

**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, 17 April 2023

**PRESENT:**        **Borough Councillors Lidstone (Chair), Brice, Roberts and Allen**  
**County Councillors Hamilton (Vice-Chair), Barrington-King, Holden,**  
**McInroy and Oakford**  
**Parish Councillor Mackonochie**

**Officers in Attendance:** Nick Baldwin (Senior Engineer, Parking), Julian Cook (District Manager), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), John Strachan and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

**Other Members in Attendance:**

**APOLOGIES**

TB22/22        Apologies were received from Councillors Bruneau, Lewis and Willis.  
Councillor Mackonochie joined the meeting at 6:20pm, Councillor Holden left the meeting at 6:50pm.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

TB23/22        There were no disclosable pecuniary interests or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

**NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK**

TB24/22        The following people had registered to speak:

Mr Paul Mason – Agenda Item 4, JTB Highways Improvement Advisory Note & Agenda Item 5, TWBC Active Travel Update  
Councillor Justine Rutland – Agenda Item 6, Public Realm Update  
Councillor Nick Pope – Agenda Item 6, Public Realm Update  
Mr Adrian Berendt – Agenda Item 6, Public Realm Update  
Councillor Hugo Pound – Agenda Item 7, Residents Parking, Clifton Road

**JTB HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT ADVISORY NOTE**

TB25/22        Mr Paul Mason (Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group) had registered to speak, comments included:

- Statements included within the report were welcomed, particularly paragraph 1.17 which stated that KCC were no longer looking to amend the network to accommodate more cars.
- Sustainable modes of transport at development sites were being recommended.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- Paragraph 1.18 related to issues around consultation with KCC on highways issues at the planning stages of new developments.

Concern was raised that it would be hard to ascertain safety issues at the early stages of any development.

- KCC were a statutory consultee on the highways impact of any planning application. Determining the significance of the information received from KCC would be a matter for the Borough as the Planning authority. But it was noted that KCC were constrained in their ability to refuse applications on the grounds of safety due to strict rules within current highway safety regulations.
- Levels of congestion were not considered a safety concern and therefore not a reason to refuse an application.
- The size of the development would also be a consideration in determining the weight given to the information received from KCC.
- There might be some value in trying to find out how many planning applications had been refused on the grounds of highway safety.
- It was noted that there were a lot of preliminary discussions before planning applications were formally submitted, and it may be the case that many were discounted at an early stage if highway safety concerns were an issue.

**RESOLVED** – The report was noted.

## **TWBC ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE**

TB26/22 Mr Paul Mason (Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group) had registered to speak, comments included:

- Consideration to be given to the reduction of pedestrian waiting times at pedestrian crossings.
- The maximum waiting time should be 10-15 seconds.
- A trial site should be set up and it was suggested the pedestrian crossing on the Pembury Road by St George's School would be a suitable place for the trial.
- The waiting time at this crossing should be reduced from 25 seconds to 15 seconds.
- The suggestion had already been put forward to KCC, who raised a number of objections, none of which could be considered as valid as they focused on keeping cars moving.
- The trial should be for a 3 month period. After which, if there were no adverse effects, the change could be made permanent and another site could be identified for similar treatment.

Hilary Smith, Economic and Development Manager gave a verbal update, comments included:

- TWBC had been awarded £25k from Active Travel England's Capacity Fund.
- The funding would be used to commission designs for cycling and walking routes within the Borough.
- A final decision had yet to be taken, but it was likely the Council would commission a design for a cycle route from the Rusthall area into the town centre.
- Initial discussions with the Commons Conservators on potential routes via the Commons had already taken place.
- During May the Council were planning some engagement within the local community in the St John's and St James' Wards on ways that

- some of the residential streets in the area could be improved.
- A small working group had been set up, which included a number of local residents, Councillors and members of the Town Forum.
- TWBC were also working with KCC regarding the future of the High Street. It was currently operating as a one-way scheme under a temporary TRO. The TRO expired in September 2023. It was understood that a new TRO would have to be a permanent one.
- In order to put a permanent TRO a public consultation would be required.
- TWBC had been in discussion with KCC on ways the scheme could be improved.
- Discussions had also taken place with the Business Improvement District (The BID), who were potentially interested in providing some funding to upgrade the current scheme.
- As part of the A21 duelling scheme, cycle routes were proposed for both Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. The Tunbridge Wells element had been completed and discussions between TWBC, Tonbridge and Malling and KCC were now taking place to take to complete the Tonbridge part of the scheme.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- It might be possible to look at extending the cycling provision to Langton Green, but it would depend on cost.
- Feedback from the High Street when the scheme was first introduced was very positive.
- Something more permanent and less high maintenance was probably the way forward.
- There was concern that a reduction of waiting times at pedestrian crossings would cause further traffic congestion, which was already a particular problem on the Pembury Road.
- 25 seconds wasn't considered to be an unreasonable time to wait.
- There had to be a balance between waiting times at pedestrian crossings and keeping the traffic flowing.
- A pilot scheme would allow officers to ascertain the effects of reducing waiting times at pedestrian crossings.
- This could be something to consider as a topic for a future meeting.
- The final decision for a pilot scheme would rest with the Health and Safety Officer and responsible crossings officer at KCC. JTB would have to submit details to KCC which would be reviewed. The decision would rest with KCC.

**RESOLVED** - The Chair of JTB to consider putting a paper to KCC for a pilot scheme to reduce waiting times at pedestrian crossings.

## TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB27/22 Discussion included the following:

- Consideration to be given on a report to look at how to reduce the number of road closures in Kent.
- In 2019, 4,000 permits were issued. In 2022 this had risen to 16,000 permits.
- 16,000 permits equated to every mile of road in Kent being closed an average of 3 times a year.

- KCC had now been asked to see how that number could be reduced.
- KCC had initially responded that Health and Safety requirements mandated that there had to be at least 1 metre between those working on the road and the traffic.
- It was suggested, road closures were easier and cheaper for contractors, rather than to set up traffic management that would allow the road to remain open.
- It was suggested that the JTB should write a letter to the KCC Cabinet Member and to the Director of Highways requesting that the number of permits be reduced and to ask KCC officers for a mechanism of how this could be achieved.
- To consider a pilot scheme for the reduction of waiting times at pedestrian crossings.
- Town issues dominated the meeting, with rural areas being missed. More engagement was needed with the Parishes. But it was important that traffic issues that affected rural areas come forward to JTB. Discussion between KCC Councillors and KCC Officers to discuss possible topics would take place in the first instance, subject to those discussions, consideration could be given to items being added to future agendas.

#### **RESOLVED -**

1. The Chair of JTB to write to KCC to request a reduction of permits for road closures and to ask for a mechanism to be put in place to ensure fewer permits were issued in the future.
2. The Chair of JTB to approach KCC about the possibility of a pilot scheme to reduce waiting times at pedestrian crossings.
3. KCC Councillors to discuss possible agenda items with KCC Officers that affect rural areas for inclusion at future JTB meetings.

#### **TWBC PUBLIC REALM 2 UPDATE**

TB28/22      Adrian Berendt, Deputy Chair of Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum had registered to speak, comments included:

- The initial plans were well received and it was believed this would result in the area becoming an iconic public square that would compliment the Town Hall and the Amelia Scott building.
- Unfortunately the final decision lost much of the original vision.
- The Town Forum, along with residents had now undertaken some work and made a number of observations which had been circulated to Members.
- The report was not intended to be scientific and was carried out independently of Council officers.
- There was concern that although traffic levels had fallen, the area still looked like a highway rather than a public space.
- Pedestrians crossing York Road, Dudley Road and Monson Road still had to make way for vehicles rather than the other way around.
- Residents of local streets were inconvenienced and remained concerned about traffic levels and vehicle speeds.
- The report made a number of suggestions that would improve the area for residents, visitors and businesses.
- A full review of the scheme so far should be undertaken with a plan that included a series of steps that would return the scheme to something similar to the original proposal.

- The Town Forum were very happy to continue to engage with officers.

Councillor Pope had registered to speak, comments included:

- Supportive of the concept of a more pedestrian friendly road but had reservations about the delivery of Public Realm 2.
- The design was confusing and even though the signage might now be correct, there were not enough other visual prompts to make it clear that the area was for pedestrians rather than vehicles.
- The change in signing from red prohibitive signing to blue signing had made it more confusing.
- Monson Road was the most confusing as there was insufficient warning of the restrictions ahead, with drivers often then having to turn around.
- Crossing at Monson Road was dangerous for pedestrians.
- It would be useful to understand next steps.

Councillor Rutland had registered to speak, comments included:

- The Parking Team and Communications team had worked hard and this was welcomed.
- Enforcement had begun and fines were being sent out.
- Although the scheme had been inherited from the previous administration, the aim of reducing traffic in the town centre was supported.
- However there were a number of flaws in the design which should now be addressed. The report from the Town Forum was very helpful in identifying these issues and the Board should consider them carefully.
- The concerns of local residents fell into two camps, longer journey times particularly when seeking on street parking spaces and concerns about the additional traffic.
- Residents had not received any meaningful engagement when the scheme was introduced.
- The scheme needed to be better for both residents and pedestrians.
- In a few months' time, there will be a better understanding regarding the level of compliance.
- A review of the scheme at a suitable time would be welcomed.

John Strachan, Parking Manager provided a verbal update, comments included:

- The purpose of Public Realm 2 (PR2) was to create a more pedestrian friendly space, to frame the war memorial and make that part of town a focal point for events such as Remembrance Day.
- Back in 2018 TWBC and KCC worked together to put together an outline design.
- TWBC then took the decision to pass on the technical elements and the design of the scheme to KCC.
- A TRO was made that gave priority to buses and taxis. TWBC took on the enforcement. The scheme came into operation in October/November 2020.
- In January 2021, in line with some of the relaxation of parking enforcement and in light of the Covid pandemic, enforcement ceased.
- Between February 2021 and June 2022, TWBC and KCC officers undertook a review of PR2. In particular the signing giving advanced

- warnings to drivers and the entry into the bus gate.
- Central Government had given County Council's the opportunity to take on the enforcement of moving traffic offences entirely using CCTV cameras. This would move the responsibility to the County Council from the local police force.
- KCC were one of the first Council's to take up those powers, and in around July 2022, they gave notice to TWBC that they would be taking on the responsibility for enforcing PR2. This was due to come into effect in October 2022 but had subsequently been delayed until March 2023 and again until March 2024.
- KCC asked TWBC to implement the scheme, which took effect in February 2023.
- TWBC rechecked the signing to ensure it was compliant and remained fit for purpose.
- TWBC wrote to all residents and businesses (over 400 letters) advising that enforcement would be starting. But that in the first instance there would be a period of warning notices.
- Information was also put on TWBC website, social media and in the local press.
- 20 February 2023, TWBC commenced with the issuing of warning notices. To date 18,000 had been issued.
- 1 April 2023 TWBC commenced issuing live penalty notices.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- It was suggested that people had got used the fact that there was no enforcement in the area so it might take a little time for them to adjust.
- There needed to be some time allowed for the scheme to bed down before a review was undertaken, at least 12 months.
- It would be the responsibility of the owner to ensure their Sat Nav's were up to date.
- Local residents were finding the scheme very inconvenient, particularly when trying to find a parking space.
- The suggestion that they have an allocated space in the multi-storey was not suitable.
- There needed to be a balance between the aesthetics of PR2 and the needs of residents.
- It was proposed that this item came back to the next JTB meeting.
- The scheme was still in a very early stage of implementation. Traffic flow was not yet under control with people continuing to drive through and on multiple occasions.
- Each car going through the restricted area was verified by a member of staff, which was very labour intensive.
- A judgement could not be undertaken now as there was insufficient evidence. It needed to be given a chance, so a review should not be undertaken at this early stage.
- TWBC's involvement in the scheme would not be the same this time next year, it would be a matter for KCC.
- Communication and appropriate engagement with the public was essential.
- The concept of PR2 was a noble one, the delivery was where it fell down.
- Residents issues were worth exploring. When the scheme was in development, York Road was temporary closed and this was seen as an improvement by residents.
- The Town Forum were thanked for their work on the subject.

- The next JTB meeting (July 2023) wouldn't allow enough time to put the data together to see how the scheme was progressing.
- Consider bringing it the JTB meeting in October. This would give officers more time to assimilate the data.
- Implementing the scheme was very resource intensive, so officers needed to be clear as to what information the JTB were asking for.
- A verbal update on the number of tickets issued would be helpful for the October meeting. This could also be done for the July meeting.
- The issue of being able to whitelist certain groups would require a change to the TRO, which would require consultation, so would be a much larger piece of work.
- The current agreement was that TWBC would administer the fines until the end of March 2024, after which the whole operation would revert to KCC.
- Any proposed amendments would then fall under the remit for KCC.
- PR2 to be kept on the agenda so that it could be reviewed regularly.

**RESOLVED** – A verbal update on the number of tickets issued to be given at the July and October meeting.

## **TWBC - RESIDENTS PARKING - CLIFTON ROAD**

TB29/22 Councillor Hugo Pound had registered to speak. A statement was read out by the Clerk which included the following comments:

- This had been an issue for quite a while.
- Also to note, the as yet undetermined planning application which, if approved, would reduce still further the available parking at the bottom of Clifton Road.
- Residents had been encouraged to speak at the meeting.
- The loss of up to 4 parking spaces down by Clifton Cottages would only compound the parking problem.
- The extension of the parking permit bays was wholly supported, although there was concern about 'moving the problem on' into Brook Road, Oak Road and Laurel Road. Monitoring and enforcement by the Council should be guaranteed.

Nick Baldwin – Senior Traffic Engineer introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- A gradual approach was a sensible option.
- It could be reviewed at a later date if deemed necessary.
- The recommendations were agreed.

### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the Joint Transportation Board endorse the drafting and advertising of a Traffic Regulation Order which promotes the additional permit parking space within the existing zone.
2. That the results of that consultation exercise be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

## **HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME**

TB30/22 Julian Cook, West Kent Highways Manager for Kent County Council introduced the report set out in the agenda.

Discussion and questions from Members included the following:

- The resurfacing on the A26 from Culverden Park to Grosvenor Road roundabout was welcomed.
- The cycle lane by Woodbury Park Road had yet to be reinstated, or the bus demarcation lines.
- It was confirmed this work had yet to be finished but would be done in due course.

RESOLVED – The report was noted.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

TB31/22 The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 3 July 2023 at 6pm.

### **NOTES:**

The meeting concluded at 7.45 pm.