throughout the pandemic. The Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar advised that many approaches had been made to Government but these had been unsuccessful due to the nature of Eurostar's shareholding structure.

The Chairman asked whether, in view of the rapidly booming travel market, Eurostar would consider providing one stop in Kent, either at Ashford or Ebbsfleet. The Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar said that the decision to open either of these stations was not a simple one and at present it was not a financially viable option.

A question was asked about the percentage of commuters using Ashford. The Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar responded that Eurostar considered this commercially sensitive information and he could not provide numbers. The Economic Development Manager – ABC added that assumptions of 200,000 passengers per year travelling through Ashford had been made during the Ashford Spurs project several years ago.

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A Member asked about the winter ski market and questioned whether a Saturday service could be provided. The Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar confirmed that a seasonal service to the French Alps was running in conjunction with a French travel operator. However, a contract was in place to ensure that Eurostar's costs were covered.

The Head of Public Affairs - Eurostar was asked whether Eurostar were concerned about competition to their Ashford service and he replied that Eurostar welcomed competition.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

311 Parking and Waiting Restrictions

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC introduced this item and drew attention to the report, which covered the work currently being managed and progressed through the Parking, Highways and Transportation team.

A Member suggested that a holistic review of all parking restrictions in the town centre was required to accommodate changes to businesses. He hoped that the Town Centre reset would address this particular issue. The Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager – ABC advised that ABC officers would be meeting with KCC representatives to collaborate on traffic, parking and bus issues.

In response to a question about moving traffic enforcement, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager said that KCC would be putting in a submission for the three existing bus gate sites in Ashford, with a consultation exercise starting at the end of March.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

312 Highway Works Programme

The District Manager – Ashford – KCC introduced this item and explained that the report provided an update from KCC Highways on schemes approved for construction.

A Member drew attention to the forthcoming night-time closures on the A2070 at the Orbital roundabout.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

313 Sevington Inland Border Facility

The Senior Highway Manager – KCC introduced this item and gave an update on the Border Facility operation. More checks were now taking place by HMRC which had led to more inbound and outbound traffic using the site. Construction was continuing on the DEFRA control post, with live animals, animal produce and plants due to transit the site from July. Permanent freight signing was still to be erected on the strategic road network, although details of signage and location had now been approved. Work on the Eastern side would be commencing this week, with a protected Public Right of Way running through the site. Store Eunice had led to a brief closure of the site, but it had been used instead to hold freight delayed by the weather conditions. EES was due to be introduced later in the year and this would impact on freight and tourists leaving Dover, so a solution was awaited.

A Member highlighted the work done on the Eastern side and said this was a good example of joint agency work. He thanked the Senior Highway Manager – KCC and all other officers concerned.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

314 Street Lighting Maintenance Service

The Street Lighting Manager – KCC introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report.

A Member asked about missing street lights in Willesborough and questioned whether they had been officially removed. The Street Lighting Manager – KCC said that KCC was not currently removing lights. The lights referred to may have been damaged or failed a structural test and were due to be replaced. The Street Lighting Maintenance Team Leader said that if she could have further details of the specific lights in question, she would look into the matter further and respond to the Member offline.

A Member explained that he had called this item to the meeting as part of the Safer Streets project. He was grateful for the presentation and pleased to know that lights were being maintained to ensure that safety of women was treated as priority.

A question was raised about the problem getting spare parts to fix the lights in Godinton Road. The Street Lighting Manager – KCC said that officers had been in touch with the manufacture for a solution, but there was no timescale at present.

The Economic Development Manager – ABC advised that the ABC contact for Safer Streets was the ABC Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

315 Ashford HGV Enforcement

The Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC introduced this item and drew attention to the key points within the report, which provided an update on overnight HGV enforcement and clamping.

A Member asked about the clamping trial and the extent to which enforcement officers were trained. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC explained that officers were fully trained as civil enforcement officers, which was mandatory in order to be able to issue a Penalty Charge Notice. However, they were only contracted to undertake enforcement work for overnight parking clamping of lorries and would not take action against any other forms of infringement.

There was a question about the comparison between numbers this year and in previous years. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC said that it was hard to make a direct comparison at the moment, but it appeared that numbers were higher now. A high percentage of complaints were coming from the Orbital Park.

A Member commented that there was a lack of services for HGV drivers in this area, and a lack of communication regarding parking availability. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC said that Ashford International Truck Stop had worked hard to improve the facilities at the site, and were now running a successful app. They had also undertaken work on promoting the pre-booking facility to ensure that drivers had a slot. The main problem appeared to be for lorry drivers who had not planned ahead and pre-booked. A Member said it was likely that the larger companies used this system, but he considered that smaller companies may be penalised for not being aware of the system.

A Member asked whether the clamping officers could issue tickets for vehicles parked outside a designated area. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC said that there was no change in the current enforcement arrangements. The clamping officers could only clamp lorries, but could not undertake the work of the Civil Enforcement Officers elsewhere in the Borough.

A Member asked whether it would be possible to provide more obvious signage in areas where there were particular problems with HGV parking. The Senior Highway Manager – KCC replied that it had not been possible to identify any signage that was going to be effective if a driver had decided that they were going to park in a particular location. Enforcement was helping, but when the truck stop was full there was a resulting problem in the residential areas. A Member asked about potential for installing physical barriers in residential areas but the Senior Highway Manager – KCC said that this would be problematic because of the need to allow access for removals vehicles and vehicles relating to businesses in the area.

A Member said that there were particular problems at the moment with HGV parking over the weekend at Matalan and also in Park Farm. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader – ABC said she would pass this information to the Community Safety Unit.

A KALC rep said that Ashford was a victim of its own success and was now attracting more lorries than ever. She considered that a Kent-wide review was needed as this was not only a problem for Ashford.

A Member thought it would be helpful to provide more information outside the truck stop site i.e. overhead motorway signs to indicate available capacity. He asked whether this could be pushed back to KCC to consider provision of this kind of information.

The Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager – ABC said that the Council had been successful in encouraging the truck stop to expand from 300 to 600 spaces, but more work was still needed. It was necessary to seek ways to provide more lorry parks. Officers would speak to the truck stop regarding any future plans to extend further. They would also discuss the need to make provision at the moment for Ukrainian lorry drivers who were stranded or in difficulty.

It was agreed that a further progress report on this item would be received at a future JTB meeting.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

316 Extension of B Line to Finberry

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC introduced this item and drew attention to the main points within the report. She would report back to the next meeting on the progress of this project.

A Member suggested that it would be useful to get Crest on board with the project as they had an obligation under S106 to provide bus stops. However, he did request that any new bus stops at Finberry should not be made of glass, to assist with anti-vandalism.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

317 ASB on A2070

The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report in relation to ASB on the A2070. She explained that a Task and Finish Group had been established with a view to reducing the noise problem and an Action Plan had been produced. It was acknowledged that it was not possible to change the road design but it was possible to focus on driver behaviour and the impact on local residents. A further progress report would be presented to the next JTB meeting.

A Member stressed that reporting noise incidents was critical as it was only possible for Kent Police to take steps if they had information to act on. He considered that the current progress was a very good example of agencies working together.

Another Member said that websites in Europe were actively encouraging bikers to come to Ashford as a good location for bike trials and questioned how this could be prevented. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC said that part of the Action Plan was to counteract this by putting alternative messages on the same social media platforms. There would be a three-pronged approach to resolving the problem through a mix of education, engagement and finally enforcement action. Targeted publicity articles were useful to convey the potential impacts of this continued behaviour and the ultimate danger of enforcement action and bike loss. Attempts would also be made to engage with bikers at biking events and educate them on the impacts of their behaviour. Enforcement would be considered the final solution after engagement and education efforts had been made. The first day of action would take place during the Easter weekend with a multi-agency team working in Rye and possibly in Ashford too. This would be a cross-border event with Sussex Police. Another event was envisaged for the summer. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC stressed that people must report incidents of noise to the Police in order for the Police to be aware of the scale of the problem and allocate Police resources to that area.

A Member asked why speed cameras were not in operation. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC explained that nowhere along the road was considered safe to site a fixed speed camera or mobile speed van. The only other enforcement option was via road policing teams.

In response to a question about Community Speed Watch, the Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC advised that Community Speed Watch did not operate on the A2070 but was focused on the surrounding local residential roads.

A Member stressed that the main noise nuisance came as bikers were leaving and accelerating away from the roundabout, when the noise became deafening for local residents. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager – ABC acknowledged this problem. She said that this would be an area of focus for engagement and education, but stressed that there was no simple and quick fix to this problem.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

318 The construction of bus shelters in the Borough pertaining to anti-vandalism measures

The Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager – ABC introduced this item and drew attention to the summary report. She explained that broken glass was being replaced with Perspex and that there was a contract with a company to manage and repair bus shelters in the Borough. There were very few bus shelters in

rural areas which were still in ABC ownership, and any of those that required replacement would be funded via S106 funding.

A Member asked about green roofs, and suggested that these would be open to vandalism. The Commercial Development & Regeneration Manager – ABC explained that the idea of green roofs came out of the carbon neutrality workshops. Officers were currently investigating possibilities in more detail, and it was possible that the town centre only might be considered the most appropriate location for any shelters with green roofs.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

319 Dates of Meetings 2022/23

7th June 2022
6th September 2022
6th December 2022
7th March 2023.

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APPENDIX A

I feel that there has been a long standing issue over many years for the need of temporary vehicular waiting bays outside the Sorting Office In Tannery Lane. As you will probably know there are double yellow lines on the road outside the building and people are not supposed to park there. Most times I am able to walk to make my collections but occasionally take the car if I'm in a rush which I found with my working schedule in the run up to Christmas. Whilst doing so I witnessed several other vehicles also waiting and about 6 people queuing outside to make their collections.

I have had some conversations with other customers and Royal Mail employees and came to believe that there is a valid need for 3 official 15 to 20 minute waiting bays outside the Sorting Office. Currently many a customer nervously leaves their vehicle there. Some are met by traffic wardens and are issued parking tickets. This can be very upsetting for a brief visit to collect missed deliveries.

To gauge the public feeling on this I instigated a petition at the beginning of January which you will see has now gained over 3000 signatures and many comments of support and the feeling is strong.

There are many people from all walks of life within the community who at some time need to collect or deliver post and parcels and require a brief 5 minute stop off for their vehicle while they do so. The car parks in the town are some distance and not conducive for those with mobility or health issues who can't walk far including elderly customers or people working busy shifts and schedules with little time to spare, for those managing children or for people carrying heavy parcels to or from the Sorting Office. Having to pay for parking to make collections also seems an unfair charge to ask the public to make to receive their mail.

My feeling, and evidently the public feeling, is that there is now a strong need for a change to the current restrictions. This area of road is already well used for waiting and has been so for many years. Provision of vehicular waiting spaces in this area is a public need and would highly benefit the local community so we would appreciate your serious consideration of this matter.

Thank you.