

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, 15 January 2024

PRESENT: **Borough Councillors Lidstone (Vice-Chair), Atkins, Lewis, Munday and Roberts**
 County Councillors Hamilton (Chair), Barrington-King, Bruneau, McInroy and Oakford
 Parish Councillor Mackonochie

Officers in Attendance: Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), John Strachan (TWBC Parking Manager), Jamie Watson (Traffic Schemes Team Leader), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager) and Julian Cook (District Manager)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors

APOLOGIES

TB23/22 No apologies were received.
 County Councillor Holden was not present at the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

TB24/22 There were no disclosable pecuniary interests or other significant interests declared in the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

TB25/22 The following people had registered to speak on Agenda Item 5:

 Sally Atkinson, Jim Key, Pippa Collard, Adrian Berendt,
 Councillors Osborne, Rutland and Brice.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 2 OCTOBER 2023

TB26/22 Members reviewed the minutes. The following amendment was proposed:

 Councillor Atkins requested a spelling error be corrected and that further clarification be given to his minute notation in Agenda item 8.

The amendment to read:

Councillor Atkins requested that the minutes note he does not support the design layout proposed for the Badsell Road junction.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 2 October 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment.

PR2 PETITION: PRESENTATION BY LEAD PETITIONER

TB27/22 Presentation by Registered Speaker, Sally Atkinson.
Points included:

- It was noted that despite the purpose of PR2 striving for a greener and more prosperous Borough, neither of these aims were felt to be achieved.
- It was felt there were higher levels of traffic resulting in higher levels of pollution from cars and buses.
- It was noted that residents in Calverley, Newton and Crescent Road were unhappy with the increase in congestion and air pollution.
- 2-3 loops needing to be completed to secure a parking space for residents in Dudley and York Road due to inability to pass through PR2.
- It was voiced that PR1 and 2 did not provide a traffic restricted area.
- It was noted that local businesses had suffered due to decrease in footfall including the local charity shops experiencing a decline in donations.
- It was noted the issue of pedestrian safety had been recognised but not addressed.
- It was noted that there had been no public consultation before, during or after the implementation of PR2, which residents felt negatively about.
- It was noted that there had been little notice of the planned works for PR2, including no prior information on local media or signage on affected roads.
- It was raised that no baseline air quality data was being collected for the PR2 area.
- It was raised that current road signage was felt to be unclear and therefore placed drivers at a disadvantage if they were new to or visiting the area.
- It was raised that to date, 57,559 fines had been issued and 9% of those had been successfully appealed. It was therefore felt that due to the high amount of PCN's issued to drivers, this should have triggered an urgent review of the signage.
- It was felt that the £1.5 million that had been collected to date in fines should have been refunded to drivers.
- It was summarised by the speaker that further clarity and justification for PR2 needed to be provided as well as reasonings it may not be revoked.

Speaker Jim Key:

- It was raised from a resident perspective the struggles residents were faced with on a daily basis due to PR2 restrictions, including lengthy detours to secure parking spaces outside their homes.
- It was felt that the Dudley and York Road residents were most affected with an increase in time and money spent due to the detours as well as a rise in traffic congestion and pollution.
- It was raised that whitelisting for taxi's was accepted however this was not the case for the 350 houses on Dudley and York Road combined.
- It was noted that the lack of exemptions for residents had begun to affect mental wellbeing as well as put strain on daily life.

Speaker Adrian Berendt:

- It was noted that the Town Forum representatives were

disappointed upon seeing final designs of the PR2 plans as the Forum were originally in support of its introduction.

- It was noted that the number of vehicles that were using Dudley, York and Newton Road had NOT increased since the implementation of PR2 and were lower than before the scheme was introduced. These were findings brought by the Town Forum.
- It was noted that several recommendations were made by the Town Forum and put forward in the report to Cabinet. Although some were considered, it was felt that these needed to be further reviewed.
- It was raised that were PR2 to be removed, this would have an effect on the Town Centre Plan which was part of the Local Plan and due to go out to Public Consultation.

Speaker Pippa Collard:

- Previous points regarding reduced amount of traffic travelling through York Road were disputed and raised that it was often used as a cut through for traffic for those who wanted to avoid the Bus Gate.
- It was raised that cars often travelled faster than the 20 miles per hour speed limit and HGVs had been seen mounting pavements as they were unable to make 3 point turns in such a narrow residential street.
- It was raised that a demographic affected also included parents collecting children from school who had to allow extra time for their journey due to several traffic light sets due to inability to travel through PR2.
- It was noted that young families were moving out of the area due to this issue as well as tradesmen reluctant to action any desired work on these streets.
- It was felt that the scheme made visitors reluctant to revisit due to fines inflicted on them following their visit.
- Councillors were encouraged to revisit the scheme and look at alternative measures that can better support residents and business owners.

Speaker Councillor Brice

- It was raised that on 15th December, 2023, approximately 280 leaflets were hand-delivered to most affected households regarding PR2, asking for feedback.
- From this, it was noted there was a very low response rate with no emails or phone calls made to the provided contact information and approximately just 2 letters handed into Town Hall with feedback.
- Due to this, it was felt that residents therefore may not be opposed to the scheme, however, further feedback was encouraged as a continuation to this project.

Speaker Councilor Rutland:

- Option B of the petition was supported and support was given of amendments being made to PR2 to satisfy residents as best as possible.
- It was encouraged that residents be more included in feedback

and that any surplus funds be put back into the immediate neighbourhood in ways to be determined.

Speaker Councillor Osborne:

- Support was given to amendments to PR2 and for surplus PCN funds to be initially spent on improving the current PR2 scheme.
- Any proposals for PR3 as an extension of PR2 would not be supported.
- In summary, Option B of the petition was supported.

Jamie Watson, KCC Senior Programme Manager, delivered the report per the agenda.

Member questions, discussion and officer clarification included:

- It was clarified that further investigations re report item 2.3 might include looking at other options to reduce the journey length for residents having to travel the long way round. At the time of restrictions, the current route was identified as the only feasible route.
- A permitted vehicles list was a possible solution but would require careful consideration as it may lead other road users to believe they were exempt from the restrictions. Any dispensations would be likely to dilute the scheme.
- Engagement with the residents of Dudley, York and Newton Roads was likely to be helpful to fully understand what problems actually exist for them as a collective. It would be beneficial to gather empirical evidence prior to undertaking any works.
- Officers clarified that the proposals within the report were actions that could be undertaken swiftly. The next step would be to investigate if the options were viable.
- It was clarified that the air quality was not monitored in the area. However, prior to PR2 there were in the region of 1200 cars per day passing through the area daily. This figure was now less than one hundred vehicles. This would suggest that pollution and noise levels were likely to have been reduced as a result.
- It was confirmed that collision data within the report was taken from the most up to date Kent Police data available for Crecent, Church and Calverley Roads to align with the roads highlighted within the petition.
- The informal survey undertaken, and noted previously, did not amount to a formal consultation with residents.
- Option B was confirmed as one that could be achieved quickly and cost effectively. Examples of small measures that could be carried out were given. Other affordable, viable options could be investigated by officers as a result of discussion with Councillors and/or residents and businesses to reach further consensus.
- The time scale for improving the visual cues and signage for drivers, as detailed in Appendix A, were confirmed as being achievable within a 3 month timeframe, however, this was dependent on current work schedules and funding.
- Officers clarified that the scheme was originally conceived by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as part of the 5-year plan. KCC, as the Highway Authority, implemented and project managed the scheme. It was considered to be a joint scheme for those reasons. The petition was originally raised with KCC and was then

presented to the appropriate board – in this case Tunbridge Wells JTB. KCC, as the Highway Authority, were responsible for the enforcement of schemes and management of traffic contraventions. This was contracted out to Local Authorities on an agency or license agreement – in the case of PR1 and PR2 it was contracted out to TWBC to do the enforcement work on behalf of KCC. It was clarified by the Corporate Director of Highways at KCC, that TWBC had sought to carry out the enforcement of PR2.

- It was confirmed that the fines and restrictions put in place by TWBC would be continued and the revenue generated by the fines thus far had all been received by TWBC. It was clarified that the funds must be spent as per the legislation, which is either on the highways, for climate change/environmental improvement projects or public transportation projects.
- It was clarified that the fines were a means of gaining compliance with the restriction rather than a means of generating income. A proportion of the revenue generated from the fines was used to cover the costs of implementing and operating the scheme. The scheme had been operated with a sympathetic appeals process.
- The financial risk associated with the scheme was borne by TWBC. There had been a financial surplus generated of in the region of £1M which had not yet been spent or allocated. How this would be spent would fall to TW Members to decide. The money could be spent on highways improvements, per legislation detailed previously, and the cost of providing the service. However, having taken legal advice, it had been established that TWBC could spend the money on reducing pollution and climate change projects. Members had been informed of the advice to support their decision making.
- It was clarified that TWBC were asked to reinstate PR2 enforcement in early 2023 in an agreement with KCC. The costs and revenue associated with the enforcement fell to TWBC as part of the agreement. TWBC had been asked to extend the enforcement agreement with KCC until the end of June 2024. From which point, KCC would be in receipt of any surplus from the scheme.
- Whitelisting for residents' vehicles was a possibility albeit a challenge. The TRO would require an amendment and a consultation would be necessary to achieve this. Further advice would be needed to identify if an experimental TRO would require a consultation.
- Implications on safety of any proposed changes, in light of this being a pedestrian safe zone, would need to be carefully considered.
- The impact of increased traffic flow from residents' cars may also impact on the driving behaviour of other road users who may follow suit - thus generating more fines. It was noted that the residents should not be responsible for the behaviour of other drivers.
- Officer clarification was given that Option B, as detailed in the report, was achievable within the time frames previously mentioned. Any additional amendments and reviews would need to be considered as separate options for discussion.
- It was clarified that all traffic restrictions can be enforced but this was often in tandem with the expectation of public compliance. The impact of the pandemic on enforcement operations was

significant; restrictions remained in place but were largely reliant on public compliance as enforcement was relaxed. Before the enforcement was reimplemented, warnings were issued over a period of time.

- As previously noted, workshops and consultations with residents were considered beneficial in establishing exactly what the challenges for residents were.
- The view was expressed that Option B dealt with some of the issues but did not go far enough. Option B was considered to be a stepping stone towards finding a final solution for and with residents.
- It was considered important to establish exactly how many permits would be required to achieve whitelisting as conflicting figures had been shared. It was suggested that whitelisting as an option should only be considered for residents of Dudley, York, and Newton Roads.
- SATNAV systems were continuing to direct vehicles through the zone when the restriction was in place. Officers would investigate if it were possible to communicate the restriction with SATNAV providers. It was expected that this would present providers with an administrative challenge due to the scheme not being 24/7.
- A sense of urgency to finding a resolution was reinforced.

Resolved - The members of JTB unanimously supported Officer recommendation Option B of the report.

ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE

TB28/22 Hilary Smith presented the report as per the agenda.

- The report was noted to be for information only.
- Both projects on the report were being taken forward and funded jointly by TWBC and KCC.
- Further engagement was encouraged from local communities and representatives.
- A final report on this would be shared at the next JTB meeting in April 2024.

There were no further questions raised by members.

HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

TB29/22 Presented by Julian Cook KCC Highways Manager.

Member questions and Officer clarification included:

- Works on Badsell Road were progressing and an update would be sought from John Farmer within the Major Projects Team at KCC, particularly regarding comments about cyclists and alternative access arrangements for them.
- Upon receiving results from the traffic survey for Birkin Road, further action would be taken regarding implementation of a pedestrian crossing.
- A public consultation would take place, if required, on the schemes proposed. Advice would be sought regarding the specific proposal for a new junction at Owls Nest, Pembury Road.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB30/22 The Items noted for the next JTB Meeting were:

- Highway Works Update
- Concrete Roads Update to be presented by Julian Cook
- Active Travel Update
- Highways Improvement Plans
- Follow up for PR2 Discussion

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TB31/22 The next meeting was scheduled for 8 April 2024 at 6pm.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 8.20 pm.

James McInroy and Charles Mackonochie were delayed entering the meeting due to technical difficulties however were eventually present.