

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2013**

PRESENT: Councillor Burton (Chairman)
Councillors Beerling, Black, Butler, Cox, Newton,
Paterson, Ross and Springett

81. The Committee to consider whether all items on the agenda should be web-cast.

Resolved: That all items be webcast.

82. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Councillor Cumming.

83. Notification of Substitute Members.

Councillor Butler substituted for Councillor Cumming.

84. Notification of Visiting Members.

Councillors Vizzard, Mrs Grigg, Munford, de Wiggondene, Mrs Gooch, Chittenden and Mrs Wilson attended as visiting members with an interest in Item 7 Local Plan – Bus Lane.

85. Disclosures by Members and Officers.

There were no disclosures.

86. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.

It was agreed that all items be taken in public as proposed.

87. Local Plan - Bus Lane

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Garland, Leader of the Council, Councillor Paine, Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, Rob Jarman, Head of Planning, Michael Murphy, principal Planning Officer and Tim Hapgood of JMP Consultants to the meeting.

The Officer gave a brief presentation outlining the reasons for the proposed bus lane, the costs and expected benefits including an expected 13% increase in bus patronage. The Committee was informed that cost benefit ratio demonstrated that the proposal was good value for money.

The Committee considered the presentation given and queried the statistics around journeys to the Town Centre from the south of the borough which the modelling had shown accounted for 87% of the traffic going to the town centre. The Committee reminded the Cabinet Members and Officers of the work that the Committee had undertaken in the previous year that showed 61% of journey destinations was the town centre.

It was noted that previous comments about the start and end points for the proposed bus lane had been taken on board with the start point including Wallis Avenue and extending to Armstrong Road. The Committee was informed that it would not go as far as the proposed three housing sites. Feedback received through consultation had shown environmental concerns around the loss of trees, Officers confirmed that only grass verges would be lost.

There was discussion around the funding of the scheme and it was confirmed by the Officers that the bus lane would be funded through S106 agreements. Members queried the possibility of extending the bus lane all the way into the town centre and were informed that this would be the ideal but could not be funded through section 106 agreements.

The Committee debated the proposed benefits of the scheme in reducing congestion and travel time to the town centre and concluded that a reduction in journey time of four minutes would not be as valuable to residents as a reduction in fares. It was also felt that this would be key in encouraging greater bus use.

The Officers were asked about the possibility of the bus lane as a multi occupancy vehicle lane or one that would take commercial vehicle as the committee considered that this would have a greater impact on changing behaviour. The Committee was informed that this level of detail was yet to be discussed and was something that could be considered.

The Committee agreed there was scepticism around the actual benefits bus lane would bring, there was feeling that any benefits could be lost when getting into the town centre due to the gyratory system. This issue was not going to be resolved without a holistic approach to transport in Maidstone.

It was resolved:

- a) That the Committee was not supportive or convinced of the merits of the bus lane as proposed;
- b) That, if Cabinet are minded to approve the bus lane the Committee recommends that work was immediately initiated to investigate its use as a bus lane/multi occupancy/commercial highway and work with KCC on a holistic approach to connect properly with the Town Centre; and

- c) That clarity on the statistics on journeys to Maidstone as a destination and journeys through Maidstone to alternative destinations.