

Notes of the meeting of the SANDWICH Area Neighbourhood Forum held at the Guildhall, Sandwich on Tuesday, 1 February 2011 at 7.00pm

Present:

Kent County Councillor	Leyland Ridings (Chairman)
Parish Councillor	Ian Martin
Councillors:	Nigel Collor (DDC and KCC)
	Mike Hill (KCC)
	Kit Smith (DDC and KCC)

Other councillors, officers and 76 members of the public.

1. Chairman's welcome

Cllr Leyland Ridings opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. He referred to the news received that afternoon concerning the closure of Pfizers in Sandwich and suggested that this be discussed at the end of the meeting, together with apologies, Notes, and other items on the agenda in order that the Open Golf Championship item could be taken first.

2. Open Golf Championship 2011

Cllr Nigel Collor, Chairman of the Open Golf Project Executive, introduced members of the Panel who would answer questions from those attending:

Ian Biggs – Major Works and Events Co-ordinator Kent Highways
Neil Edwards – Roadworks Team Leader (SE Kent) Kent Highways
Sgt. Gary Fittall – Kent Police
Gillian Gayton – DDC Major Project Officer
Mike Hill – KCC Cabinet Member for Community Services
Insp Rick Roddy – Kent Police
Fran Warrington – KCC Head of Tourism

Kent Highways advised that arrangements would be very similar to those of 2003 with the main primary route being M2/A2 to Dover and the A256 and A258 to Sandwich. A park and ride scheme would again operate from Barville Farm and plans were on display in the room showing the 'tidal' flow of traffic at peak times through Sandwich. These peaks would be 0600 to 1400 hours for inward traffic and 1400 to the evening for outward traffic. Several good points had been raised already that evening by

members of the public and these would be taken into consideration at the February meeting of the Joint Transportation Board.

Kent Police would address a range of issues including logistics, crime and security, contingencies and traffic as in 2003. This time the event would coincide with the County Show at Detling and therefore traffic for the Open would not be recommended to use the A249. All efforts would be made to keep the M20 route clear for local traffic and any possible Operation Stack. The A257 (Ash road) would be kept free for local traffic as a key route at all times during the period 10-17 July. Practice days on 10-13 would generate light traffic but volumes would increase for the actual championship with up to 15k vehicles, 50k attendees and paying public. In addition 6k contractors were expected on site and unknown numbers of visiting children. Friday would be the main day for hospitality and traffic was expected to peak on the Thursday and Friday from 0700 to 11.30/12.00 inwards and 18.30/19.00 outbound. Saturday and Sunday would be quieter with inbound traffic not expected to cause much congestion but then a mass exodus would occur after the presentations on Sunday at about 18.30. In 2003 there had been 183k paying public, St. Andrews had had 200k and this figure could be expected in Sandwich this year. Arrangements had been made with the Royal & Ancient regarding deliveries, infrastructure, grandstands, marquees etc. which would start to arrive in April and be finally cleared in August.

KCC Head of Tourism was also representing Visit Kent and reported that European funding had been secured for a 3 year golf campaign which would be helped by the Open. The eyes of the world would be on Sandwich providing a good opportunity to promote Kent and development opportunities were being discussed with consumers with information available on a website and a golf guide being issued. Trade and tour operators were encouraged to feature Kent in golf holidays as was the golf trade and, to date, over 30 visits had been made. Golfers tended to be high spenders which could impact favourably on the area. A temporary accommodation scheme was running with advice for those who wished to provide B&B facilities in their homes, and details of this and a meet and greet service were available.

Cllr Mike Hill expected this Open to be significantly larger than the 2003 event and explained how lobbying of the Royal & Ancient by KCC and DDC had resulted in the championship being brought back to Sandwich earlier in the 10 year cycle. KCC was a major funder and promoting Kent would help to improve tourism. The aim was to provide an extremely successful championship.

Cllr Nigel Collor expressed gratitude to Canterbury City Council and Shepway and Thanet District Councils for their support. In 2003 there had been a £17.6m economic impact and 176 full-time equivalent jobs had been created during the championship. The press corps had consisted of a thousand people.

Questions and answers

- What possibility of diverting some road traffic onto the railway; getting the High Speed service to stop at Sandwich; and who was applying pressure to achieve this? DDC had held discussions with South Eastern who had advised that additional services would be provided but no confirmation had yet been given as the new timetable was not due until March. KCC and Sandwich Town Council were also applying pressure.

- Colebrook Sturrock is co-ordinating lettings for the Open with many properties in Sandwich, Deal and Ramsgate; what information was available on completion of the new road? Kent Highways advised that the East Kent access project was progressing well but would not be finished until 2012. Liaison was ongoing with regard to peak traffic flows to ensure that the impact on the Open was minimal. The network capacity would be maintained.
- How could local businesses advertise themselves at the Open? KCC Tourism would be writing to all businesses in Sandwich in the following week and the local authorities would have a marquee at the event in which local businesses could be showcased. The issue of staff access to Sandwich businesses would also be addressed.
- What pressure was being put on the Royal & Ancient to support local businesses, e.g. a local nursery could supply crèche facilities? The R&A was offering a competitive tendering process and a commitment to ensure that the local economy benefited, for example using local food. This issue would be mentioned to them again. Any loss of business due to the Open would need to be compensated for by using local suppliers.
- In 2003 the park and ride scheme at Barville had been a struggle for Eythorne and other local residents; this time it would be worse due to the closure of the 2 gaps on the A256 which meant all traffic would have to use the roundabout. What assurances could be given to local residents? DDC had contacted all Town and Parish clerks for relevant issues of concern and was aware of this particular problem. Further discussions would be held with Eythorne Parish Council. Kent Police were still working on resources and roles.
- How would Sandwich residents be guaranteed access to the town and parking; a 20% increase in parking fees had been proposed – would there be a further increase? The A257 (Ash Road) would be the major route for local traffic at the North end of Sandwich via Strand Street. Open traffic would use the Toll Bridge and Quay Parking in the town would be the same as in 2003. No further increase in car parking charges was planned during the event.
- How will businesses on the Quay get to and from their premises and get their staff in? Access via the A257 and Strand Street would reach the Quay.
- Will local businesses receive any priority to ensure staff reach work on time? DDC would be contacting all local businesses, dealing case by case and also covering waiting times/loading/unloading.
- HGV vehicles using unsuitable GPS systems ended up on minor roads; lots of these would be around from April to August – how could they be advised? The R&A would be giving all contractors specific routes in and out of Sandwich avoiding the town.
- Those living in St George's Road had to put up with contractors' vehicles at all hours during the 2003 Open – would they be coming this way again and waking everyone up early? Unfortunately yes. This was the only suitable route, articulated vehicles could not use any other way; times had not yet been specified but were likely to be after 10.00pm and before 6.00am. The Ancient Highway was not an option and all parking in St. George's Road would be suspended during that time. DDC would offer alternative parking spaces for residents with no alternative to parking on the street and these people would be contacted. Individual contact would be made with a resident having building work undertaken to their premises during the Open regarding delivery of supplies.

- Residents of St George's Road still had to contend with large agricultural vehicles in August which would be added to by contractor's vehicles; these problems increase each year. What plans were there for after the Open? Kent Highway Services were not involved with this and could not answer but would pass the matter to the Ashford transport team. The local Town Policeman was well aware of the problem and that DDC and KCC were working to avoid waiting in St. George's Lees; an improvement on 2003. There were also issues with the back entrance to Sir Roger Manwood School during term time but this would not occur during the Open as the school would be closed. He was happy to assist with any lobbying after the Open.
- During the last Open some local customers had been turned back by Police when trying to enter the town and those at the Golf Course could not get back into town as a result of which businesses had suffered. Would it be different this year? All routes would be clearly signposted; businesses could alter opening times and had the opportunity to advertise their services in the marquee at the Open. Sandwich would be open for business but with more traffic. There would be only 2 checkpoints at which motorists would be stopped if they did not have residents' stickers or golf permits and the best access would be via Woodnesborough Road and the Ash Road.
- What would prevent people parking on the Quay and walking to the golf course? DDC could not place extra restrictions on parking or ensure residents only parking by closing the car park as this would be detrimental to the town.
- The Open was a wonderful event but how to ensure money was spent locally at the time and also encourage return golfing visits for long term benefit to the area? KCC Tourism was encouraging this through its 3 year campaign, encouraging bringing families, developing the market and promoting Kent golf courses. There was massive interest by press and tourism.
- When will Sandwich residents receive their permits? DDC would send these out in late May/early June after local authority elections. Each property would be issued with 2 stickers and a form to request more if necessary. A leaflet would accompany the stickers showing the routes and other information for example rubbish collections, hotline telephone number, email address. Stickers would be numbered to correspond to individual addresses/ vehicle registration plates.
- Will residents of Woodnesborough, Eastry and Ash have vouchers for parking? These would not be issued automatically; it was up to residents to contact DDC for permits. More details would be included in the At Your Service magazine in June which went to every household.

Cllr Collor thanked the panel members and those attending and gave the hotline number as 01304 872788. At present messages were checked daily but the line would be manned during the championship.

3. Having received no apologies or declarations of interest and been authorised to approve the Notes of the previous meeting, Cllr Ridings referred again to the closure of the Pfizer plant in Sandwich and advised that local MPS were trying to arrange a meeting with local Leaders and officers. Local mayors and Town/Parish Councils would be contacted. The Mayor of Sandwich hoped that optimism about future of the site for research and development was well founded, expressed concern about the devastating consequences of the closure and offered to assist with any talks to Government. As many Pfizer employees lived in Deal, Ramsgate and Canterbury these authorities should be part of discussions about solutions, and the potential impact on local schools was also highlighted. Cllr Smith suggested that a future

Forum meeting could look at the local economy for East Kent in order to identify growth areas/potential.

4. Kent Greeters

Denise Smith, Volunteer Manager for Kent Greeters, spoke about the work of the organisation which co-ordinated volunteers who had a particular interest in and knowledge of their local area and who undertook to meet and greet visitors. The accent was on local tales and places of interest rather than historical dates and it was usual for a session to last 1-1½ hours or 3 hours for the White Cliffs. Volunteers also had an active social life and visited other towns. No charge was made for this service but if volunteers found that visitors insisted on tipping them then tips were put as donations to Visit Kent to help train greeters. Notes and guidance were provided for new greeters, the system was very safe and a lone worker policy was in place. Sandwich Town Clerk had a store of information which was freely available. An enthusiasm for Sandwich was the main requisite.

The Chairman thanked the contributors and those who had attended. The meeting closed at 8.35pm.