

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

TUNBRIDGE WELLS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Virtual Meeting - Online, at 6.00 pm on Monday, 3 July 2023

PRESENT: Borough Councillors Lidstone (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Roberts, Lewis, Munday and O'Connell
County Councillors Hamilton, Barrington-King, McInroy and Oakford
Parish Councillor Mackonochie

Officers in Attendance: Julian Cook (District Manager), John Strachan, Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), Nick Baldwin (Senior Engineer, Parking) and Louise Kellam (Democratic Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

TB1/23 Apologies were received from Councillor Atkins.
County Councillors Holden and Bruneau were not present at the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

TB2/23 There were no disclosable pecuniary interests or other significant interests declared at the meeting

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS REGISTERED TO SPEAK

TB3/23 The following people had registered to speak:
Agenda Item 6 – Lorna Blackmore
Agenda Item 7 – Sally Atkinson, Jim Key, Pippa Collard and Cllr Justine Rutland

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 30 JANUARY 2023

TB4/23 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.
RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 30 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 17 APRIL 2023

TB5/23 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.
RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 17 April 2023 be approved as a correct record.

PERMANENT TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER - HIGH STREET, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

TB6/23 Registered Speaker – Lorna Blackmore
Hilary Smith, TWBC Economic Development Manager, introduced her report and provided a verbal update on consultation responses:

Questions and discussion from Members included:

- It was clarified that the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and consultation only covered the one-way system on the High Street, not the other elements such as street furniture.
- The scheme was deemed a good idea by Members generally.
- It was noted that the TRO scheme improved the traffic flow and helped businesses on the High Street. The public were used to the changes and the TRO had created a nicer environment for eating out by creating one way traffic, which improved the High Street greatly.
- In relation to ongoing solutions to issues such as cars parking on corners and problematic junctions, TWBC were continuing to work with the Business Improvement District and KCC to make improvements to the scheme.
- Restrictions were already in place on parking on corners, and if amendments to restrictions were necessary this would be looked at by both TWBC and KCC through the application process.
- The effect of the one-way system on the junction with Vale Road could be looked at in the future, but it was reiterated that the report being discussed was quite specific regarding the TRO and that there was a long-term project underway with KCC on improvements to the area's traffic.
- Finances played a large part in any decisions made, and questions as to who would fund ongoing works needed to be answered as KCC's budget could not stretch too far after a £47 million overspend last year and overspend pressures in the first quarter of the current year, so ways of saving money were assessed and budgeted and funds would not be made available, so if the TRO was supported and made permanent, it was possible TWBC would have to fund this.
- The BID had so far been very supportive of the scheme.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Joint Transport Board considered representations made in response to the public consultation.
2. That the Board endorsed the making of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order for the northbound one-way restriction in the High Street, Royal Tunbridge Wells between its junctions with Mount Sion and Vale Road.

UPDATE ON PUBLIC REALM 2 BUS GATE

TB7/23 Registered Speakers – Sally Atkinson, Jim Key, Pippa Collard and Cllr Justine Rutland

Before passing over to the reporting Officer, the Chair clarified that the update asked of the Officer for the JTB was purely regarding the enforcement, but that Members could subsequently discuss the scheme more broadly.

TWBC Parking Manager John Strachan provided a figure of 25,373 for Penalty Notices issued from 1st April 2023 until 3rd July. Furthermore:

- He highlighted a downward trend, with numbers of Penalty Notices issued reducing each week - when numbers were first being monitored, in excess of 1000 vehicles a day were driving through the restriction. This was now approximately 200 vehicles a day.
- The restriction had been in place for a couple of years with signage and during the Pandemic enforcement had been suspended.

- Commencement of warning notices being issued began on 20th February 2023 and approximately 18,000 warning notices were issued by 31st March 2023.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- When discussing Department of Transport guidance mentioned by one of the registered speakers (questioning the effectiveness of the scheme by monitoring Penalty Notices that were issued, and if disproportionately high requiring a review of the scheme)
- It was noted by the Officer that TWBC acted as the agent for KCC in carrying out the enforcement for the scheme. KCC had given notice that they would be taking enforcement in-house from 1st April 2024. He also noted that these types of schemes took time to settle down and Department of Transport advice suggested these type of schemes took around 6 months to bed in. KCC advice had been that they would probably wait a year before considering any significant reviews.
- It was felt that unless a review could be pushed forward and the residents consulted with, the residents were being batted back and forth between KCC and TWBC.
- It was then suggested that at this moment in time, the scheme lay entirely with TWBC and KCC did not have any control of the scheme. The KCC Director of Highways had stated it was up to TWBC if they wished to cancel the scheme or make adjustments due to the issues presented by residents, but that they solely benefited from the scheme as all fines went to TWBC, not KCC. KCC were not able to intervene until 2024. KCC were responsible for the signage and if TWBC needed to change highway layouts they would need to go into consultation with KCC who would have to agree it, but the fines and collections of fines could be stopped tomorrow by TWBC if they wished to do so. This was disputed by the TWBC officer, who stated that KCC had informed them of their intention to take on enforcement of Public Realm 1 & 2 in-house, and that it was at KCC's request that they reimplemented Public Realm 2 in February 2023. He highlighted that KCC was the Highway Authority who devolved responsibility of enforcement of Public Realm 2 through an agency agreement with TWBC.
- It was suggested that the scheme could no longer be reversed due to the removal of the island in the road which would be required for pedestrian safety.
- The comments made by local residents were acknowledged by Members and it was suggested that if the scheme could not be reversed, then the suggestions put forward by the speakers and the other residents of Dudley/York Roads could be listened to by the two Councils to resolve the issue.
- It was reiterated that Members were there on the residents' behalf and it was of great concern to the residents and local traders to make this work. The scheme had gone too far to just cancel it, so further consultation and solutions were needed.
- In regards to next steps, budgetary constraints were reflected upon. When the suggestion that some of the revenue created by the Penalty Notice fines were used to create alternative solutions and alleviate the situation for residents of York and Dudley Roads, it was noted by the reporting Officer that any alterations would need to be enacted by KCC as TWBC were 'caretakers' of the scheme. This was disputed by the Chair, with TWBC's initial involvement in the scheme's proposal

and it's part in the Council's planning for the town centre being referenced, but it was clarified that any changes to the layout or highway would be matters for the Highway Authority (KCC), so TWBC officers would not wish to comment on them.

- The Chair summarised that there had been clear indication from residents as to what they wanted, but that enforcement had had an impact on the number of cars passing through the area, which was the aim of it and was positive. The impact on local residents and businesses was the remaining critical issue with the scheme and it was hoped that the two authorities could between them look at the practical solutions proposed by the residents, as well as the need for proper consultation.
- It was noted that at the previous JTB on 17th April a proper review of the PR2 scheme was felt to be more appropriate after 12 months to allow the scheme time to settle. However, it had been noted at the previous meeting that the item had come to the agenda late and that residents had not been given enough time to register to speak at that meeting, and so residents constructive comments at this meeting were appreciated. A suggestion for ward councillors in Culverden and Park and the area's County Councillors to meet with residents to discuss proposals was deemed sensible.

RED BRICK FOOTWAYS

TB8/23 Julian Cook, KCC Highways Manager, introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

Questions and discussion from Members included the following:

- The work of Julian Cook and his team to secure the funding was commended.
- Any new application would require crossovers to be made out of red bricks, but it was possible for residents with previously tarmacked crossovers to apply for red brick replacements, at their own cost. There was to be no retrospective enforcement on crossovers already tarmacked.
- Implementation was set for January 1st 2024 so that Quality Assurance specifications could be completed which required, for instance, enhanced deeper depths of sub-base to ensure quality and longevity. As a result, all contractors completing the works would have all the necessary certificates to work on the public highway. Works would then be checked by KCC, with an extended warranty period that would be the responsibility of the householder and the contractor that they used. A similar process was currently in place for tarmac crossovers in terms of ensuring satisfactory work.
- The quality of bricks to be used in the paving was set out in specifications to ensure safety and consistency. They were Keswick Bricks, which had been used in the St John's Road and Madeira Park area and were the requirement within the specifications.
- The weight of Electric Vehicles were damaging the original clay red bricks, but the new red brick specifications were of greater depth to protect them. Some tarmac would be needed in areas where Utilities were closer to the surface, due to the greater depth of the bricks.

RESOLVED – The report was noted.

HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

TB9/23 Julian Cook, Highways Manager, introduced the report as set out in the agenda.

Questions and discussion from Members included:

- In relation to the Badsell Road/Maidstone Road design process (p37 – Developer Funded Works), the report stated that it was about to start and when asked when the first design would be available for review by residents, Mr Cook stated he would need to speak with colleagues in the Agreements team for specific details and report back.
- Western Road surfacing works (p27) had been partially carried out recently but was cancelled, or partly-cancelled, due to water works. When asked to confirm when works were likely to recommence, Mr Cook agreed to speak with colleagues and report back.
- In regards to St John's Road new access for residential developments (p37), the area was very heavily trafficked by pedestrians and was also a very wide highway, which was thought meant that a bell mouth junction was not permitted and had not been mentioned in the report. It was clarified that some types of vehicles needed to be accommodated, but this would be checked to confirm what type of junction would be delivered.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB10/23 Discussion included the following:

- Public Realm 2 was proposed as an ongoing item and it was agreed that a quarterly report on enforcement and numbers would be beneficial, as well providing a forum for dialogue with residents.
- Crossovers were discussed, and KCC Officer Julian Cook offered to provide the link for the KCC website with all the information on Vehicle Crossovers / Dropped Kerbs. [Apply for a dropped kerb or access point - Kent County Council](#). The specific KCC dimensions / requirements for a dropped Kerb were to be found under [read the application guidance \(PDF, 564.8 KB\)](#).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TB11/23 The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 2nd October at 6pm

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.25 pm.