

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, 19 September 2024.

PRESENT: Mr S Holden (Chairman), Mr N J Collor (Vice-Chairman), Mr T Bond, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, 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 and Mr D Robey

ALSO PRESENT:

IN ATTENDANCE:

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Sandhu.

2. Declarations of Interest

(Item 3)

No declarations of interest were received.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held 9 July 2024 were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

4. Cabinet Members and Corporate Director's Verbal Updates

(Item 5)

1) Mr Baker said the processing and issuing of Kent Travel Saver passes had gone very well. The number of students applying for passes was similar to previous years despite the increase in cost to the user. Additional communications had been shared with schools and students on how to prepare for travel and giving details, where available, of alternative bus routes if a student misses their intended bus. Whilst all passes issued to schools' operators had been instructed to give a two-week grace period to allow students to travel whilst schools were distributing passes which did not always happen on day one.

Mr Baker attended a Parliamentary reception on 5 September organised by Julia Lopez, MP for Hornchurch and Upminster, Jim Dickinson, MP for Dartford, Logistics UK and National Highways to promote the importance to government on making a decision to proceed with the new Lower Thames Crossing. The Secretary of State

was due to make a decision on the Development Consent Order on 4 October. National Highways were running a series of public engagement events across Dartford and Gravesham between 20 September and 1 October to update the public on the progress of the scheme.

Mr Baker also attended a site visit at Galley Hill on 11 September, joining the local MPs for Dartford and Gravesham and the Minister of Future roads, Lilian Greenwood. Mr Baker highlighted the need for urgent government support to enable this major road to be reopened. On the day of the visit, Swanscombe High Street was also closed for repairs necessitated by the discovery of voids and a large washout area caused by further Thames Water leaks. Whilst Galley Hill remains closed, the High Street was a key access route for the community so the Minister was able to see for herself the huge impact on residents and road users due to the Galley Hill collapse.

The public consultation on Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) continued until 8 October and Members were asked to encourage their constituents, district/borough councils, parish/town councils and other organisations to respond so that their views could be taken into account in the draft document that was to be brought back to full Council for adoption. Public exhibitions in town and village halls, libraries, gateways and shopping centres across the county had taken place and were to continue over the remaining weeks until early October. All Joint Transportation Advisory Boards had been sent a report on the LTP5 consultation, and where requested, officers were attending virtually. Briefings had also been offered to all district and borough councils. It was important to get KCC's transport priorities right in the statutory plan so that KCC could engage with the new government on how these essential schemes could be funded and delivered, hence the importance of this consultation.

The Examination of the Development Consent Order (DCO) for Gatwick's Northern Runway to enable two runway operations, concluded on 27 August. The Examining Authority were to provide a recommendation report to the Secretary of State by 27 November and a decision on whether to grant consent was due to be taken by 27 February 2025. KCC remained opposed to the application throughout the Examination due to the detrimental noise impacts in the west of the county and a lack of evidenced direct economic benefit to Kent.

KCC had produced an updated five year forward works programme covering planned works for most asset groups from 2024-25 to 2028-9, and all of the asset managers and their team members who had contributed were thanked. The programme had been published on the KCC website. It was a dynamic programme and subject to regular review so schemes could be changed or new schemes added during the year.

The Active Travel Interventions team held a popular engagement session with staff offering adult bicycle training, bespoke route planning and a 'Dr Bike' for ad-hoc repairs.

KCC also used the Swale Recycle Project to provide refurbished bicycles (refurbished by HMP Swaleside inmates) for staff. KCC were looking to do this at more large employers' sites in the future.

KCC's Capability Fund rating moved from 1 to 2. The capability ratings were used to calculate funding allocations to boost technical capability to deliver high quality

schemes. Higher rated authorities were eligible to access more funding, ensuring that investment was appropriate to the level of capability.

2) Mr Hills, Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment gave an update on Mr Thomas's behalf. It was announced that after many years of dedication and hard work by the team, the new Sevenoaks Waste Transfer Station (WTS) was operational. The team held a launch event on 4 September 2024 with KCC's Chairman, Bryan Sweetland cutting the ribbon to commemorate the special occasion. Work started on the build in July 2023, with development secured through a new leasing arrangement with Darenth River Ballast Company. The new site replaced the old Waste Transfer Station building and was five times bigger. It was designed to enable the recycling of more waste streams collected kerbside by Sevenoaks District Council, and to accommodate government's future legislative requirements, including the collection of food waste. The Waste Transfer Station could take 60,500 tonnes of waste per year, boasts two weighbridges, and state of the art fire prevention and odour suppression systems. Trees and wildflowers had been planted along the riverbank next to the site. The site was also taking trade waste from local businesses.

Trade waste services had been re-introduced at the Dover facility to meet the growing needs of the commercial sector in the locality. Extensive planning and modifications were required at the site to enable the service to be offered by FCC Environment under contract to KCC. Materials that were to be accepted included bulky waste, green, paper and card and wood to be phased in at a later date.

There were further developments around the reuse offering at the Household Waste Recycling Centres. Following the success of the previous year's re-use pop up shops at a number of the HWRCs and in response to customer feedback, the team worked with the Provider FCC Environment to host pop up shops at Dover and Allington HWRCs in August and September 2024. Visitors to the HWRCs were pleased to see KCC promoting the reuse of goods and were thrilled to grab a bargain from the selection of high-quality items on offer. These popular events were a fantastic way to re-home pre-loved goods such as toys, electricals, homeware, garden and bric-a-brac items, which were all sourced from the onsite reuse containers. The pop-up shop at Allington HWRC comes ahead of the permanent reuse shop at the site, for which planning permission had been submitted, with the hope to open the shop by the end of the financial year. Together with the Resource Management and Circular Economy team, FCC Environment were leading on the procurement to find a Kent charity to run the shop in a partnership approach.

The Low Carbon Kent team took their next cohort of 12 learners through the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (known as IEMA) workforce and manager courses. Joining them were representatives from 10 different KCC teams, all keen to see how positive improvements could be made across the council. KCC's status as an accredited training centre was allowing the team to fully engage our partners and supply chains in sustainability skills and practical case studies. This was delivering co-benefits aplenty as we seek to embed better ways of working and justify the changes we all need to make both from the bottom up and top down of our organisations.

3) Following Mr Hill's update, Members asked questions and it was noted that:

- Districts made their own decisions about food waste but this was due to change, making it compulsory for district councils to do separate food waste collections.

4) Mr Jones said that the works to repair and refurbish the existing fans in Chestfield Tunnel were progressing. It was expected that this work would be completed by end of October. After testing and installation, the contraflow would be removed.

New fans for the tunnel were to be delivered when the new ventilation system is designed and procured in the 25/26 financial year, however this was subject to a key decision. The new ventilation system was to be installed in both tunnels.

Building on the Galley Hill update provided by Mr Baker, KCC's contractor had completed their investigation work and KCC was waiting for the report which it was hoped would identify the cause of the collapse. Consultants had been appointed to undertake a costed options analysis to provide to the Department for Transport (DfT). The report would show what needed to be done to reopen the road and the costs.

Work had continued with specialists to identify a solution to stabilise the bank on Road of Remembrance. The ground investigations work started on 9 September and are due to be completed 30 September. Once the investigations were completed, the data would give KCC the information required to begin the design which scoping work was being undertaken. KCC could not commit to an opening date until the design had been prepared.

Network Rail had informed KCC that they had been unable to complete essential repairs of the Kingsferry Bridge during the previous closure and required a further closure from Friday, 25 October until Sunday, 3 November. This had been scheduled during school half term in order to minimise disruption. There continued to be discussions about how to further minimise disruption, including looking at free recovery based on site, what other local highways activities could be stood down and how the Grovehurst scheme could be moved forward.

As reported at the recent All Member Briefing the latest implementation date for the Entry Exit System (EES) was 10 November. In response to concerns regarding long queues affecting tourist travel, the DfT was developing options for a couple of sites that could be available to hold tourists off the road network until the time for them to travel to the Port. The sites, and use of them had not been confirmed by Ministers. The Port of Dover and Eurotunnel were working hard to be ready for implementation.

It was reported that as of 3 September; KCC's contractors had delivered 208,849 square meterage of patching and filled 5,326. Work was to continue to be delivered into mid-October.

An application for planning permission had been submitted for a new transfer station to serve Folkestone and Hythe. The district council took the collected waste into Ashford Waste Transfer Station, along with Ashford Borough Council. As a result of housing growth including the Otterpool development and future legislative requirements, transfer station infrastructure was needed to serve the area to ensure sustainable waste disposal.

Since last year, the team had been avidly collecting mobility aid equipment at four of the HWRCs in Swanley, Dover, Allington and Tunbridge Wells. This was an ongoing partnership project between the Resource Management and Circular Economy team, Adult Social Care and Health teams along with the NHS and NRS Healthcare. Equipment such as crutches, wheelchairs, grab rails and rollators were placed in dedicated containers at the HWRCs and then repaired, if required, and cleaned before being reused in local communities. The project had proved to be such a success that it was being expanded to include Pepperhill and New Romney HWRCs.

The 'Nothing Wasted' recycling campaign had launched to encourage residents to recycle as much as possible at HWRCs. There was plenty of content on the Greener Kent Facebook page and there was a campaign on local radio and on the back of buses. The Engagement and Behaviour Change team had spent time at various HWRCs to create a positive campaign that put site staff and residents at the fore, sharing all the good practice seen to model and normalise recycling and reuse. Contractors were out with engagement stands on sites over the summer to continue having valuable conversations and changing behaviours on site. Many people had actively approached staff to ask if they could recycle anything more from their mixed bags of waste, rather than just taking them to the bays destined for incineration.

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

- Subject to the report received about the propagation of the defect on Galley Hill, Members were assured that the subsequent solution would be safe, viable and consider the long term use of the road.
- District and borough councils would need to be collecting paper and card, plastics, glass, metal, food waste and garden waste at kerbside by 31 March 2026. The development of the Sevenoaks Transfer Station was to get ahead of that date - with the amount that would be recycled countywide increasing and the amount being incinerated going down.
- There would not be requirements around how district and boroughs containerised waste, but food caddies would be separate. However, how KCC was able to process the waste collected by the district and borough was affected by how it was containerised.
- There were challenges around making HWRC accessible to pedestrians, particularly as all the sites were different.

5. Directorate Dashboard

(Item 6)

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment &Transport was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Jones introduced the report and said that it was second performance dashboard of the financial year, 2024-2025. There were 17 key performance indicators (KPIs); eleven were rated green, five were rated amber and one was rated red.

One of the amber indicators was within Highways & Transportation, and four within Environment & Circular Economy. The one KPI RAG rated red is HT14: Member enquiries completed within 20 working days. This indicator covered all enquiries from

MPs, councillors and other elected officials as well as enquiries from members of the public directed to Cabinet Members or members of senior management. Enquiries generally related to divisional matters, such as requests for information or feedback on works taking place in an area. Also received were many requests for changes to speed limits and road layouts.

With a significant number of enquiries coming from MPs, performance in June was affected by the pre-general election period (purdah) when it was not possible to correspond with MPs on enquiries they had raised regarding constituency matters. Where it was appropriate and constituent contact details were available, responses were sent directly to them instead.

Other Highways & Transportation indicators were mostly on or above target, despite the volume of work continuing to be above expectations across many areas. However, the number of new enquiries requiring further action was within expectations since the start of the financial year indicating an easing of demand. As for Environment and Circular Economy, although three of the Waste indicators were amber, there had been improved recycling rates at Household Waste Recycling Centres as volumes taken to the sites continued to increase, although they were still 29% below pre-pandemic levels.

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

- Members were reminded to copy in the VIP email address for enquiries.
- More information was requested on the reuse and recycling of wood.

3) RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

6. 24/00086 - Highways Term Maintenance Contract 2026 Award *(Item 7)*

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport, and Andrew Loosemore, Head of Highways, were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Loosemore introduced the report.

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

- Any sub-contractor would need to be approved by KCC and it was expected that the contractor would self-deliver the majority of the work and their performance would be monitored at a more local level than previously, using service-based key performance indicators.
- Parish seminars had been scheduled and one of the matters for discussion would be the Highways Term Maintenance Contract.
- The Road Asset Renewal Contract was a contract for road surfacing which was subject to a separate procurement process to the Highways Term Maintenance Contract.

3) RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision as outlined in the recommendations in the report.

7. Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

(Item 8)

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport; Katie Ireland, Safer Active Journeys Team Leader and Jamie Watson, Traffic Schemes Team Leader were in attendance for this item

1) Ms Ireland introduced the report.

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

- The Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan would help KCC's pre-engagement and consultation. There were instances of there being a small number of responses to a consultation on an ad hoc scheme but a strong response once the work had started on implementation of the scheme. The limitations of consultations were discussed.
- From lessons learned on the Herne Bay scheme, there would be earlier engagement with all relevant groups.
- It was recognised that there were challenges when retrofitting solutions to allow pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to safely use a route. There were also challenges presented to the success of schemes by enforcement issues.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

8. Winter Service Policy

(Item 9)

Richard Emmett, Senior Highways Manager was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Baker introduced the report and advised that there would be a meeting in the spring to discuss how the Winter Service Policy had been implemented.

2) Mr Emmett outlined the report.

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

- KCC worked with unparished areas and salt was still delivered if there was somewhere to store it safely.
- In the event of snow or a declared 'ice emergency', other routes, known as snow routes, such as villages not on a primary salting route, are also treated.

4) RESOLVED to note the report.

9. Road Closures Update

(Item 10)

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport, and, Pauline Harmer, Senior Highways Manager, were in attendance for this item

1) Mr Baker introduced the report.

2) Ms Harmer outlined the report.

3) Members asked questions, and it was noted that:

- Site notices for planned works have been updated to show that it is utility companies requiring the road closures.
- Residents were encouraged to access One Network which showed roadworks and traffic disruptions across the UK: [Causeway one.network Map | uk.one.network](#)
- Legislation meant utility companies had two hours from the start of emergency works to advise KCC.
- The use of Road Closure Inspectors meant that they were driving performance and ultimately safety. Performance issues, such as roads not being opened in a timely way after works appeared to have been completed, were also brought to the monthly meetings with the utility companies.
- It was queried whether data could be brought to Members to show whether the number of road closures was increasing over time.
- Concerns were raised about repeat closures of the same routes. It was clarified that full road closures were put in place for safety reasons.

4) Mr Rayner proposed, Mr Bond seconded the motion as follows:

a) This committee recommends to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport that the permit scheme conditions referred to at paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 be more stringently enforced in connection with the road closure work for its duration. The enhanced inspector regime should be used to ensure that when street works overrun their permitted duration, the maximum fine be levied to encourage utility companies and their contractors to make full use of the available hours to complete their works with alacrity during the permitted duration.

b) This committee recommends to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport that he and officers look for the powers held by Transport for London, in connection with the degree of control that TfL exercises in connection with timing and duration of utility related road works, especially on major roads or red routes, with a view to KCC acquiring such powers for use in the equivalent major roads and junctions in Kent.

5) Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

10. Work Programme

(Item 11)

The work programme was noted.

- (a) **FIELD**
- (b) **FIELD_TITLE**