

# **NORTHFLEET AND GRAVESEND WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

## **NOTES OF MEETING**

**Date 28<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

**Venue: Northfleet School for Girls**

### **Present:**

Cllr John Burden Gravesham Borough Council member for Northfleet South (Chairman)  
Mr Leslie Christie, Kent County Councillor for Northfleet and Gravesend West Division (Vice Chairman)

Gravesham Borough Council ward councillors

Cllr T S Dhesi - Northfleet North

Cllr Andrea Webb -Northfleet North

Cllr Ron Bowman -Northfleet North

Cllr N S Thandi -Northfleet South

Cllr Bryan Sweetland -Higham

Cllr Harold Craske - Painters Ash

Cllr S Howes

Cllr Tony Pritchard

+36 members of the public and representatives from local organisations

### **KCC Officers:**

		<b>Action</b>
<b>A1.</b>	<b>Welcome - Cllr John Burden (Chair)</b>	
	Cllr John Burden (Chair) introduced himself and pointed out the councillors amongst the group. He explained how the meeting would work.	
<b>A2.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Mr Ray Parker, Kent County Council member for Northfleet and Gravesend West Division.	
<b>A3.</b>	<b>Any Declarations of Interest</b>	
	Cllr B Sweetland declared an interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS West Kent.	
<b>A4.</b>	<b>Highways Schemes- Presentation by Mr Ray Dines, Transport and Development Manager - Kent Thameside, Kent Highways Services will give a brief overview of Highways projects and developments schemes.</b>	
	Following this the following questions and issues were raised with Ray Dines Q. The road in front of Gravesham Court in Westcourt area. Can the road be repaired before someone has an accident?	

	<p>Q. Annual budget of £10m spend across 12 districts in Kent. How is it spent?</p> <p>R. It is spent according to the agreed objectives. Schemes are developed and then go to the scoring system to see how it scores across those objectives. A scheme that saves more casualties will score higher than one with none or fewer.</p> <p>Q. We should try to prevent accidents before someone is killed?</p> <p>R. We have to tackle those on the sites where accidents happen first. We do look in terms of accessibility. May score in other areas.</p> <p>Q. How much of the £10m is ring-fenced by government?</p> <p>R. It is down to county members to look at the list and decide based on our assessment as to which schemes go ahead. Government do not dictate to us which schemes we do. However, if we spend a lot of money on schemes that do not fit their objectives the grant may be reduced the following year.</p> <p>Q. All Saints Road and road next to it – cars parked on both sides of narrow roads making it difficult for buses. Wouldn't it be more sensible to have one way roads?</p> <p>R. One way streets do increase traffic speed. We have to look at what the difficulties of doing it are. If there is a safety risk we will consider it.</p> <p>Q. Public transport in the Woodlands area – 308 and 455 are very old buses with steps up and majority of people are elderly. ARRIVA have said they cannot afford to replace with new buses as they do not make money from the elderly. Spoke to MP Adam Holloway who said it will improve but it hasn't been forthcoming. They promised that when other areas got new buses we would get more modern ones but they have gone back on their word. We get one bus an hour and services are often cut because buses break down and go in for repair.</p> <p>R. In general terms services are improving in the Kent Thameside area. If we are going to continue to get movement it is essential that we have a better transport system and the assumptions are people will travel more on public transport in the future. We are working with the operators to improve the services. Ray Dines will take this back to the transport people and get comment.</p> <p>Q. Springhead Road junction with Hall Road development scheme – will it be done this year?</p> <p>R. It is not a short term scheme. It is funded by the development across Kent Thameside. Trying to get partnership agreement signed so we can start the process rolling. Districts are collecting money from the tariffs but until the government put their share into the scheme we are unable to develop some of the larger strategic schemes. We want to start it as soon as possible.</p> <p>Q. One scheme which causes a lot of concern and public support is the one way system around St. Mark's Avenue. It has not been successful because of the PIPKIN test. What are the chances of its success? It is not on a major road but there has been considerable problems?</p>	
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	<p>Q. Talking about improving public transport, Park and Ride and Fastrack are excellent but there is a real problem with Gravesend West and East Gravesend. The transport system needs to be reviewed. Once young people get the Freedom Pass they are going to be demanding?</p> <p>Q. A2 speed control</p> <p>R. A2 Demand Management is a Highways Agency scheme. Part of the strategic package but one which the Highways Agency would deliver. Variable speed limits on the M25 is the first thing which has been done to give smoother traffic flow and avoid traffic stacking up. As we move to 10-15 years time (we are trying to get more people on public transport) there does need to be some control on the network in the peak hours. At the M25/A21 junction starting something called ramp metering which holds the traffic back until such time as there is a gap in the flow. We are watching these tests with interest. In the first instance it will be variable speed control.</p> <p>Q. With Ebbsfleet Station now open and the domestic services starting at the end of this year, what is the impact going to be in terms of local impact? Are we talking to developers about how we are going to manage it?</p> <p>R. Yes we are talking to them in order to manage the network. We cannot predict what improvements we need to make. As far as the domestic services are concerned it is unknown but we are watching it closely. We do not know how far people will come to access that station</p>	
<b>A5.</b>	<b>Discussion on Highways – how do KHS prioritise improvements to the roads and what should the priorities be for the Northfleet and Gravesend West area?</b>	
	<p><b>Public transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you haven't got a car you are relying on public transport. Not getting improved service we are promised. Need new buses to make it more efficient. Old buses are very uncomfortable for elderly and frail people to travel on.</li> <li>• Improve public transport service to get traffic off roads</li> <li>• Public transport – weekend travel – lack of buses – lack of services – low buses needed and through ticketing</li> <li>• Public transport in the Woodlands area – 308 and 455 are very old buses with steps up and majority of people are elderly. ARRIVA have said they cannot afford to replace with new buses as they do not make money from the elderly. Spoke to MP Adam Holloway who said it will improve but it hasn't been forthcoming. They promised that when other areas got new buses we would get more modern ones but they have gone back on their word. We get one bus an hour and services are often cut because buses break down and go in for repair.</li> <li>• If you haven't got a car you are relying on public transport. We</li> </ul>	

	<p>are not getting improved service we are promised. Need new buses to make it more efficient. Old buses are very uncomfortable for elderly and frail people to travel on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access on buses for the elderly and access needs e.g. buggies Buses too high off curb</li> <li>• Bus service – Improvements – not everyone wants to go to Bluewater <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ routes to hospitals bad service</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cars parked at schools are a problem – buses struggle to get through</li> <li>• Route to Darent Valley Hospital from Northfleet and West not good</li> <li>• Fastrack should be used for new large developments</li> <li>• Hospital – early appointments – public transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Fastrack – local service not given priority new link Northfleet to ... St – When and where?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Low income can't afford to send children to school Cost of children's travel to school – £50/week</li> <li>• Has analysis been done on users? What is use of Fastrack – need stats from Fastrack and feedback</li> </ul> <p><b>Highways maintenance / Potholes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street lighting is also abysmal contract</li> <li>• Marry up road works to avoid digging up same roads twice within short timescale</li> <li>• Lighting – street lights out of order since November 19 2008</li> <li>• After utilities work – road collapses and potholes start showing – there should be more supervision of utilities work</li> </ul> <p>Speed reduction/lorries and congestion issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average speed checks on the A2 have improved traffic speed on A2</li> <li>• When there is an accident on the A2 there is grid lock – motorways are closed.</li> <li>• Concerns about fast traffic on Coldharbour Road and Singlewel Road</li> <li>• Need to re-educate young people in schools about dangers of speed</li> <li>• Lost lorries causing gridlock at Stone</li> <li>• Speeding – waiting for fatalities – not good enough</li> </ul> <p><b>Highways schemes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic calming – not good for elderly travelling</li> <li>• Bean junction</li> <li>• What happens with schemes – political independent system decided politically?</li> <li>• Pipkin officer driven – not what was wanted</li> <li>• More dropped kerbs</li> <li>• Access for St George's School, Meadow Road – road surface was never designed for heavy traffic - School is campaigning for new</li> </ul>	
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	<p>access and road – can extra funding be found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what about a one way system around St. Mark's Avenue – will this be in scheme for 2010/11</li> <li>• Hall Road/Springhead Road problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Illegal parking/parking issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pavement parking not enforced – have only just spent money – what is the point if it is to be ruined.</li> <li>• Cars parked on yellow lines – need enforcement</li> <li>• Cyclist having to go round parked cars makes life difficult</li> <li>• Traffic wardens – enforcement – parking permits work quite well</li> <li>• There is limited parking in new developments</li> <li>• A2 activity park – access into park ... very limited</li> <li>• There is Park and Ride for commuters – will the Park and Ride be used? Wrotham/... Road</li> <li>• Chilton Road – green is in the middle – want more parking</li> </ul>	
<b>A6.</b>	<b>Presentation by Dr B Vasudaven of Fleet Health care to give an update on the proposed new equitable access clinic in Northfleet.</b>	
	<p>Following Dr Vasudaven's presentation, the following questions and issues were raised</p> <p>Q. Will other GP surgeries close?</p> <p>R. No, it will be in addition to existing services.</p> <p>Q. It is encouraging to see so many car parking spaces but it is not the easiest place to get to by public transport?</p> <p>R. We wanted it on the Fastrack route and needed it to be away from the residential areas to get the space required. The big driver for the scheme is the use of casualty for minor illnesses. GPs do not open at weekends and patients go to casualty and the cost of that service is huge.</p> <p>Q. Is it one walk-in centre for the whole PCT and how many patients could you be dealing with?</p> <p>R. If it works there will be another one in Dartford. It is being trialled in Northfleet.</p> <p>Q. I would have to catch two buses to get to it instead of the 5 minute bus ride I have now?</p> <p>R. We will be working with the Patient Participation Group to try and improve accessibility. We are looking at options.</p> <p>Q. It is difficult to get appointments when you are working. What hours will this surgery be open?</p> <p>R. It will be open from 8am to 8pm 7 days a week. We are also hoping to eventually get an Out of Hours service based there which will be open 24/7.</p> <p>Q. How is it likely to affect local pharmacists?</p> <p>R. The pharmacy is not in our jurisdiction. We hope local pharmacists will operate from there. It is down to the landlord.</p> <p>Q. It is taking surgeries out of the areas of need – young families and</p>	

	<p>the elderly. To get fastrack there is quite a walk to pick it up. Northfleet north will not have a surgery within walking distance?</p> <p>Q. It is the wrong location. There are plenty of other areas where it could have been placed.</p> <p>Q. Will you have to pay in the car park?</p> <p>R. No</p> <p>Q. Will there be a dentist there?</p> <p>R. No</p> <p>Q. Will doctors be able to access all patients' notes?</p> <p>R. Yes</p> <p>Q. Is there a plan B if they don't get planning permission?</p> <p>R. No</p>	
<b>A7.</b>	<b>Group Sessions: what should the priorities be for services at the new equitable access clinic?</b>	
	<p><b>Points about the location</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed location seems like the wrong location</li> <li>• Riverview GPs are extending hours</li> <li>• Gravesend Community Hospital – shouldn't this be the venue?</li> <li>• Ebbsfleet Rainbow Centre – could you have a surgery there?</li> <li>• land at back of St George's?</li> <li>• Bath St surgery should be used or the Rainbow Centre</li> <li>• To find a venue that suits everyone is difficult if not impossible</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on other surgeries/pharmacies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need local surgeries as well as this one – will existing surgeries remain open?</li> <li>• Northfleet north won't have access to a very local doctors surgery. Bramley is not allowed to expand.</li> </ul> <p><b>Access/public transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport – connectivity needs looking at. There are no direct bus routes</li> <li>• patient transport volunteers</li> <li>• re-establishing bus routes to serve new site and serve existing communities</li> <li>• Problem with buses, 496 used to go from the Plough to Gravesend but bus has been taken out.</li> <li>• Should be what patient wants not what Government wants – 30% need public transport</li> <li>• Shuttle bus service needed? Possibility of a shuttle bus service using Age Concern minibuses</li> <li>• Location is bad for Northfleet and Gravesend West</li> <li>• Being open 8-8, 7 days a week is a positive thing but there is significant concern that this service will have an impact on existing, outlying surgeries</li> <li>• Positive for those who work and out of hours emergencies</li> </ul> <p><b>General points re process</b></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation not widely spread around area</li> <li>• Lord Darzi – government commission that was set up. A poll commissioned that cost £12 million shows that 84% of patients are happy with GPs. It is the Government that have decided. Is it government that decide or people?</li> <li>• Regarding the proposed clinic, fleet health care the company is made of 12 GPs which are a limited company. The table felt that this is not representing GPs – individual directors is PLC</li> <li>• Also the Parliamentary Select Committee looking at the clinics is a Labour Party dominated. Report is damning of these clinics. pilots</li> </ul> <p><b>Services would like to see at new clinic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see education centre for prevention of obesity and health care problems? Yes this will be included.</li> <li>• Dietary advice</li> <li>• diabetes</li> <li>• out reach for social services</li> <li>• sexual health services</li> <li>• minor injuries treatment</li> <li>• One stop shop – the more services that can be provided on this site the better Chiropody</li> <li>• Physiotherapy</li> <li>• Specialist on diabetes</li> <li>• Podiatry</li> <li>• Social Services outreach</li> <li>• Advice</li> <li>• Phlebotomy</li> <li>• Minor surgery</li> </ul>	
<b>A8.</b>	<b>Summary of table discussions: Brief feedback from each of the tables on what were the priorities and issues identified</b>	
<b>A9.</b>	<b>Question time - general questions regarding GBC and KCC to Members and Officers present</b>	
	<p>Q. How will Northfleet and Gravesend West be able to capitalise on 2012?</p> <p>R. The area will capitalise on a whole range of things around 2012 – high speed rail link, Ebbsfleet, Heritage Quarter, Transport Quarter, proposed development at Northfleet Embankment. A lot of these will help the area. At the end of the recession we will be very well placed to capitalise on all of those. We are keen to bring some confidence to bear in the area for the upturn when it comes.</p> <p>Q. Now the application for the traveller site at Springhead Road has been agreed as there been any action around that?</p> <p>R. It is constantly changing. The council applied for planning permission which was granted and the travellers then changed their application from temporary to permanent which would suggest they do not want to move. It is the council's intention to try and</p>	

	<p>encourage them to move from that site and they have had another site offered to them which now has planning permission so we will need to wait and see. We are obliged to provide a number of pitches within the borough and if we do not identify them we cannot easily move them on if they just pull up into fields.</p> <p>Q. Facility for Occupational Therapists through KCC for house adaptation services are done by KCC and funded by GBC but as money is not available people cannot have the adaptations. KCC provide the inspection and then it comes to a halt.</p> <p>R. There does not seem to be a problem getting the inspection done but the problem is getting the adaptations implemented. If there is a problem let Cllr Christy know. There was a backlog of OTs going out. Last year there was a catch up exercise and there has been a time issue between being assessed and getting the adaptations. There is a big pot of money but we do have an ageing population which could cause problems.</p>	
<b>A10.</b>	<b>Future Discussion Topics: Brief discussion on topics to consider at future meetings</b>	