

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAIDSTONE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs Stockell (Chairman) and
Councillors Ash, Bird, Brown, Burton, Butler, Carter,
Chittenden, Clark, Cooke, Daley, Ells, Mrs Gooch,
Hotson, Willis, J.A. Wilson and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Munford,
Mrs Ring and Round

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Cuming, English and Moriarty.

2. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor Butler for Councillor Cuming
Councillor Mrs Gooch for Councillor Moriarty
Councillor Mrs Wilson for Councillor English

3. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman stated that, in her opinion, the following reports should be taken as urgent items for the reasons specified:

- The report of the KCC Head of Transportation relating to Maidstone Transport Strategy options because, due to various leave commitments, the report had only recently been finalised.
- The oral report of the KCC Highway Manager, West Kent, on a proposal to extend the 30 mph speed limit at Lenham Road, Platts Heath because, due to various leave commitments, it had not been possible to include a written report on the agenda.

4. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Mrs Blackmore indicated her wish to speak on the report of the KCC Head of Transportation relating to Maidstone Transport Strategy options.

Councillor Munford indicated his wish to speak on the report of the KCC Cabinet Member for Community Services relating to the Christmas/New Year 2013/14 storms and floods.

Councillor Mrs Ring indicated her wish to speak on the report of the KCC Head of Transportation relating to the Member Highway Fund.

Councillor Round attended the meeting as an observer.

5. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

With regard to the reports of the KCC Cabinet Member for Community Services and the Kent Association of Local Councils relating to the Christmas and New Year 2013/14 storms and floods, Councillors Bird and Brown stated that their properties had been flooded.

6. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

7. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2014

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 22 JANUARY 2014

A Member expressed concern about the length of time since the last meeting of the Board. It was suggested that, in future, political group spokespersons from each partner authority (one from each political group from each authority as appropriate) and the KALC representative should be invited to attend the agenda setting meetings.

RESOLVED: That, in future, political group spokespersons from each partner authority (one from each political group from each authority as appropriate) and the KALC representative should be invited to attend the agenda setting meetings.

9. PETITIONS

Mrs Jenny Sutton presented a petition objecting to the proposed reduction of the current 17.5 tonne weight limit on the B2163 through Leeds Village. Mrs Sutton said that the objectors were concerned that Willington Street would be used as an alternative route if the proposal went ahead resulting in increased noise, air pollution and congestion etc. She called for further consideration to be given to the construction of a new dedicated road to remove all through traffic and HGVs from residential areas.

The petition was referred to KCC Highways and Transportation with a view to a report back to the Board in October 2014.

10. QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or statements by members of the public.

11. PETITIONS REPORT

Tim Read, the KCC Head of Transportation, presented a report updating the position with regard to petitions submitted to KCC Highways and Transportation.

Petition for the extension of the 30 mph speed limit on the A274 at Langley from the beginning of the Parish of Langley to the Five Wents Crossroads

It was noted that KCC Highways and Transportation had investigated the request and found current vehicle mean speeds to be very close to the existing 40 mph speed limit. Kent Police were consulted informally and had stated that based on the speeds recorded, they would object to any proposal to reduce the speed limit to 30 mph at this location. Based on this and the likelihood that any reduced speed limit would largely not be complied with, and having regard to the sound safety reasons for not imposing an artificially low speed limit, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Waste had declined the request.

In response to questions by Members, the Board was advised that:

- The introduction of speed limits in unrealistic locations or the setting of speed limits that are unrealistically low could be ineffective and lead to disrespect of the speed limit.
- Interactive speed signs had an immediate, but usually short lived, impact, compared to fixed speed limits. The presence of a speed limit implying enforcement that the Police could not guarantee to provide due to limited resources tended to lead drivers to believe that there was little prospect of being caught.
- If the built environment changed in the context of new development in this area, there would be an opportunity to reassess the situation in consultation with the Police.

Petition for the construction of a new section of footway on the A249 Sittingbourne Road to link Toppesfield Park to the existing pelican pedestrian crossing near Tudor Avenue

It was noted that site investigations had revealed that there was insufficient highway land to enable a new footway to be built to appropriate technical standards. The Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Waste had declined the request, indicating that if land was made available by the owners of properties fronting Sittingbourne Road, a bid could be made for Local Transport Plan funding although funding from this source could not be guaranteed.

The local County Council Member said that he had put £2k-3k of his Member Highway Fund towards safety investigations and was looking into the possible installation of a speed indicator device for traffic travelling north along Sittingbourne Road and improved carriageway lining.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12. MAIDSTONE BRIDGES GYRATORY

Peter Rosevear, KCC Strategic Transport Planner, presented the report of the KCC Head of Transportation updating the position with regard to the Bridges Gyratory Improvement Scheme and outlining the next steps.

It was noted that:

- The scheme involved the construction of two additional northbound lanes on the eastern side of the River Medway with new junctions controlled by traffic signals. This would enable northbound traffic on the A229 to avoid crossing both bridges, thereby reducing journey distances and travel times and enabling the regeneration of the western riverside.
- The Scheme had been the subject of a successful bid to the Government's Local Growth Fund and would also be supported by the Borough Council's New Homes Bonus.
- Outline planning permission had been granted for a supermarket on the Baltic Wharf Powerhub site. The permission included an obligation on the developer to widen the carriageway over the northern bridge to increase capacity. However, this would reduce the width of the existing footway/cycleway on the northern bridge. KCC would look at the capacity calculations to consider whether the improved capacity would be sufficient to allow retention of the footway/cycleway at its current width.
- Concerns had been expressed by some Members that the scheme in its current form would result in the removal of vegetation along the river. The preparation of a comprehensive landscaping scheme to mitigate the impact of the highway works would be addressed at the detailed design stage.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the following:

- Consideration should be given to improving pedestrian links across the river and the condition of the underpasses.
- Consideration should be given to measures to improve air quality such as the provision of green infrastructure.
- The scope to retain the cycle route should be examined.
- The developer of the Baltic Wharf site would be asked for a contribution to the scheme, but the timing of this could be difficult as the application was speculative with no named supermarket involved.
- Members should be involved as the scheme progresses to design stage.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the Officers be requested to have regard to the points raised in the discussion when progressing the Bridges Gyratory Improvement Scheme to detailed design.

13. CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR 2013/14 STORMS AND FLOODS

Paul Crick, KCC Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement, introduced the report of the KCC Cabinet Member for Community Services setting out the lessons learned from the Christmas/New Year 2013/14 storms and flooding (and previous severe weather events) and a series of recommendations for how the County Council, in collaboration with its partners, could be better prepared to manage any such future events and flood risk.

Stuart Beaumont, KCC Head of Community Safety and Emergency Planning, then gave a short presentation outlining the effects of the storms and floods and the key recommendations. It was noted that Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling were the two Boroughs with the most affected areas, but there had been no deaths, casualties or reports of hospitalisations. Given the unprecedented circumstances, staff, systems and procedures had coped well, but there were areas for improvement including the need for:

- A visible presence on site in affected areas;
- The rapid deployment of sandbags;
- Enhanced arrangements for warning and informing the public, including contingency arrangements in the event of power outages and greater use of social media;
- Greater flood awareness and individual/community resilience;
- A review of potential flood defence schemes; and
- The consequences of flood risk to be fully considered before promoting development in flood risk areas.

A Member made reference to the Brishing Dam, Boughton Monchelsea, and the responsibility of the Parish Council to finance its maintenance. The KCC Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement advised the Board that he would be meeting with the Environment Agency the following day to discuss Medway Valley flood alleviation and he would raise the issue then. In addition, he would ensure that Max Tant, KCC Flood Risk Manager, was available to attend any meeting arranged between the Parish Council and the Environment Agency to discuss the matter.

During the discussion reference was made to the following:

- District/Borough Councils had been proactive in promoting the Central Government Repair and Renewal Grant, but take-up across the County had been limited. Enquiries had been made as to whether a group application could be made for funding towards the cost of community flood defence schemes, but the criteria did not allow for this.

- The Flood Recovery Minister for Kent had given a commitment to raise as a priority the effectiveness of the response of the various utilities companies, particularly the power, water and sewerage providers.
- A review had been undertaken to increase resilience across KCC and its partner authorities in order to be better prepared in future. This included training reservists.
- There were concerns about the arrangements for surface water run-off both during and after the construction of new housing development at Langley Park. *The MBC Head of Planning and Development undertook to provide this information outside the meeting.*
- There was a need to manage flood risk within the planning system. The Environment Agency was a statutory planning consultee, but KCC would only comment on the potential flooding issues associated with a planning application if consulted. *The KCC Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement and the MBC Head of Planning and Development undertook to draw up a rationale for consulting KCC on the potential flooding issues associated with planning applications.*

RESOLVED:

1. That the report and presentation be noted.
2. That all the various agencies be thanked for their response to the severe weather events experienced over Christmas/New Year 2013/14.

14. **CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR STORMS AND FLOODING**

The Board considered a report summarising the views received from KALC member Councils regarding the impact of the Christmas and New Year storms and floods across Kent.

Councillor Brown (KALC) said that staff on the ground from the UK power networks had been very helpful arranging to move some sub-stations and dealing with issues relating to telephone answering. Enhanced arrangements were being made to inform the public in flooding/severe weather conditions, including contingency arrangements in the event of power outages. Greater flood awareness and individual/community resilience should be encouraged together with the development of community emergency plans.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

15. MAIDSTONE TRANSPORT STRATEGY OPTIONS

Tim Read, the KCC Head of Transportation, presented a report clarifying KCC's position on progress towards an Integrated Transport Strategy to support whatever housing and employment growth is promoted in MBC's Local Plan. He explained that this was very much a work in progress and any options chosen would be tested through the use of the Maidstone transport model. The schedule of schemes which had been drawn up was not exclusive, and the impact of alternative proposals could be tested.

During the discussion reference was made to the following:

- The need for consideration to be given to the potential for a Leeds/Langley bypass or a new link road to join the A20/A274;
- The need for a definitive statement from KCC as local Highway Authority clarifying its position regarding the widening of the A274 Sutton Road for a bus lane;
- There was uncertainty about what the proposed widening of Sittingbourne Road would achieve;
- Park and Ride should be included in the model together with consideration of public transport and walking and cycling initiatives;
- Consideration should be given to the possibility of additional development coming forward along the A20 corridor through work on the T&M Local Plan and the need for a co-ordinated approach to infrastructure improvements;
- The need for consideration to be given to the impact of town centre traffic on rural areas;
- The need to be ambitious and imaginative in the development of transport schemes to support growth; and
- The scheme to support potentially 1,000 homes in a designated AONB, the lack of mention of sites included in the Local Plan, the inclusion of sites which are not in the Local Plan, and schemes which have already been agreed, but not commenced.

Rob Jarman, the MBC Head of Planning and Development, advised the Board that Maidstone BC had not been involved in the production of the report. He said that it was a core principle of the NPPF that the Local Planning Authority would actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable. It would be necessary to demonstrate that this had been considered. There was uncertainty as to what transport modelling work had been undertaken and more information was required regarding the proposed schemes.

The Board considered the proposal that a Working Group be formed comprising representatives of KCC and MBC to discuss these and other emerging schemes.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Joint Transportation Board should meet as a Working Group to discuss the development of transport schemes to support the housing and employment growth promoted in the Local Plan, with invitations extended to other interested parties as appropriate.
2. That the timeline for the meetings of the Working Group should be aligned with and support the timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan and funding deadlines for schemes.
3. That the first meeting of the Working Group be scheduled to take place before the next meeting of the Joint Transportation Board on 15 October 2014.

16. **RECONSTRUCTION OF WILLINGTON STREET**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Programmed Works, Highways, Transportation and Waste updating the position with regard to the reconstruction and resurfacing of two kilometres of Willington Street, Maidstone. It was noted that the improvements were being delivered in three phases. Phase 1 between the A274 Sutton Road and Denton Close had been completed on time despite some poor weather. Phase 2 between Denton Close and Otterbourne Place would be delivered next Easter and Phase 3 between Otterbourne Place and Deringwood Drive would be completed during the summer school holidays 2015.

During the ensuing discussion, Members thanked local residents for their understanding during the course of the works and the Officers for the way in which the works had been managed. Carol Valentine, the KCC Highway Manager, West Kent, advised the Board that it was accepted that there were lessons to be learned in terms of, for example, communication generally and liaison with the utility services, and an analysis would be undertaken to inform the practical implementation of Phases 2 and 3.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

17. **MAIDSTONE SCHEMES REPORT**

Tim Read, the KCC Head of Transportation, submitted a report updating the position with regard to traffic and safety schemes currently being progressed by KCC Highways and Transportation.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

18. HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Board considered the report of KCC Highways and Transportation updating the position with regard to schemes approved for construction in 2014/15.

In response to a question by a Member, the KCC Highway Manager, West Kent, confirmed that the Sutton Road footway improvement scheme from its junction with Cranborne Avenue to its junction with Mangravet Avenue on the eastern side had been programmed to start this financial year. A date would be agreed with Amey once the traffic management arrangements had been finalised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

19. MEMBER HIGHWAY FUND UPDATE

The Board considered the report of the KCC Head of Transportation updating the position (as at 11 August 2014) with regard to highway schemes that had been approved for funding by the relevant County Members and the Director of Highways.

A Member wished it to be noted that although reference was made to a speed table being resurfaced in Northumberland Road, it was actually the crossing.

In response to a question by a Member, the Board was informed that it was the intention that a decision regarding the proposed reduction of the current 17.5 tonne weight limit on the B2163 through Leeds Village to 7.5 tonnes would be made following a discussion with the Board in October 2014. A consultation exercise had taken place already, the results of which would be reported to the Board.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

20. PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE 30 MPH SPEED LIMIT AT LENHAM ROAD, PLATTS HEATH

Carol Valentine, the KCC Highway Manager, West Kent, updated the Board on a request received to extend the existing 30 mph speed limit on the Lenham Road, Platts Heath to the site of the village name plate, the effect of which would be to include a small number of outlying properties on Lenham Road in the 30 mph village speed limit. It was noted that the request had been refused on the grounds that the current density of development and the semi rural nature of Lenham Road at this location did not support the introduction of a 30 mph speed limit.

RESOLVED: That the position be noted.

21. DURATION OF MEETING

5.30 p.m. to 8.05 p.m.