

TUNBRIDGE WELLS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Monday, 16 July 2018

PRESENT: Borough Councillors Stanyer (Chairman), Backhouse, Lidstone, Simmons and Woodward
County Councillors Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Hamilton, McInroy and Rankin
Parish Councillor Mackonochie

Officers in Attendance: Damien Cock (Schemes Project Manager), Lisa Gillham (Tunbridge Wells District Manager), Vicki Hubert (Principal Transport Planner), Hilary Smith (Economic Development Manager), Jamie Watson (Traffic Schemes Team Leader) and Mark O'Callaghan (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Mackonochie, McDermott, Moore and Scott

APOLOGIES

TB1/18 Apologies were received from County Councillor Oakford and Councillor Dr Hall.
County Councillor Holden was not present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

TB2/18 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

TB3/18 Councillor Moore had registered to speak at minute TB5/18 and TB8/18.
Councillor Scott had registered to speak at minute TB8/18.

The Chairman noted that one member of the public had registered to speak at minute TB5/18 and TB6/18.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 16 APRIL 2018

TB4/18 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 16 April 2018 be approved as a correct record.

UPDATE REPORT

TB5/18 At a later point in the meeting but in respect of this item, Councillor Stanyer explained that the Update Report replaced the former Tracker and would bring forward only items where there was something substantive to report.

The Board considered the report and comments were made in respect of the following items:

1 – A26 Cycle Route

Jamie Watson, Traffic Schemes Team Leader, KCC, introduced the report and clarified that phase 1 would commence and phase 3 would enter into the detailed design stage during the current financial year. In respect of parts of

phase 2, the previous 20mph zone and section of cycle route near Mabelton would not be progressed. Consideration would be given to any new proposals.

Paul Mason, for Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group (TWBUG), had registered to speak and commented that more people would cycle if conditions were safer. There was strong public support for the proposals. The A26 was a key part of the transport network, particularly for school children. TWBUG had identified several 'quick wins' and was prepared to work with KCC to make best use of the route.

Councillor Moore, member for Park ward, had registered to speak, she was concerned that KCC proposed to not proceed with waiting restrictions and other important elements of the scheme due to a perceived lack of support. Several local policies emphasised active travel and there was strong public support for better infrastructure. School traffic was a major contributor to congestion and a lack of safety was the key barrier to more people cycling. Prioritising active travel would reduce congestion for all.

Mr Watson advised that KCC would continue to work with TWBUG and local members to make improvements to the scheme where possible but were keen to avoid delays in implementing the agreed proposals.

Councillor Backhouse endorsed Councillor Moore's comments which echoed his experience in Sherwood ward.

Councillor Lidstone welcomed progress but was disappointed that the opportunity to reduce traffic and pollution on a key route between two major conurbations was not being fully taken. It was not safe for cyclists to mix with 40mph traffic at Mabelton. A 20mph zone in Southborough would improve safety and could help re-establish it as a town centre rather than just a thoroughfare. To not implement waiting restrictions would force cyclists into a narrow lane of vehicles. The Traffic Regulation Order covering the waiting restrictions had been fully advertised and had been strongly supported by locals. KCC was failing in its ambition to be a pioneer for active travel.

Mr Watson advised that the decision to retain the on-street parking was on the instruction of County Councillor Oakford.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the comments made in the discussion, the report be noted.

21ST CENTURY WAY CYCLE ROUTE CONSULTATION REPORT

- TB6/18 Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, TWBC, introduced the report which included the following comments:
- The 21st Century Way was an existing cycle route which linked: the key employment area of North Farm; new housing at Knights Wood; High Brooms Station; and Tunbridge Wells Town Centre.
 - The route was in need of upgrading and completion and was a key component of the Cycling Strategy.
 - Significant amounts of section 106 funding had been obtained to improve facilities for both cyclists and pedestrians.
 - A comprehensive consultation on the proposals had been held at the end of 2017 with 82 per cent of respondents either supporting or strongly supporting the proposals.

- Since the publication of the report, the statutory consultation on 20mph schemes around Goods Station Road and Clifton Road had completed and no objections had been received.
- Work was ongoing to improve the proposals further in response to encouraging suggestions made during the consultation.
- Delivery was expected to start in Spring 2019.

Paul Mason, for Tunbridge Wells Bicycle User Group (TWBUG), had registered to speak and welcomed the proposals. In addition to the express support of local residents, a recent online poll suggested that 80 per cent of respondents would cycle if it was safe to do so which demonstrated latent demand for improved infrastructure. TWBUG had identified several 'quick wins' and would be happy to work with officers to make best use of the route.

The discussion included consideration of the following matters:

- Wide support from members and appreciation for the work in preparing the proposals.
- Inclusion of 20mph as part of the scheme was welcome.
- The route's proximity and additional cycle parking at High Brooms Station could help alleviate some of the commuter parking.
- The route would be usable all-year-round due to new lighting for sections of the route through Home Farm Lane and Grosvenor and Hilbert Park.
- Designers would work with Parks teams to ensure the surface of the route through the Park would be suitable for the variety of users and appropriate for the park setting.
- Full segregation was not proposed for the Park as the paths were wide enough and already featured tactile surfacing to distinguish shared spaces.
- 20mph zones would be funded through section 106 money secured for pedestrian and cycling improvements. There was no opportunity for on-road segregation.
- Speed surveys identified that average speeds were already low enough to justify the 20mph restrictions where off-road provision was not possible.
- 20mph zones would be identified by signs only but conditions would be monitored and further measures considered if necessary.
- The strong local support for the proposals would suggest that the speed limits would be respected.
- The KCC Local Transport Plan budget for the 20mph Public Health Initiative provided around £100k across the County for schemes where existing average speeds were below 24 mph. Kent Police had advised they would not enforce 20mph limits where there were no traffic calming measures so zones had to be self-enforcing.

RESOLVED – That the Board support the project to be delivered in 2018/19.

HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

TB7/18 Lisa Gillham, District Manager for Tunbridge Wells, KCC, introduced the report and noted that in addition to the road resurfacing set out at appendix A: the A26 was due to be resurfaced commencing on 1 August 2018 for 20 nights; and the A264 Langton Road would be resurfaced commencing on 15 October 2018 for 5 nights.

Comments were made in respect of the following matters:

Resurfacing (page 65):

- The status of micro-surfacing on Badsell Road, believed to have been completed, was questioned. Ms Gillham to confirm with Councillor Mackonochie.
- Maidstone Road in Paddock Wood was in a poor state of repair.

Carrs Corner (page 73):

- Discussions were ongoing. A meeting between officers and County Councillors was being arranged and any progress would be reported to a future meeting.
- Progress on improving the pedestrian island had stalled waiting for agreement from the Borough Conservation Officer, the delay was unacceptable.

Langton Road Crossing:

- The cost of traffic and pedestrian surveys to facilitate the crossing had been established, of which Rusthall Parish Council had agreed to pay half. Other funding sources were being investigated.

Lighting (page 69):

- A number of replaced light columns were yet to be fully removed and there needed to be a programme to complete the work.

Flooding and drainage (page 67):

- A lack of reported drainage repairs in light of the recent flooding around The Pantiles was concerning. The impact of repeated flash flooding had been high for residents and businesses.
- Reports of blocked drains had gone unanswered and no action had been taken.
- Dismissing increased flooding as an inevitable consequence of climate change was unacceptable and tax payers expected authorities to do whatever was possible, there needed to be a plan to tackle the problem.
- The Leader of Kent County Council had written to residents indicating that there would be substantial change whereby surface water would be diverted to the River Grom rather than the sewers, this was positive action but was not reported.
- Failure to report good news perpetuated a perception of inaction.
- Experience showed that simple measures such as clearing drains and ditches made a significant impact.
- As a result of improved maintenance following the flooding in 2017 the drains were in reasonably good order and it was likely there were more systematic issues at fault which would require a strategic approach.
- A meetings with the water companies was being facilitated by Greg Clark MP and members should ensure they were invited.
- The report only covered the more substantial works where the asset value was in excess of £5k and did not include reactive repairs. It would not be practical to list every action and there was more going on than the report would suggest, however, if a significant scheme had been agreed it would be reasonable to expect its inclusion in the report. Ms Gillham to report back to members.

Combined Member Grants (page 83):

- Ferndale handrail had been installed.
- The location of the SID on Pembury High Street, the Pembury Gateways and dropped kerbs on Liptraps Lane, Sherwood had been confirmed.

Local Growth Fund distribution (page 75):

- £100m had been added to the Local Growth Fund by the Department for Transport and funding had been granted for West Kent, Kent Thameside and Tonbridge Regeneration. Clarification was sought as to what percentage would go to West Kent. Ms Gillham to report back to members.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

TB8/18 Comments were made in respect of the following items:

1 – Residents' only parking Grove Hill Road and adjacent roads, Royal Tunbridge Wells

Councillor Moore, member for Park ward, had registered to speak and proposed the creation of a special 24/7 residents' only parking zone on Grove Hill Road, Mountfield Road, Mountfield Gardens, Sutherland Road, Meadow Hill Road and Guildford Road. The area was a special case due to its location sandwiched between two parks, meaning if all spaces were filled residents could not spill over into neighbouring areas, and its proximity to the Calverley Square development where construction traffic and visitors were likely to push out the residents. There were 3,500 off-street parking spaces within a 10 minute walk of the new Theatre for shoppers and theatre goers. The proposal was for a temporary restriction with the option to be made permanent following the trial.

The Chairman read out correspondence received from the head of service covering Parking which cautiously welcomed the proposals noting that this type of restriction was seldom used in Tunbridge Wells but agreed that investigations would be commenced with a report submitted to a future meeting.

Councillor Simmons requested that the report clarify how the restrictions would be enforced 24/7.

Members agreed that the topic could come forward to a future meeting.

2 – Congestion Kings Toll Road, Pembury

County Councillor Barrington-King advised of continuing problems in Pembury around the A21, vehicles trying to avoid the congested Kippings Cross area were using the narrow and inappropriate roads including Kings Toll Road. The weight of traffic was blocking and damaging the country lanes, detailed statistics had been compiled by residents and forwarded to officers. Efforts were underway to work with sat-nav providers and support was sought from the Board to take proposals for new signage to Highways England.

County Councillor Hamilton advised that a senior officer at Kent Highways was a former employee at Highways England who may be a valuable contact.

Parish Councillor Mackonochie suggested that a no-left turn from the A21 to Henwood Green Road could improve the situation.

Councillor Woodward sought confirmation as to the scope of 'topics for future meetings' and whether local matters should be taken up with the Highway Authority directly.

3 – SpeedWatch controlled 20mph zone for Culverden

Councillor Scott, member for Culverden ward, had registered to speak and introduced items 3 to 5. He proposed a 20 mph zone for Culverden which was a busy, school-heavy area and noted that the scheme could benefit from police approved speed control using the latest light-touch regulations.

4 – Pedestrian crossing on Upper Grosvenor Road

Councillor Scott commented that the southern end near Meadow Road was a known danger spot which needed a pedestrian crossing. Suggestions of reducing parking restrictions to encourage on-street parking as speed breaks would actually decrease safety for pedestrians.

5 – Driverless Vehicles

Councillor Scott sought support for investigating the potential future of driverless vehicles and what measures current policies should take into account to ensure that any current actions were future proofed and would not inhibit the use of driverless technology in the future. He added that several companies had expressed that they were looking to invest in the technology to the tune of £100m and Tunbridge Wells could be an area of interest. Driverless vehicles were safer for cyclists than conventional vehicles so the right investment in cycling infrastructure could also enable driverless technology. Early planning could ensure any new towns or significant developments were designed to enable driverless vehicles, if not immediately then in the near future, which would dramatically reduce the number of parked cars and increase land values.

County Councillor Hamilton endorsed the proposal and noted that near future technologies were likely to bring about the most significant change in road travel for 100 years.

6 – Air Quality Monitoring

Councillor Simmons requested that regular air quality updates be available.

7 – Strategic Planning

County Councillor Hamilton commented that the impending Local Plan was an opportunity to influence traffic on a strategic level as tackling individual roads was inefficient and likely to have consequential effects in other areas. She advised that a meeting with the head of service for Parking was arranged for January 2019 after the outcome of the rail franchise would be known. She cited problems with oversized vehicles in Old Hay, Paddock Wood, as an example which lead her to question whether enough notice was being taken of traffic flows from new developments and their impact.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, TWBC, advised that the Transport Strategy, last updated in 2015, was being reviewed as part of the work on the Local Plan. The current stage was the commissioning of consultants to undertake assessment work looking into the transport implications of growth across the Borough. There had been several

consultative meetings with the JTB Local Plan Working Group earlier in the year and the intention was to continue this work once the consultants had been appointed.

Councillor Stanyer noted that the previous Transport Strategy had been made in the context of growth in the region of 6,000 new homes, whereas the latest figures suggested a need in excess of 14,000 new homes. A new robust plan was needed with a clear vision for the future, setting out where the growth would be located and integrated into existing networks, new rail transport and active travel modes. Current indications suggested that infrastructure planning was insufficient given the expected significant development.

Vicki Hubert, Principal Transport Planner, KCC, commented that it was the purpose of the Borough's Local Plan to address these concerns, work was already underway by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Planning Policy team. Transport issues and future development would form part of the evidence base to inform the Plan, current efforts were focused on the implications of 9,500 new homes by 2023. Consultants were engaged to assess the current situation and overlay the predicted growth which would allow officers to determine what the transport implications and their mitigation would be. There had been and would continue to be numerous consultative processes, both public and internal, in the development of the Plan.

Ms Smith noted that the Local Plan would be subject to the full scrutiny of the Council's normal decision making processes and the JTB Local Plan Working Group has been established with the purpose of providing a consultative link with the Joint Transportation Board. Ms Hubert added that the Growth Strategy which formed part of the evidence for the Local Plan, had only been agreed by the Council on 12 June 2018, so work had only recently started on the Transport Strategy.

Parish Councillor Mackonochie requested that parish councils be represented on the JTB Local Plan Working Group.

8 – Drainage Infrastructure Review

County Councillor McInroy sought to clarify whether the drainage infrastructure review discussed earlier in the meeting under the Highway Works Programme would come back with a report.

The Chairman confirmed.

9 – Brick Paving

County Councillor McInroy commented that a number of red bricks had been removed by a developer from the pavement on Royal Chase, part of the Tunbridge Wells Commons Conservation Area. Advice from senior members at Kent County Council suggested that no remedial action could be taken. He sought a definitive answer as to what could be done to reinstate the paving and what happened to the removed bricks. He added that pavement condition was one of the more frequent complaints and there was a need for a schedule of maintenance.

The Chairman agreed to consider the efficacy of bringing forward the above requested items and to confirm with officers which items may come forward to a future meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TB9/18 The date of the next scheduled meeting was Monday 15 October 2018 at 6pm.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.40 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.