

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 **6th December 2022**.

Present:

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

Cllrs Barrett, Feacey, C. Suddards – ABC.

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

Mr S Campkin, Mr M Hill, Mr C Simkins – KCC.

Mrs A Hicks – KALC.

Apologies:

Cllrs Cornish, T Heyes, Link – ABC.

Mr D Robey – KCC.

Mr A Rogers – KALC.

Also present:

Cllrs Iliffe, Nilsson, Spain, Wright – ABC.

In Attendance:

Safety and Wellbeing Manager; Civil Enforcement Team Leader; Member Services and Ombudsman Liaison Officer – ABC.

In Attendance (virtually)

Cllr Ledger - ABC.

Highway Manager – Ashford – KCC.

242 Declarations of Interest

Mr Bartlett	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he lived adjoining the Sevington Inland Border Facility site.
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Feacey Made Voluntary Announcements as he was
Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.

243 Ashford Shared Space and Lower High Street

The ABC Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced this item and drew the Board's attention to the key points within the report.

The Chairman read out questions that had been received from a local resident who was unable to speak at the meeting, as follows:

1. Was some consideration given to storm water when designing this project?
2. Does all the storm water from this impermeable surface go into the same drains as the foul water from nearby premises?
3. If there is a separate drain for storm water does it flow directly to the Stour or into Ashford Waste-water treatment plant?

The Safety and Wellbeing Manager explained in answer to question 1 that consideration was not given to storm water when designing the project because the design of the road itself was not changing, and that there was only a proposed change to the top surface of the road. In relation to question 2, the surface was to be replaced with a permeable surface which would allow the storm water to go into drains which were separate from the foul water drain. Regarding question 3, this was a matter for Southern Water and the Council could not provide a definitive response.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3, Mr Mathews had registered to speak on this item, on behalf of Central Ashford Community Forum. He also represented a business which had been trading in Ashford Lower High Street for over 50 years. His comments covered:

- Lack of consultation from either KCC or ABC on this fundamental change to the High Street environment.
- Lack of maintenance from KCC over 15 years, and granite blocks were not finished properly after being laid, hence the problems now.
- Tarmac surface created more problems for surface water drainage and increased accident risks from high speed electric scooters, cyclists and skateboarders.
- The cheap tarmac fix would inevitably blight the whole town centre and an outstanding and interesting feature of road and pavement surfaces would be lost forever.
- The granite blocks should be repointed and milled down to provide a smoother surface that would be durable and long lasting, thereby preserving what was a very expensive feature for the whole of Ashford Town when the blocks were installed.
- The ripping up of the granite blocks did not fit in with the Town Reset objectives and that of the £3.1 million grant being made available. The money should be spent on the regeneration of the High Street and not used to further develop Elwick Road or Bank Street areas.

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

- A Member expressed concern over the danger that any new tarmac surface would be likely to attract e-scooters and skateboarders, which could cause a hazard to other users. This sort of activity was currently precluded by the cobblestones. However, he also noted that the needs of wheelchair and mobility scooters must be taken into account, and wondered if milling might address this concern. He suggested that designated crossing points could be installed, and that this was also an opportunity to upgrade the drainage system.
- Another Member noted the proposal to re-point and re-sand the pathways, with just the roadway to be re-tarmacked. He advised that KCC would only fund the proposed roadworks and any work over and above that, such as retaining and regenerating the cobbles, would have to be funded by Ashford Borough Council. He said that he was very pleased with the work that had been done so far, such as mending the potholes.
- A Member suggested that the cobbled area in the Lower High Street had historical significance and was integral to old Ashford. He added that he would prefer to see the cobbles retained, with improvements to the surface, although he recognised that there was a cost factor to remedial work in comparison with removal and tarmacking the area. He considered that there had not been enough consultation with users and local businesses.
- The KALC representative agreed that this was a conservation area and the cobbles gave character to the Lower High Street. However, she recognised that it was not safe for wheelchair users and that remedial work, including crossing areas, was needed if it was decided to retain the cobbles.
- Another Member argued that it would be a shame to lose the cobbles. He had been a trader in a local shop in the High Street and he considered the cobbles were integral to the character of that area. He suggested that other measures should be put in place to facilitate disabled access. He was concerned that creating a smooth surface would lead to problems with scooters and skateboards in future.
- A Member advised that the life span of any newly repointed cobbles would only be 5-8 years. In addition, the shutdown period of the Lower High Street would be longer for cobble renovation than for tarmacking. He also advised that KCC would not replace red tarmac, and would only replace tarmac in future with black tarmac. He added that he had explored the option of milling down the cobble stones, but this would be an immense expense. He pointed out that this Board was a consultee only for the proposals and that this was ultimately a KCC remit. He advised that, due to inflation, it may not be possible to fund this project at a later date if it did not go ahead now.

Although he recognised the arguments made by other Board members, he suggested that the proposals would at least provide a safe road surface for all users.

- Another Member said that, although he appreciated the attractive appearance of the cobbles, they were not in fact historic and the High Street originally was a two way tarmac road. It was not safe for wheelchair users in its current format. He pointed out that there were already problems with skateboard and scooters users on the High Street. His main concern was in relation to speeding traffic in the evenings. The cobbles currently acted as a speed restriction and he had asked KCC if road markings and strips could be included in the tarmac to act as a deterrent. Another Member said that the speeding problem had already been discussed and that traffic calming and mitigation measures were being considered.
- A Member also noted that a number of High Street businesses had deliveries via HGV vehicles and it should be remembered that this was a highway for use by a variety of vehicles.
- A Member made a plea for better communication with residents about the various phases. She said that there had been insufficient information about previous stages when it had been impossible for residents to access Godinton Road.
- A Member asked whether KCC would be obliged to repair the cobbles if the Board objected to the proposals. The Chairman replied that the Board was only an advisory forum.

Resolved

That the Joint Transportation Board:

- i. Acknowledges the proposals and the work that has commenced and is planned.**
- ii. Requests that measures to enhance the conservation area, including reconsidering a cobbled surface, are explored during the town centre reset.**
- iii. Requests that any proposals should have regard to speed management and drainage of storm water.**

Cllr C Suddards asked for it to be noted in the Minutes that he questioned the procedure that had been followed to reach a resolution and vote.

244 Highway Works Programme Update Report

The KCC Highway Manager – Ashford introduced this item and drew Members' attention to the key points within the report. She added that the last two pages of the report provided an update from National Highways regarding the M20 works, as requested at the JTB pre-meet. The Chairman noted that Operation Brock was to be

reintroduced for the coming weekend and this would cause further delay on the M20 moveable construction barrier update.

The Chairman said that there had been comments regarding access to residential property during large scale construction works, and he requested that a message be sent from the Board to KCC officers to consider carefully the impact on residents and access to their properties during future projects. The KCC Highway Manager said she had passed previous emails on this topic to National Highways with a request that they provide a response to the Board Chairman.

The KALC representative said that, contrary to the report, she did not consider that the works at Stubbs Cross were fully complete. The report referred to signs at each end of Magpie Hall Road, but there was currently only one sign. The Chairman asked the KCC Highways Manager to take up this matter offline with the KCC Member for Ashford Rural South.

A Member commented on the bad state of repair of Jemmett Road and questioned whether there were S106 funds to repair this area, or if not, whether there were any plans in the pipeline. The KCC Highways Manager said she would look into the matter and provide a response to all Board members.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

245 Parking and Waiting Restrictions Update Summary

The ABC Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report.

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

- A Member asked for an update on the provision of parking bays outside the sorting office. The Safety and Wellbeing Manager said that this was at the top of the priority task list for the new Transport and Technical Officer.
- A Member asked about the delay in the installation of electric charging points. The Safety and Wellbeing Manager replied that there was a delay in DNO connections across the Borough. The points in Edinburgh Road had been installed and were working, and the points in the Stour Centre were in place and awaiting final commissioning work. Points in Vicarage Lane were installed and were awaiting bay markings. She had requested an updated schedule from the contractors, but matters were delayed by reliance on UK Power Network (UKPN) for connections.
- A Member asked about points in Elwick Road car park. The Safety and Wellbeing Manager said she wasn't able to give a precise answer but would provide the Board with an updated schedule as soon as she had received it.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

246 Ashford HGV Enforcement Update

The Civil Enforcement Team Leader introduced this item and highlighted the key points within the report.

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

- A Member noted the figure for number of HGVs that had been clamped during a two month period and asked how this compared with initial roll-out figures four years ago. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader said that figures for that period had been similar to present numbers, and that there was always a peak in the three months prior to Christmas.
- A Member asked whether an improved sign could be installed at the entrance to Aylesbury Road. Incidents were occurring on this small dead-end road when heavy lorries were forced to reverse, sometimes into residents' cars. Residents were requesting improved signage to deter lorry drivers from entering the road. The Civil Enforcement Team Leader said she would pass this request on to KCC Highways. Another Member said that there were also problems with lack of signage for HGV lorries in Church Road and the Civil Enforcement Team Leader said she would also pass this on to KCC Highways. However, there were no parking restrictions on that road so there was no power to stop HGV lorries parking there.
- In response to a question, the Civil Enforcement Team Leader confirmed that the whole zone, which encompassed 5 different areas, was typically checked 2 or 3 times on nights when enforcement was taking place. Other problem areas were being monitored, but there was currently no power of enforcement there.

Resolved

That the report be received and noted.

247 Moving Traffic Violations

A Member commented on the negative KCC response to a request for private hire taxis to be allowed over the bus gates. He thought this was regrettable as he did not think the privilege would be abused if there was a camera installed. The Chairman said this matter might be included in the KCC drive to enforce moving traffic violations. He considered that officers should be asked to trial this for 12 months, with a report back to this Board on progress during that period.

Members noted that residents in private hire vehicles had to take a longer route than those in hackney vehicles who were permitted over the bus gates. They felt that this was inequitable and the system should be amended, especially as the technology was already in place.

Members were also aware that buses were going over the bus gate when they were not in service, and were using it as a quick route back to the depot. The Chairman said he would take up the matter with the relevant officer but he felt that this may be difficult to enforce and prevent.

A Member said that there was an issue with taxis speeding along Godinton Road late at night and better control of this problem was needed. The Chairman responded that KCC would be undertaking enforcement of bus lanes and cross hatched areas but speeding would still remain in the remit of the Police. A Member considered that hatched areas would expand into Ashford in the future and suggested that a presentation should be given to a future Board meeting. The Chairman considered that it would be appropriate to receive a presentation to the Board meeting in June 2023.

Resolved

The item was noted.

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