

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 14 September 2023.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mr A R Hills, Mr M A J Hood, Mr B H Lewis, Mr H Rayner, Mr D Robey and Mr A Sandhu, MBE

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Bond.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 5)

Simon Jones (Corporate Director, GET) was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Baker said that the Mayor of London's expansion of ULEZ began on 29 August 2023. Any driver of a petrol vehicle over 18 years old or a diesel vehicle over 8 years old would need to pay the £12.50 daily charge to drive within the charging zone. KCC made representations to Transport for London (TFL) throughout their consultation and planning process, setting out clearly the objections to impact to residents and businesses of Kent. Many partner authorities bordering London shared the same concerns and KCC supported the authorities that brought the unsuccessful legal challenge against the scheme. While there remained no expansion of mitigation measures, such as access to a vehicle scrappage scheme for Kent residents and businesses, KCC was to continue to appeal to both London and the government to put in place the support that was needed. Until such time as adequate mitigation measures were put in place for Kent's residents, KCC would not permit TFL to install any signage relating to ULEZ on KCC's local road network. Signage for the ULEZ scheme will need to be on the TFL network.

Thanet Parkway Railway Station opened to passengers on 31 July 2023, marking the culmination of almost a decade of work by KCC to improve rail interconnectivity to Thanet. The delivery of the station was a key strategic transport achievement for KCC, with ambition featured in the Local Transport Plan and the Rail Action Plan for Kent. A formal opening ceremony was held on 8 September. The station plaque was revealed by Huw Merriman, Rail Minister; KCC Leader, Roger Gough; Thanet District Council Leader, Rick Everitt; and local MP, Craig Mackinlay. There was music at the event from Thanet Big Sing Community Choir.

Thanet Parkway Railway Station was a key example of 'infrastructure first' where KCC had championed the delivery of the station and car park infrastructure to accommodate the present and future communities of Cliffsend and Ramsgate. The scheme along with Network Rail's journey time improvement programme meant that passengers were able to travel to London in 70 minutes. The station was fully accessible with lifts, 16 disabled parking bays, tactile paving for wayfinding and help points throughout the site. The station was to be staffed by Southeastern between 8am and 4pm with KCC maintaining overall control of the car park, with an operator managing it on KCC's behalf. Since opening and not including the opening day, station passengers had averaged about 200 passenger journeys per day so it was already half way to achieving the passengers expected after the first year of operation. Weekend passenger numbers had exceeded the business case forecast. It was estimated that $\frac{3}{4}$ of passenger journeys were being made to the station on foot or by bike. KCC was to continue to work with Network Rail, Southeastern and Thanet District Council to realise the potential of the station as an integrated transport hub at the heart of Thanet's infrastructure.

The examination of Development Consent Order for Lower Thames Crossing, which started in June 2023 was progressing. Issue specific hearings had taken place and KCC officers had made oral representations at the hearings, with more scheduled for October and November. Oral submissions were aligned with the Local Impact report, which was based on analysis of the evidence provided, presented in the application of the positive, neutral and negative impacts of the scheme on the county. The written representation which set out KCC's position on the scheme as approved by the Corporate Director, the former Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and the Leader of the Council. The position in these submissions was aligned with KCC's statutory Local Transport Plan which set out a policy of support for a new Lower Thames Crossing.

Issues still needed to be resolved with the applicant and the mitigations for the negative impacts that KCC expected to be delivered, were key parts of the written and oral submissions. These included making a case for improvements to the A229 Bluebell Hill to be funded by the Lower Thames Crossing Scheme, as the link between the M20 and the M2/A2 was absolutely essential to the strategic functioning of the new crossing. Members had been asked for their views and these had been incorporated and submitted to the examining authority on 18 July 2023. All submissions were published publicly on the Planning Inspectorate's website, along with instructions how anyone could register to make representations at the hearings. The examination was to continue for the 6-month period and was expected to conclude on 20 December 2023. The inspector's recommendations to the Secretary of State were to be made 3 months after the conclusion of the examination period and a decision on the project was expected to be made 3 months after the

recommendations. If approved, construction which had been re-phased by 2 years was due to start in 2026 with a new road and tunnel likely to be opened around 2032.

There had been a briefing for Members on 23 June on the Local Transport Plan. The public consultation on the emerging Local Transport Plan opened on the 27 June and was to close on 18 September. Once feedback from the consultation was considered, work was to begin on drafting the full plan. This was to include proposals for how and when in Kent KCC should focus on improvements to transport. The Member Task & Finish Group, consisting of Members from Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee and others, was to be an essential part of the next phase and the aim was to complete the work in 2024 before the next round of public consultation on the full plan.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- The approach was 'infrastructure first' and work was to continue developing Thanet Parkway as a travel hub. KCC was in a position to work with railway partners to take forward issues as they arose.
- Concerns were raised that there would be an increase in traffic on the A2 with Lower Thames Crossing Scheme and that the implications for the wider network needed to be considered.

3) Miss Carey said she wanted to highlight the excellent work undertaken by the Plan Bee group who had been awarded a Bees' Needs Champion Award by the government. The difference the work being done was making to pollinators was acknowledged.

Thanks were given to staff at the Household Waste & Recycling Centres at Herne Bay and Canterbury, who had a difficult time and coped brilliantly with double the number of visits during the Canterbury City Council industrial dispute with their waste collection service staff which had resulted in strikes. This was challenging and the booking system had helped to manage the demand.

4) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- KCC was leading the way for local authorities with Plan Bee.
- The consultation on Household Waste & Recycling Centres was to come back to the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee before any decisions were made.
- Items such as batteries and crisp packets were able to be recycled at supermarkets.

5) Mr Jones said the new Kent Travel Saver platform had performed very well since its launch in early July, improvements had been made since the IT back-office difficulties the service encountered in the summer of 2022. As a result Contact Centre call volumes were significantly reduced and there had been no issues getting passes to schools. Where problems had been reported, these had related to issues with Royal Mail or within the schools themselves.

At 6 of September, nearly 25,000 Kent Travel Saver and 16+ passes purchased, which was an increase from last summer. A more detailed analysis would be brought to a future meeting of Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee.

Bus services had not changed in the summer of 2023 as was the case in 2022 and initial indications were that there had been fewer capacity issues, than in previous years. Work had continued with bus operators around providing services to Kent.

It was reported that a recruitment process was underway for Road Closure Inspector roles. Several interviews had taken place, but recruitment was proving to be challenging in the current employment market. It was hoped that some suitable candidates would come forward for each area.

Work was being undertaken with the Streetworks teams to address issues and concerns to drive compliance and help ease the frustrations due to closures. Through the excellent work from both the Kent Streetworks Team and Southern Gas Networks (SGN) the A264 Pembury Road finished 2 weeks ahead of schedule. The original programme was for a 12-week closure, which was challenged by officers and resulted in a revised programme submitted for the school summer break; approximately 6 weeks.

The contractor was flexible and further resources were deployed where this was possible, understanding how critical the route was in the network.

The site had fantastic collaborative working between KCC Highways and various utility companies (KCC operations and Drainage, UK Power Networks [UKPN], South East Water [SEW], SGN). This meant the SGN road closure was fully utilised, reducing the impact for the travelling public, by saving at least a further 10 days of closures on this section of road, for other works.

There was a public meeting relating to Upper Street in Leeds. It was understood that progress had been good and innovative techniques had been used by the contractor.

Mr Jones thanked Members for attending the briefing in August relating to the Highways Term Maintenance Contract. The new arrangement with AMEY provided a platform for and additional focus on AMEY performance.

With the rate increases in the KCC contract; this would allow AMEY to secure additional resources in a competitive highways market. It was anticipated this would make it easier for AMEY to find local SMEs with the right capability and capacity, to deliver for Kent, which in turn was to improve KCC's overall performance.

The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) project was progressing well. KCC had submitted their Expression of Interest to the Department for Transport regarding the £12million funding allocation aimed at developing a county wide Electric Vehicle charger network.

KCC was working closely with the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles on plans around this and an initial pilot had been identified for Folkestone and Hythe of 60 additional on street chargers.

Providing reliable and affordable charge points was important in facilitating the transition needed to meet local and national strategic objectives and the intention was to bring a proposal to Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee early in 2024 for a decision on whether to progress to procurement.

KCC was awarded £6 million for 'Pothole Blitz' work. £2.1 million of work had been completed, £3.3 million of work had been committed to by the KCC team for delivery and 47,059m² of patching across the Kent road network had been completed. Works were on track to be completed towards the end of October 2023.

The Plan Bee team had secured further funding to continue work for a third year. KCC GET staff had completed a day of volunteering with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust at Brockhill Country Park and in Romney Marsh, building upon the good work of Plan Bee.

6) Further to questions from Members it was noted:

- There were works at Galley Hill Road in Swanscombe. Surveying was still ongoing to establish how best to resolve the issue. The next steps would be reported to the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee.
- As the Highway authority, KCC was not at liberty to prevent utility companies from gaining access to their equipment. KCC worked hard when given advance notice to make sure that events and local businesses have the opportunity to have those works mitigated. Where emergency works are undertaken, KCC was not informed before works. KCC was lobbying government to secure more powers for more enforcement and regularity.
- There were regular meetings between KCC and utility companies and issues would be raised as part of the agenda with them going forward.

5. Decisions taken between committee meetings

(Item 6)

Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport) was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Jones said thank you to Members who attended the briefing on the decision. An update was to be brought to Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee in 2024.

2) RESOLVED to note the report.

6. Performance Dashboard

(Item 7)

Matt Wagner (Interim Chief Analyst) and Simon Jones (Corporate Director, GET) were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Wagner introduced the report for quarter 2 of the 2023/24 financial year. There were 19 key performance indicators (KPIs); 10 were rated green, 6 amber and 3 red.

The indicators rated red were under Highways and Transport: potholes repaired in 28 calendar days, emergency incidents attended to within 2 hours, priority enquiries completed within 20 working days.

2) Further to Member's questions, it was noted:

- The marking of potholes was an area of improvement being worked on with the term maintenance contractor - it related to the speed at which KCC wanted potholes filled, the level of response expected but it was recognised that there was an opportunity for optimisation.
- Monthly Strategic Steering Groups with Amey were planned to ensure a focus on performance and performance improvement plans. Issues such as delays in line markings and signage were to be raised with Amey.
- The management of soft landscaping had been a challenge over the summer because it had been a very wet and warm summer. Adaptations would need to be made to deal with changes in the expected seasonal weather.

3) RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

7. Winter Service Policy for 2023-24

(Item 8)

Richard Emmett (Senior Highways Manager) was in attendance for this item and Andrew Loosemore (Head of Highways) was in attendance virtually for this item

1) Mr Emmett outlined the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, the following points were noted:

- Parish seminars with Highways officers were to take place and dates were to be confirmed.
- More salt was to be put on the highways in the evening instead of doing a second run in the morning but the weather conditions needed to be considered when adopting this technique – as if there was too much water run off, the salt would not last or if more than a certain amount of salt needed to be used, they would still need to do two runs.
- Snow routes on roads that were not A or B roads received service once the primary networks were ‘covered’ in terms of gritting. Trials were being run where local farmers were given salt which they could deploy.
- There was contingency salt being held at Ridham Dock, however, this is supplied by Amey.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

8. Drainage Infrastructure Maintenance

(Item 9)

Earl Bourner (Drainage Asset Manager) and Simon Jones (Corporate Director – GET) were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Bourner introduced the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- KCC was working with Southern Water on a ‘pathfinder’ project which was looking to take as much surface water out of the systems as possible. There were dips in the footway which collected water when there had been

significant rain. Members of the public could make contact in order for flood water to be cleared, if required.

- For a blocked gulley on the highway, members of the public should make a report to KCC. For a sewer, reports should be made to Southern Water.
- The main strategic gulleys were cleansed on a yearly basis, the minor network was cleansed within a 3 year period. An intelligent approach had been adopted to gulley cleansing.
- Should anyone damage KCC infrastructure, KCC will pursue those responsible.
- There was a pro-active programme of asset management and a way to work on backlogs. Asset data was being collected so that KCC could see where KCC's underground assets were and where Southern Water assets were. This was an ongoing project for KCC and there was a national campaign regarding collecting this information.
- Residents in Kent were able to help with flooding with natural solutions such as having water butts, tree pits, ponds, permeable paving, having greenery in their gardens.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

9. Annual Update on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

(Item 10)

Matthew Smyth (Director for Environment and Waste); Katie Traylen (Climate Change Team Leader) and Simon Jones (Corporate Director- GET) were in attendance for this item

1) Miss Carey introduced the report.

2) Mr Smyth and Ms Traylen outlined the report regarding delivery towards the national target of 2050 to reduce emissions to Net Zero, plus the emerging air quality targets from government.

3) Further to questions from Members, it was noted:

- There was a commitment to new nuclear at Dungeness. It was felt the grid would not cope without the contribution of nuclear as well as schemes such as Solar Together.
- The ambition was for demand to be met in a way that helped Kent to reduce emissions and for residents to enjoy a modern life with choice in cleaner environment.
- Initiatives for individual homeowners varied depending on the property, meaning that the return-on-investment period would vary. Work was being undertaken to understand what would be best for individual households. KCC's role was to think about what information to share with residents around this.
- The government was keen to seed-fund initiatives rather than fully funding them. The challenge was to find the right investment packages.
- There were opportunities around the bus network and taxis using hydrogen. There was a hydrogen plant in Herne Bay.

4) RESOLVED to note the report and endorse the progression of the proposed areas for future delivery.

10. Processing of Dry Recyclables (Without Fibre) Contract (SC2058)

(Item 11)

Matthew Smyth (Director for Environment and Waste) was in attendance for this item

1) Miss Carey introduced the report.

2) Mr Smyth outlined the report.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to

a) agree to award of a new contractual arrangement for the processing of dry recyclables for Dover District Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Thanet District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, for a period of up to 48 months and

b) to delegate authority to the Director for Environment and Circular Economy to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A of the agenda report.

11. Updating the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Kent Minerals Sites Plan - Results of Public Consultation and Next Steps

(Item 12)

Sharon Thompson (Head of Planning) was in attendance for this item

1) Mrs Thompson outlined the report.

2) Further to questions from Members, it was noted that:

- Only one site had been identified for county's supply of hard rock and no further sites had come forward.
- An alternative to these materials being found within the county, was for the materials to be imported from Scotland or overseas, which would have environmental impacts including consequences for carbon emissions which would need careful consideration.
- Kentish ragstone from Hermitage Quarry was important in building projects locally and for historic buildings in London.
- Concerns were raised about the environmental impacts from the proposed site.
- It was clarified that the promoted site at Hermitage Quarry was designated as being a Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) site.
- A further update was to be brought to the committee.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

12. National Bus Strategy & Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan - Update

(Item 14)

Dan Bruce (Public Transport - Policy, Infrastructure & Community Team Leader) and Phil Lightowler (Interim - Director of Highways and Transportation) were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Bruce introduced the report.

2) Further to debate and questions from Members, it was noted:

- It was disappointing that there was not more flexibility in how the government funding could be spent locally. The content of the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan reflected the National Bus Strategy.
- There had been problems with capacity and reliability for school buses on particular services and work was being undertaken to resolve the issues.
- The government funded scheme where a Stagecoach single fare had been capped at £2 had increased passenger numbers but numbers had not gone back to the level of before the Covid-19 pandemic.

3) RESOLVED to note the update.

13. Work Programme

(Item 13)

RESOLVED to note the work programme.