

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **MAIDSTONE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2024**

#### **Attendees:**

<b>Committee Members:</b>	<b>Councillors Russell (Chairman), Burton, Cannon, Carter, Clark, Cooper, Coulling, Garten, Hastie, Jeffery, Khadka, Parfitt-Reid, Passmore, Webb and J Wilkinson</b>
<b>Visiting Members:</b>	<b>Councillor Cleator</b>

#### 36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ash, Cooke, Grigg, Holmes, Knatchbull, Prendergast and T Sams.

#### 37. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

- Councillor Burton for Councillor Knatchbull
- Councillor Garten for Councillor Holmes
- Councillor Jeffery for Councillor T Sams

#### 38. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

#### 39. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman intended to take Item 16 – Maidstone Highway Work Programme, prior to Item 13 – Maidstone Local Bus Focus Group, to allow the Kent County Council Highways Manager to attend for that item.

#### 40. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Cleator was present as a Visiting Member for Item 12 – Maidstone Integrated Transport Plan and Item 13 – Local Bus Focus Group.

#### 41. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

#### 42. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

The following Councillors had been lobbied on Item 12 – Maidstone Integrated Transport Plan:

- Councillor Burton
- Councillor Cannon
- Councillor Carter
- Councillor Clark
- Councillor Jeffery
- Councillor Parfitt-Reid
- Councillor J Wilkinson

43. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:** That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2023

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to changing the following text in Minute 33, to read:

“The KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation was invited to address the Board, and emphasised that the decision was made following his consideration of the relevant traffic data and resident concerns, *with the County councillor* having been consulted, and was taken before the ETRO expired to avoid the risk of highway safety if the road was re-opened and then re-closed permanently.”

45. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Notice has been given pursuant to the Council’s Petition Scheme of the intention to present a petition in the following terms:

*‘We the undersigned residents would ask that Kent County Council, working with the Police arrange for the Speed camera (at Loose Road) to be replaced as soon as possible.’*

Councillor Khadka presented the petition and reiterated the community support to reinstate a speed camera at the bottom of Loose Road and that the previous camera on the road was justified in its presence.

The Board expressed support for the petition and stated that it should be directed to Kent County Council as outlined in the wording of the petition. An update on any action taken following its submission was requested for a future meeting, and the Chairman stated that an explanation would be sought on why the speed camera was initially removed.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The petition be passed to Kent County Council for their attention; and,
2. An item be placed onto the work programme to receive a report on the progress of the petition.

46. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were seven questions from Local Residents.

1. Question from Sue Gooding to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

In the absence of the questioner, the Democratic Services Officer asked the question on their behalf.

*'Would it be possible to have a yellow box or keep clear sign at the end of Northview on Loose Road by Kwik-fit?'*

*'When residents come up from the town and try to turn right into Northview we are often holding up the traffic right back to the lights at Armstrong Road as cars are queuing in front of the access to this road and we cannot turn in and can often take 5 or 10 mins as once lights change and cars start moving we cannot get across both lanes as traffic is now coming down from Sutton Road.'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

2. Question from Gordon King to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

*'Having just accessed the KCC web site for road works which takes you to the One.Network web site. I was surprised to see that the closure of Cranbourne Avenue at the Wheatsheaf junction is still listed as temporary until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Please could KCC clarify the status of the closure, and if it remains temporary what opportunity will there be for residents to urge decision makers to open it again?'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

Gordon King asked the following supplementary question:

*'Since we've had Cranbourne Avenue closed there's increase in traffic flow through West Park and South Park roads. These roads were built when the estate was built and one suspects that the structure of the road is not capable of carrying the traffic load it's now carrying. Is KCC going to look at rebuilding these roads? One added bit is, it's quite interesting that once you come off of what were Council houses to the private houses in Willow Way, that the road surface is a lot better.'*

The Chairman stated that a written response to the supplementary question would be provided at a later date.

3. Question from Anthony Mason to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

*'As a fairly new resident of over a year to the area of South Maidstone and following the recent spates of accidents to the Plains Avenue - Loose Road junction would the committee please let us know when traffic lights will be*

*installed to prevent a further accident occurring which sooner or later will result in a fatality.'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

4. Question from Kinga Hammersley to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

*'What was the specification given to the company commissioned to assess the impact of the experimental closure of Cranborne Avenue?'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

Kinga Hammersley asked the following supplementary question:

*'What are the objectives of the company commissioned to assess the impact and the conclusions of this report (Improvement Options Report) and where you can find this information?'*

The Chairman stated that a written response to the supplementary question would be provided at a later date.

5. Question from Andrew Hammersley to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

*'How many residents of Shepway and the Loose Road area did Neil Baker consult with before taking the unilateral decision to close Cranborne Avenue?'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

Andrew Hammersley asked the following supplementary question:

*'How many residents of the Shepway and Loose Road area were consulted with when the public consultation was open and when did Neil Baker visit the area?'*

The Chairman stated that a written response to the supplementary question would be provided at a later date.

6. Question from Jeremy Day to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

*'It has previously been stated that less traffic is using Plains Avenue than might have been expected because it has been "dissipated" onto other routes. Have any studies been done on whether this dissipated traffic has been moved to other choke points causing even more problems than are being solved by the closure of Cranborne Avenue?'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

Jeremy Day asked the following supplementary question:

*'There's obviously lots of choke points like Plains Avenue which has become a nightmare there's also things like Postley Road joining in the one way system,*

*there's crossing Armstrong Road, there's all sorts of choke points it must be making traffic worse. Are there any plans to do a detailed evaluation of where all this traffic is going in this area because it's obviously going to just make things worse everywhere else. Are there any plans to actually do the studies and work out if it's making anything worse or if it's making things better?'*

The Chairman stated that a written response to the supplementary question would be provided at a later date.

7. Question from Michelle James to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

*'Since the new traffic lights at Armstrong road has been implemented and causing a bottle neck on the Loose Road and with the in my opinion, wrong and ill-advised decision to Close Cranborne Avenue and make the Loose road into one lane going in to Maidstone.*

*'Please could you explain why the health and safety of myself and all on the Loose Road North bound including North View have to risk our lives to gain access to get on and of our drives?'*

The Chairman responded to the question.

Michelle James asked the following supplementary question:

*'Can you please tell me when it was last monitored as this has been going on since 2020, since 'Moving Maidstone' mattered?'*

The Chairman stated that a written response to the supplementary question would be provided at a later date.

To listen to the answers to these questions, please follow this link:

<https://youtu.be/OwSrBFWuBoQ?t=851>

47. MAIDSTONE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board requested that an item be added to the Work Programme on the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 monies and developer funds, given the concerns raised that Kent County Council had not spent the funds as the Highways authority, and that due to increasing construction costs, planned infrastructure schemes may not be implemented.

It was further advocated that in providing updates on the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package, the reports should include the costs of and monies spent on projects.

A report on the future of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board would be brought to a future Board meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. A report on the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 monies and Developer Fund contributions be added to the Board Work Programme.

48. MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PLAN

Andrew Hammersley and Michelle James addressed the Board.

During the discussion, several Board Members raised concerns about the processes that were undertaken by Kent County Council (KCC) ahead of Cranborne Avenue's closure as part of the A229 Loose Road junction with the A274 Sutton Road (Wheatsheaf junction) scheme. It was highlighted that the Board was an opportunity to hear public concerns on transport, including the Wheatsheaf junction, but acknowledged the frustration that the Board was only advisory to KCC as the highway authority. It was recognised that an increasing population and housing demand in Maidstone created additional stress on the highways infrastructure but CIL monies had not been spent on some projects and that progress was slow on schemes including on the Wheatsheaf junction.

The Board expressed significant disappointment that KCC Highways officers had not attended the meeting given the Board's remit and that their absence had been recorded at previous meetings.

In considering whether to note the report, some Members felt that noting the report but holding KCC account to the public for its failure to attend meetings would be appropriate. Overall, it was agreed not to note the report due to an absence of Highways Officers as Members felt it was impossible to reach an informal conclusion on the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the Board refuses to note the report.

Note: Councillor Webb left the meeting during the item's consideration at 7:35 p.m.

49. MAIDSTONE HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

50. MAIDSTONE LOCAL BUS FOCUS GROUP

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the item and stated that Kent County Council (KCC) had proposed a new bus regulatory framework for the County. It included the creation of Local Bus Focus Groups (the Group) at Borough Council level to replace the former Quality Bus Partnership (QBP). The Council would be responsible for administering the Group for Maidstone.

Local Bus Focus Groups had already been established with other local authorities in Kent and would allow the Council to have a strategic level input on bus strategy. The new Group would involve Maidstone Borough Council (MBC), KCC and the bus operators and would meet every 6 months, similar to other local authorities' Local Bus Focus Groups.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development stated that the proposed focus group would update the Board regularly on its findings and that a new group was required after the Quality Bus Partnership had been dissolved two years ago.

In response to questions the Principal Planning Officer stated that as KCC had proposed the Group and had submitted the structure to the government, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) was unable to amend the proposals. The Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan had disbanded the previous Quality Bus Partnership model, with the Bus Service Improvement Plan model supporting the creating of Local Bus Focus Groups.

The Board welcomed the report and stated that a forum for bus transport would be effective if the group focussed on strategic issues.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER:** That a Local Bus Focus Group be created to allow for interaction & work on strategic issues (for example: bus infrastructure improvements and wider strategy/policy updates) with bus operators.

51. KENT BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY FUNDING UPDATE

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

Note: Councillor Paul Cooper left the meeting during the item's consideration at 8:41 p.m.

52. IMPLEMENTATION OF 2004 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT AND ANPR CAMERAS UPDATE

The Board expressed disappointment that there were no Officers in attendance from Kent County Council.

During the discussion, some members of the Board queried whether the purpose of the camera on the Leeds Langley corridor was to monitor the weight load of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) or prevent HGVs from entering the road. The Chairman stated that clarification would be sought on the enforcement of the ANPR camera in Leeds Langley.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

53. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.49 p.m.

Note: The Committee adjourned between 8:13 p.m. to 8:21 p.m.