

1 May 2007

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

HIGHWAYS ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the Highways Advisory Board held on Tuesday, 1 May 2007 at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Mr R F Manning (Chairman), Mr J R Bullock, MBE, Miss S J Carey, Mr D S Daley, Dr M R Eddy (substitute for Mr R J E Parker), Mr C G Findlay, Mr W A Hayton, Mr C J Law, Mr J I Muckle, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr A R Poole, Mr K Sansum, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr R Tolputt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Harrison-Mee, Director, Kent Highway Services; Mr D Hall, County Transportation Manager; Ms A Angeletta, School Travel Plan Adviser; Mr I Procter, Road Safety Manager; Mr A Riley, Technical Director; Mr G Tanner, Senior Transport Planner; Mr D Thomas, Procurement Manager; and the Head of Democratic Services (represented by Mrs K Mannering).

Petition

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman formally received a petition from Mrs D Phillips, on behalf of the Safer Roads for Teston Campaign, calling for the Malling Road gateway to be brought forward ahead of other works and resurfacing on the A26.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes
(Item 2)

(1) When the Chairman sought approval of the Minutes of 6 March 2007, Mr Law referred to paragraph 8 and the lack of reference to the following:-

‘A Member suggested that officers would consider peak hour operation times only. Officers were also requested to investigate the use of this particular bus lane by HGVs in the initial period of operation. Links to Towards 2010 should be included.’

(2) At the Chairman’s discretion there followed some debate on the subject and it was acknowledged by a majority of the Members that the issue was considered, although a note was not included in the Minutes.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) subject to the inclusion of the paragraph in (1) above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman; and
- (b) a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Board on the wider issues relating to bus lanes.

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2. Management of Highway Trees

(Item 3 – Report by Alan Riley, Technical Director, Kent Highway Services)

(Prior to consideration of the report, Members received a presentation from Alan Riley, Technical Director, Jacobs. Following a question and answer session, the Chairman thanked Mr Riley for a very informative presentation).

(1) Kent was recognised nationally as the 'Garden of England' and a safe, healthy and thriving highway tree population contributed significantly to that recognition. Public perception of the need for tree management was variable and could focus on a single issue affecting one individual to the wider issues surrounding the environment, biodiversity, and sustainability. The report outlined the approach to managing highway trees as an asset on a county wide basis by Jacobs' arboricultural team. The approach would ensure the safety of users of the highway and would develop an inventory based tree management system.

(2) Kent Highway Services (KHS) had, for some years, met its duty of care by undertaking regular inspections of highway trees (tree safety audit) and arranging for identified safety works to be carried out. The inspections were undertaken by Jacobs' arboricultural team with the resultant works arranged by KHS staff using local arboricultural contractors. Emergency tree works, routine maintenance and ad-hoc inspections requests were managed by KHS staff at divisional offices. Routine maintenance was sometimes arranged through district council contracts and no co-ordinated replanting policy was in place.

(3) The aim was to develop a consistent tree management regime across the county administered by arboricultural specialists. The management regime would be driven by a tree policy approved by Members and would provide clear objectives against which budgets could be prioritised.

(4) The tree policy would inform customers and other interested parties how Kent County Council (KCC) managed its tree stock and the objectives guiding that management. The tree policy could provide a framework for KCC and the KHS tree management practice should sit within the policy. Approval of the policy across KCC directorates would reduce risk to the Authority by ensuring a consistent approach to tree safety management and ensure environmental objectives, subject to budgetary constraints, were met.

(5) The management process would deliver a 'one stop shop' for all tree matters. It would ensure that tree issues were dealt with by tree specialists, budgets were spent in a consistent manner, and arboricultural contractors were properly assessed and managed. The process would prevent duplication of effort and ensure that tree issues and enquiries go direct to the individual best placed to deal with them.

(6) The management of trees and the associated budgets was based on inaccurate historic data. An inventory of the asset would be developed and managed electronically and would inform future management and budget requirements. The overriding objective would be to ensure the safety of the users of the highway.

(7) The tree safety audit process was carried out in accordance with a practice note that was reviewed at least annually and amended as appropriate. The practice note set out the frequency of inspections, the criteria for assigning priority levels to tree works and an internal audit process. It also detailed how trees on private land adjacent to the highway were assessed and the methodology for dealing with operational matters for both KHS and private trees. The performance against programme was audited annually

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(8) All response times were monitored and would be audited against targets. This applied equally to emergency call outs and all calls received via the KHS Contact Centre. Contractor performance would be monitored against call-out times and site performance data collected by Jacobs. Emphasis would be placed on safe working practices and the training of staff and development of processes as tree work was a relatively high risk activity requiring skilled operatives.

(9) The safety of trees, the unnecessary removal of trees and the replacement of trees that had been removed raised concerns that could be alleviated by an effective communications process. The process would inform the public, Parish, Borough and County Council Members and officers of the progress of the tree safety audit and of the intention to carry out works. Where replanting could not be undertaken a reason would be given.

(10) The tree safety audit also identified private trees that might present a danger to users of the highway. Owners of the trees were contacted by letter advising them of the need to have all their trees that might affect the highway inspected by a competent person. The owners were also sent a copy of a leaflet explaining how KHS looked after trees on the highway and their responsibilities as an owner.

(11) The current paper based system used for inspections and reporting was inefficient when compared to computer based systems. The system was open to human error and variation in recording criteria. An electronic system, with the availability of time stamped records included inspection reports and response times would reduce KHS liability in the event of an incident.

(12) To achieve compatibility with existing systems the asset management software of choice was Confirm. Confirm modules, with suitable mobile hardware, would allow a tree database to be built up over time that could be used to manage reporting, consultation and implementation needs. The tree modules were compatible with other Confirm modules.

(13) The use of Confirm would result in savings from the initial inspection process through to completed works. The savings could be measured under three headings:-

- Time – Efficient collation and analysis of data, searchable parameters through user definable fields required significantly less man-hours to schedule proposed works.
- Money – Efficient data collation, improved work output, accurate allocation of budget and targeting of works in accordance with contract priority parameters.
- Environment – Less contractor driven miles as works proactively programmed in areas rather than reactive responses. Less paper usage across whole life of project.

(14) Tree management software would offer improved service delivery, customer satisfaction and a demonstrable improvement in quality of tree stock.

(15) The Board noted the preparation of a tree policy for consideration and inclusion in the Forward Plan.

(Prior to consideration of Items 4 and 5 below, Members received a presentation from Graham Tanner, Senior Transport Planner; and Annette Angeletta, School Travel Plan Advisor. Following a question and answer session, the Chairman thanked the officers for a very informative presentation).

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3. Smarter Choices – 2007 Progress Report
(Item 4 – Report by County Transportation Manager)

(1) Smarter Choices was about improving sustainable travel options and encouraging people to use alternatives to the car to help tackle congestion and reduce pollution. Initiatives included travel planning (particularly with schools), improving public transport, marketing, car sharing, car clubs and tele/flexible working.

(2) Research had shown Smarter Choices contributed cost effectively to national and local priorities improving accessibility and social inclusion, encouraging regeneration, reducing pollution and carbon emissions and increasing levels of physical activity. For Kent this initiative was a key part of delivering statutory duties and policies in Travelling to School; Choosing Health, Every Child Matters, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The report provided an update on the initiatives reported to the Board on 2 May 2006 and sought continued member support for their implementation.

(3) 2006/07 had been another very successful year for improving travel to school, with a further 90 schools developing travel plans. This brought the total to 326, and equated to approximately 50% of all Kent schools. The Travel Plan team was on target to meet 100% by 2010. School Travel Plans had now secured in excess of £2 million of additional capital grants for Kent schools to spend on infrastructure within the school grounds to support their action plans.

(4) Kent's School Travel Plan initiative was funded by Government through to March 2008. It was hoped that continued funding for local authorities through to 2010 would be secured as part of the Government's spending review in 2007.

(5) The team were putting together a strategy for working with schools in 2007/08. It was now proving difficult to provide the necessary support to existing Travel Plan schools, helping them to deliver their action plans and ultimately to reduce congestion, whilst continuing to bring on new schools to keep pace with the target. As such, it was proposed to consolidate existing school travel plans in 2007/08 and review resource requirements once there was a certainty of continued funding for the initiative.

(6) For the first time this year, all Kent schools had been asked to complete information relating to mode-share on the journey to school as part of an annual census return. This would enable us to establish a clear picture of changes in travel patterns on the school-run. Data from 2006/07 would form a baseline for the LTP, against which we would set and measure targets for mode-shift.

(7) As part of funding secured to support statutory duties in the Education and Inspections Act, a Bike IT officer had been appointed in a match funding arrangement with the sustainable engineering charity Sustrans. Bike IT officers worked with schools to encourage cycling through training, teaching basic cycle maintenance skills and projects to enthuse children about cycling. Kent's new Bike IT officer would begin work with schools in the Ashford area in the summer term. Subject to the success of the scheme, which was funded initially for one year, there might be opportunities to expand into other areas.

(8) KCC's partnership with the Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group (including Medway Council) goes from strength to strength. Kent had the most walking buses of any local authority in the UK. A new robust risk assessment procedure and the appointment of a part-time walking bus co-ordinator had helped to ensure that the buses, which relied on parent volunteers, continued to be properly managed and monitored.

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(9) Kent had worked with the partnership to deliver two new Walk to School initiatives including the KM Green Footsteps Challenge (often known as the 'walking bug' in recognition of the cuddly green mascot) and Walk on Wednesday (WOW), which had been championed in Thanet schools. The results of the initiatives had been impressive, leading to an average 10% shift from cars to walking at participating schools. Evidence had also suggested that behavioural changes were sustained beyond the extent of the initiative. Following the successful pilot of cluster-wide initiatives with Thanet schools, we would be working from September 2007 to raise the profile of walking to school in entire communities.

(10) In 2006 Government announced a £15 million fund to provide grants of £1,000 to state funded infant/primary schools wishing to establish or expand a walking bus scheme. Smaller £500 grants were also made available to schools wishing to take part in walk to school initiatives such as Green Footsteps and WOW. Grants were available for 3 years, subject to an annual review of progress. As a result over 131 schools were supported with successful applications, leveraging in a further £95,500 for Kent schools to spend on walk to school activities supporting them and the Kent and Medway partnership.

(11) Alongside the development of School Travel Plans, the team had continued to promote travel planning initiatives to businesses and developers. The work in this area could be reactive e.g. providing advice to a planning authority on the content of a travel plan or proactive e.g. promoting the Kentcarshare initiative to businesses across the county.

(12) A priority for 2007/08 was to establish a baseline of Travel Plans across the county, enabling us to understand the number and type of businesses currently covered by a travel plan. This would enable the provision of more effective advice and assistance, supporting and enforcing sustainable development.

(13) Establishing and delivering workplace travel plans across the county was a substantial task and was not currently resourced and funded as school travel plans. The key to delivery was partnership, both with the business community, Jacobs as part of the KHS Alliance and also other directorates/affiliates including the Kent Sustainable Business Partnership and Business Link.

(14) In January 2007 the Maidstone Car Club was launched in partnership with Streetcar, the largest operator of car clubs in the UK. The scheme currently operated with two VW Golfs in designated bays outside Sessions House and utilised web-based and Smartcard technology to book and use the cars. The key objective was to provide County Hall employees, requiring adhoc use of cars during the working day, with an alternative to driving to work at congested peak times, thus helping to alleviate congestion and parking pressures at and around County Hall. The cars were also being made available to nearby residents and businesses to help relieve parking pressures.

(15) To date about 40 employees had registered with the scheme. KHS were working hard with Streetcar, Maidstone Borough Council and the Town Centre Management Group to promote the scheme and to encourage use by local residents and businesses which would help offset the cost to KCC. Additional locations were also being sought in Maidstone and further afield to increase brand recognition and also to achieve a higher 'critical mass' which had been the key to success in other areas.

(16) Feedback from Streetcar users had been very positive, particularly in terms of the ease and efficiency of registration and booking and also the cleanliness and maintenance of the vehicles. The scheme remained a pilot initiative however, and would be kept under regular review.

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(17) Kentcarshare was KCC's web-based journey matching facility, developed in partnership with Liftshare. It continued to be a flag-ship initiative for sustainable transport in Kent and had expanded well since its launch in September 2005. The scheme had over 2000 members across the county and had achieved excellent brand recognition with many people coming to appreciate that adapting their travel patterns by car-sharing on just one day a week could not only make a big difference to congestion but also saved them money.

(18) Notable recent successes included the launch of Kentcarshare by Kent Police, one of the largest employers in the county. The scheme had been developed in support of Travel Plans at their HQ and college sites on Sutton Road in Maidstone and had been personally endorsed by Chief Constable Michael Fuller in a letter to all staff. Kentcarshare was also being launched and promoted locally by Sevenoaks District Council and Gravesham Borough Council with Swale due to follow in due course. To support the developments, promotional signage in Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells had been relocated to sites in Gravesend, Sittingbourne and Ashford.

(19) KCC, in line with most other Local Authorities, had in recent years sought to capitalise on nationally recognised 'green travel' events which included National Green Transport Week. This year National Green Transport Week ran from 16-24 June. A range of initiatives were being developed including a themed week called 'Try something new' with events planned for County Hall and other KCC offices. These would address sustainable travel issues, including reducing the need to travel and opportunities for flexible working. The headline initiative for County Hall would be the 'one tonne carbon challenge' where we would be attempting to save one tonne of carbon emitted by KCC officers and Members through small adjustments to travel patterns during the week.

(20) In tandem with this Kent Businesses and local authority partners would be targeted encouraging them to emulate activities at County Hall and take part in a competition to win prizes including folding bicycles, Arriva/Stagecoach bus tickets, free environmental audits and a tree dedication as part of the Woodland Trust's Victory Wood project in Maidstone.

(21) KHS recognised the increased support for initiatives which sought to tackle carbon emissions and climate change issues in Kent and were keen to play our part, wherever possible, to contribute to the recommendations of the recent Select Committee Report and other corporate KCC targets.

(22) The success of Smarter Choices relied on developing partnerships with people and organisations across Kent. A fundamental principal of Smarter Choices was to develop and deliver highway schemes and services, which were aligned with people's travel needs. This could be achieved by continuing to engage with the public and other stakeholders to raise awareness and ownership, leading to the development of effective schemes that delivered real behavioural change.

(23) Smarter Choices gave Kent an opportunity to make good progress towards improving access, tackling congestion and delivering sustainable development as defined in the LTP2. The plan built on good practice and was achievable and cost effective.

(24) The Board noted the good progress being made and continued to support the delivery of the programme.

4. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Implications for Kent County Council

(Item 5 – Report by County Transportation Manager)

(1) The Education and Inspections Act 2006 contained within it a number of new requirements and statutory duties for Local Education and Transport Authorities. Some of

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these related to arrangements for transporting children to and from school/college and the promotion of sustainable transport options to pupils and parents.

(2) The Act introduced four new elements for local authorities:-

- (a) duty to promote sustainable travel modes for travel associated with education,
- (b) an expansion of travel support to low income families,
- (c) the making of suitable travel arrangements for 'eligible children' in a LA's area, and
- (d) opportunities for School Travel Pathfinders.

(3) These could be grouped into two broad areas: one related to eligibility criteria for free school transport and the second to developing, publicising and promoting sustainable travel options. The report outlined the new duties and the steps being taken to address them within KCC.

(4) The Act included provisions which extend school transport rights for children from low-income groups — those who were eligible for Free School Meals or whose parents were in receipt of Maximum Working Tax Credit.

(5) From September 2007, extended rights for pupils from low-income groups aged 8-11 came into force. The Act placed a duty on local authorities (LAs) to provide free transport to their nearest suitable school more than 2 miles from their home (the current cut-off was 3 miles). DfES would be providing up to £5 million per year, nationally, to authorities to fund the additional provision.

(6) From September 2008, LAs would be under a duty to provide pupils from low-income groups with transport to any one of 3 nearest schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home, and to the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief up to a distance of 15 miles from their home. Government funding would build to more than £45 million per year to LAs to fund the additional provision. Responsibility for delivery against the elements of the Act fell to the CFE Head of Admissions and Transport.

(7) The Act also placed a duty on LAs to promote sustainable travel and transport. The duty applied to all school children and young people of 6th form age, including those resident and receiving education or training in the authority's area and those not resident but who travel within the authority's area to receive education or training.

(8) The duty related to journeys to and from institutions (including attendance at pre- and after-school activities) and journeys between institutions during the day. Journeys might be to, from or between schools (including independent schools), further education institutions, and other institutions where education or training might be delivered. There were four parts to KCC's responsibility to promote sustainable travel modes; these, together with proposed actions to deliver against them, were explained in more detail in the report.

(9) The County Council was already very well positioned to deliver against this objective as a great deal of work was already being done with schools and colleges to promote sustainable transport. Additional funding would assist KCC in expanding work in future years. Initiatives included:-

- Kent Freedom Pass pilot for 11-16 year olds
- Walking buses – continued support for the Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group

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- Walk to School Initiatives – development and expansion of the Green Footsteps Challenge and WOW
- Cycle to school initiatives – Bike IT officers
- Kentschoolrun – the sister initiative of Kentcarshare
- Junior Travel coordinator schemes – pupil travel representatives

(10) Government was making an additional £4 million pa available to local authorities to support the new requirements, of which Kent could expect to receive circa. £112,000 pa. The funding was likely to be fully allocated against the delivery of the above initiatives in 2007/08 and to support additional staff resources in future years.

(11) KCC's Travel to School Steering Group had been expanded to reflect the new duties contained within the Education and Inspections Act, together with increasing interaction and cross-over between policies and initiatives impacting on the delivery of transport and education services. This included the Kent Freedom Pass, staggered school hours, the new 14-19 agenda and Extended Schools. The new Steering Group drew in stakeholders from CFE, KHS and Transport Integration to ensure that all initiatives were delivered as part of a joined up strategy. The Steering Group would be jointly accountable to the Cabinet Members for Environment, Highways & Waste; and Education and School Improvement.

(12) The final element of the Act related to opportunities for Pathfinder schemes. In response to criticisms of the policy, conflicts around the walking distance criteria for free school transport and the lack of account of parental preference, DfES was offering opportunities for local authorities to apply for Pathfinder status, to consider the needs of all pupils in their area. Pathfinder authorities would test innovative solutions in their area to promote sustainable travel and encourage less use of the car.

(13) Whilst Pathfinder authorities would have to continue to make arrangements for 'eligible children' (those currently receiving free travel and children from low income families), other measures would be expected to go well beyond the minimum.

(14) Up to 20 Pathfinders were likely to be selected, these could be individual or joint with other LA's and arrangements would have to be introduced in 2009 for a period of 4 years. Each authority could receive up to £200k pump priming money. Also, Government would make up to £12 million pa available across the pilot schemes to help fund the initiatives. To be a Pathfinder authority, charges must be made (except for children on low incomes or those in receipt of free travel at the start of the scheme). A charge of £1.00 per day might be considered in any scheme and the income must be hypothecated to reinvest in transport services.

(15) Kent had confirmed interest in being considered as a Pathfinder authority, potentially in support of the Kent Freedom Pass project. However the timings for this were not ideal given that a full bid needed to now be developed in time for substantial consultation with stakeholders and other interested parties before a final bid was submitted by 30 November 2007. The schemes were to start in September 2009 when the Kent Freedom Pass was planned to go countywide, subject to the success of the current pilot.

(16) The Board noted the contents of the report, and endorsed the proposed way forward to deliver against key requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

5. Local Public Service Agreement 2 (Road Safety)
(Item 6 – Report by County Transportation Manager)

(1) Following the highly successful PSA1 project that ended in December 2003, Kent County Council launched the PSA2 project in October 2004. The aim of the PSA2 project was to achieve the major element of the 2010 national road casualty reduction targets which was a 40% reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured by 31 December 2007. This challenging target was being addressed by a partnership of key players drawing on the contribution of their particular skills and resources. The purpose of the report was to provide an update on progress to date, an overview of activities undertaken so far and plans for the remainder of the project, and beyond.

(2) Monitoring of crash and casualty data was an on-going process, however, the long term view enabling comparisons of annual trends and patterns provided the most valuable insight of overall progress toward the target, what worked and importantly what did not.

(3) Fully validated crash and casualty data would be reported to the Board separately. However, the available data indicated that there was a good chance of reaching the PSA2 target by December 2007. The Road Safety team and their partners would be intensifying their activities throughout 2007 to ensure that the target was not missed. Plans for the remainder of the project were set out in the report, and were based on KHS research findings that identified which of the measures previously deployed were most effective.

(4) The approach to the project had been to integrate the known benefits of education, enforcement, engineering and evaluation. The main thrust of the Road Safety team's work had been in public education through a programme of countywide publicity campaigns, proactive press and public relations and public engagement projects involving Road Safety Officers in the field. These activities were in addition to planned public education work. A co-ordinated approach between public education and planned programmes of engineering work ensured that added value was gained during localised projects. We also liaised with Kent Police to identify shared priorities and plans wherever possible, and worked together in joint initiatives whenever it was appropriate to do so.

(5) The findings of recently commissioned research gave an indication of the publicity campaigns, messages and methods that had been best received by the public. Perhaps more importantly the research told what had had least effect. Combined with the crash and casualty data studies, we were better able to determine:-

- What were the main areas of concern?
Main areas of concern were dangerous and illegal speed, road user impairment, and lack of awareness.
- What was the most appropriate form of intervention?
To continue delivering a strategy of public education, in addition to existing programmes of work.
- Which sector of the community did we need to engage with?
Drivers, employers, motorcyclists.
- What should the key messages be?
Messages that addressed the main concerns, dangerous and illegal speed, road user impairment and lack of awareness.
- How did we best deliver them?

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Through a programme of public education including publicity campaigns and public engagement activities.

Appendix A of the report showed the planned publicity campaigns and public engagement projects to March 2008.

(6) It was recognised that we were capable of achieving the PSA2 project target but this was not a foregone conclusion. However, the plan set out in Appendix A was well conceived based on thorough research, adequately funded and would be energetically delivered.

(7) Achievement of the PSA2 target on 31 December 2007 did not remove the requirement to meet the national casualty reduction targets for 2010 set out by HM Government in 2000 (Tomorrow's Roads - Safer Roads for Everyone, the Government's road safety strategy and casualty reduction targets for 2010, Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000). The targets were, by 2010, and based on the average figures for 1994 to 1998, to at least achieve:-

- A 40 % reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road crashes.
- A 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured.
- A 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres driven.

(8) There was a risk that we would not be able to sustain the casualty reduction achieved between 2000 and 2007. It was important that the Road Safety team was able to maintain an adequately funded programme of public education beyond the PSA2 project, thereby reinforcing previous work and increasing the potential to meet the 2010 national casualty reduction targets. Work was underway to produce a plan to direct priorities and strategies up to 2010 and to identify appropriate funding sources.

(9) During debate Mr Bullock acknowledged the role and support of the Fire Service.

(10) The Board noted the information contained within the report and its appendix.

6. Temporary Street Furniture

(Item 7 – Report by Director, Kent Highway Services)

(1) The Traffic Management Act, which received Royal Assent in July 2004, required Highway Authorities to enable the expeditious movement of all traffic on the road network. In November 2004, the Government issued the Network Management Duty Guidance, which described how an Authority should meet the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 2004. As part of the Network Management Duty the local Highway Authority was tasked with ensuring that temporary street furniture did not create congestion or a disturbance on the public highway and that the needs of all traffic including pedestrians, paying particular attention to the visually and mobility impaired, was taken into account.

(2) In the County of Kent, the obligation rested with the Kent County Council (KCC), as Highway Authority, and the owners of any features or structures on the highway. Private sector traders had no powers to place temporary street furniture on the highway but under the Highways Act 1980, both KCC and local district/borough authorities had powers to grant licences to others to legitimise the placing of private sector features such as tables and chairs. The powers also existed to remove furniture under the same Act and the Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

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(3) KCC wished to encourage the provision of amenities on the highway where they were consistent with the protection of the public and where they would not be disruptive. The KCC was very keen to stimulate a 'café culture' to improve the town centre areas in a general move towards a vibrant 21st century environment where external 'pavement' dining using furniture placed on highway and public land could be a vital part of the life and character of the area.

(4) In order to meet the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 2004 and the associated Network Management Duties it was necessary to put a Policy into place to ensure both the effective management of temporary street furniture on the public highway and a consistent approach across the County. The Policy would be adhered to by both KCC and any local district/borough authority who, with the agreement of KCC, wished to issue licences for temporary street furniture within their administrative boundaries.

(5) The Policy would set out the processes to be considered when applying for a licence to place temporary street furniture on the public highway. It would also outline the criteria that must be considered by an applicant, the good practice that should be followed and the conditions to be adhered to by the applicant. The Policy would illustrate all pre-application considerations and lay down the necessary procedures to be followed when applying for a licence for temporary street furniture.

(6) The Board:-

- (a) supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that approval be given to the publication of the Policy for the Location and Licensing of Temporary Street Furniture on the Public Highway; and
- (b) requested clarification of the formal decision-making process (Report back after going to JTBs).

7. Results from the Tracker Survey 2006

(Item 8 – Report by Director, Kent Highway Services)

(1) Residents satisfaction surveys, to gauge public perception with the highway service had been carried out since 1987. At the Board in September 2006 approval was given to undertake an annual tracker survey that also included seeking the views of County Members and Parish/Town Councils. The results of the first of these annual surveys was presented in the report. The information would be used to help improve service delivery.

(2) A total of 1268 face to face interviews were carried out on a representative sample of Kent residents with approximately 100 interviews, reflecting the age, gender and economic status, in each of the twelve Districts. The sample size gave a +/- 2.75% accuracy for results at a County level and +/- 10% accuracy at a District level.

(3) In addition to residents views the same survey questions were asked of all County Members and Parish/Town Councils. A total of 21 County Members returned completed questionnaires (a response rate of 25%) whilst for Parish/Town Councils a total of 162 returned completed questionnaires (a response rate of 54%). This was the first time the same survey had been used for all three groups.

(4) The questionnaire comprised over 40 questions, ranging from satisfaction with the condition of roads, pavements, streetlights and local bus and train service, the most important and most in need of improvement of the services KHS provided, through to views on congestion, accessibility to local services and vulnerability when using the highway.

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(5) The key headline from the survey was the significant improvement in the public's perception of roads, pavements and streetlights. For the first time since 1987 more residents were satisfied with the condition of roads, pavements and streetlights than dissatisfied. Whilst there remained around 40% of residents dissatisfied with the condition of roads and pavements there were 45% who were satisfied, leading to the small difference, but significant improvement, from all previous surveys. The last survey undertaken in 2005 indicated over 50% dissatisfied residents with only 30% satisfied. The public view of streetlights whilst again having more people satisfied than dissatisfied had dropped back slightly from previous years with 59% satisfied compared to 27% dissatisfied in the 2006 survey.

(6) The other key headline was the significant difference in perception between residents and County Members and Parish/Town Councils. Over half of County Members were dissatisfied with the condition of roads and pavements compared to around a quarter who were satisfied. For streetlighting however almost a half were satisfied compared to nearly a third who were dissatisfied. Similarly over a half of Parish/Town Councils were dissatisfied with the condition of roads and pavements compared to around a quarter who were satisfied. The pattern was again similar for streetlights where nearly half of Parish/Town Councils were happy with streetlights compared to a quarter who were dissatisfied.

(7) There was clearly a big difference between the perceptions of residents and County Members and Parish/Town Councils and this would be an issue to explore in the coming months and review again following the next survey in November 2007.

(8) Other issues emerging from the survey were:-

- Overall 64% of residents were aware of Kent Highway Services prior to the interview. Whilst almost a quarter were aware of the single 08458 247 800 number to call about a highway problem only one in ten had needed to contact KHS to report a problem.
- Residents rated road and pavement repairs as the top two most important KHS services whilst Members felt it was road repairs and congestion, with Parish/Town Councils stating road repairs and clearing drains as the top two priorities.
- In terms of congestion 63% of residents felt they were affected by peak time congestion on a weekly basis compared to 90% of County Members and 71% of Parish/Town Councils. Interestingly 76% of residents, 52% of County Members and 74% of Parish/Town Councils stated that using a car or van was their main method of travelling to and from work.
- In the wider transport role of KHS 53% of the public felt they could access a GP surgery within 30 minutes by using public transport compared to 38% of County Members and 20% of Parish/Town Councils.

(9) The annual tracker survey provided a wide range of information to help shape and improve highway service delivery.

(10) The Board :-

- (a) noted the good progress being made in public perception of the highways service;

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(b) agreed to work closely with officers to understand the concerns of County Members and Parish/Town Councils demonstrated through the survey; and

(c) agreed to encourage Members to respond to the next survey when it was sent out in November.

8. Local Transport Plan for Kent – Budget Allocation Model and Scheme Prioritisation Methodology

(Item 9 – Report by County Transportation Manager)

(1) A detailed report on a new scheme prioritisation methodology for Transport and Safety Packages, PIPKIN, was presented to the Board in July 2006. Members accepted that a more robust methodology was required in order to ensure that future funding priorities met the County Council's key strategic objectives.

(2) A further report to the March 2007 meeting of the Board set funding priorities for the expenditure of the £7,239,000 Transport and Safety Package Programme for 2007/08. The report described the funding allocation using the Design Guide Model (DGM) as an interim measure before PIPKIN came into full effect for 2008/09.

(3) The Transport and Safety Package Programme would be formulated by May 2007. Every scheme would be given a priority ranking through PIPKIN and the information would be reported to Joint Transportation Boards during the summer of 2007.

(4) The County Council regularly received requests from members of the public for schemes which, in their view, improved the management of traffic flows, improved access to key services or improved air quality in their area. This often resulted in a scheme being designed, some of which were never built because there was insufficient funding.

(5) Local input into traffic management was encouraged and desirable. However, in order to ensure the best value for money from scarce financial resources, the County Council had devised a prioritisation model (PIPKIN) based upon the scheme's contribution to safety, congestion reduction and public transport use. The model had been formally agreed by Members.

(6) In order to ensure that all staff were able to provide a consistent message to scheme promoters, it was recommended that the following procedure should be adopted:-

If a promoter identified a scheme for inclusion in the Integrated Transport Programme (ITP), the following process could/should be followed:-

- The support of the local community should be encouraged to establish whether the scheme was widely supported as a local need.
- If an appropriate level of support was provided by the local community, the applicant should submit his scheme proposals to the Divisional Office, and if County Officers had no immediate/initial professional concerns related to the feasibility/delivery/construction of the scheme, it would be included in a Contenders List and presented to the relevant JTB for their consideration/advice/debate.
- The JTB would assist KCC in the identification of schemes, using the Contenders List. From this list, a draft ITP would be established and would be put forward for formal PIPKIN assessment.
- PIPKIN assessment was undertaken for all schemes (for all 12 Districts) and a Countywide list of schemes would be produced in priority (PIPKIN) order. The decision whether to include the applicant's scheme in the Draft County Programme would depend on

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its relative importance/position based on the countywide PIPKIN assessment and its position relative to the level of funding available for that year. PIPKIN would flag up those schemes that promoters and/or officers identified as having a deliverability risk.

- Schemes that were prioritised above the cut-off line would be identified and would form the Final Draft County Programme and would be presented to HAB for their recommendation to the Cabinet Member to approve and reported to JTB for their information.
- Once approved, the high priority schemes would be designed in detail, ready to commence construction from 1 April and other priority schemes would be designed and implemented in due course, but designed within that financial year.
- Those schemes that fell below the cut off line, and that were deemed to be either locally or politically important, could be resubmitted for assessment in the following year.

(7) The Board supported the proposal for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that the policy statement set out in paragraph (6) above be approved.

9. The Future of Interactive Speed Limit Signs

(Item 10 – Report by County Transportation Manager)

(1) Interactive speed signs were first introduced in Kent in 2000 when five signs were installed. In 2001, a further 15 signs were installed and following this the County Council developed a forward programme which ranked prospective signs in priority order based on reported injury crashes and recorded speeds. A criteria was developed and reported to Members in November 2005. Over 100 interactive speed signs had now been installed across the County. The forward programme, which was funded through the Transportation and Safety Package budget (ten signs per year), had been supplemented by additional funds from Parish Councils, Members, and developers so that over the last three years more than 20 sites per annum had been installed.

(2) The signs seemed to attract universal praise, however, with over 100 signs now operational in the county it was time to evaluate their role in reducing speed and crash levels and that more importantly the speed reduction had been maintained. Consultants (Jacobs) were therefore commissioned to carry out a study into the first 20 signs, updating a previous study which had only considered speed.

(3) The study showed that all 20 signs had reduced speed with only minor increases shown between the speed checks taken immediately after implementation and those taken some 6 years later. Moreover the average crash levels at the sites fell by over 30%. More detailed information was shown in Appendix 1 of the report. The conclusion was that the signs had proved very successful in their objective to reduce speed and injury crashes. The report indicated that the success arose from the careful site selection process undertaken at the time and used to produce the site location criteria/priority assessment process used in the production of the forward programme.

(4) With over 100 sites now implemented it was important to ensure that those that followed were as effective as the early sites and that care was taken not to undermine that success by introducing signs with little or no justification. The site location criterion remained robust and must be retained. Where it was felt that a site which clearly did not meet that specification might be justified, then a case for its implementation must be made to the Board giving a clear rationale for significantly departing from the agreed criteria.

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There was evidence to show that where signs had been erected at sites which did not meet the criteria, little or no improvement had been achieved. This could also undermine the value of the signs more generally.

(5) Interactive signs had had a very good maintenance record. However the first signs were approaching their seventh year and at some stage in the future either individual signs or all signs implemented in one year would need to be replaced. In addition advances in technology meant that the signs could do more than just flash a warning sign at passing motorists so more advanced applications could be considered. In future TSUK would undertake the procurement of the signs and associated maintenance.

(6) The current formula for the priority assessment of interactive signs considered both the number of crashes, their severity with high scores for KSI's and the rate per km past the proposed location of the sign. To this was added the difference between the recorded 85th percentile and the posted speed limit of the road. In future, where potential sites achieved a score of less than 15, or where the 85th percentile was already within 3 mph of the posted speed limit they should not be considered appropriate unless there were additional reasons such as the site being close to a school or an old people's home. In such cases a clear statement as to the objectives behind the introduction of a sign needed to be set out.

(7) Over the last few years signs had been suggested at locations where the distance between the start of the limit and sign was too short and the site location criteria could not be met. In such cases it had been suggested that the speed limit terminal signs were merely moved further away into the countryside. The extended limit would not be acceptable to Kent Police as it would not comply with the rules set out in "Circular Roads 1/2006". It would add to sign proliferation in rural areas and it would lead to drivers ignoring what they would see as inappropriate speed limits. This was not best practice and should be avoided.

(8) The introduction of interactive speed signs in the county had been shown to produce significant reductions in speed and crash levels. However it was important that further signs were installed in such a way that the benefits continued and that the work so far carried out was not undermined by the implementation of signs with no identifiable benefits. A further report giving details of a demonstration project using speed indicting devices (SID's) would be placed before members in July.

(9) The Board supported the proposals for recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that:-

- (a) the success of interactive speed signs as identified in the recent Jacobs report be noted; and
- (b) the requirement to consult the Board where it was felt that an interactive speed sign should be implemented despite not being in line with KCC policies, be agreed.