

Gravesham Joint Transportation Board

Wednesday, 16 January 2019

7.30pm

Present:

County Councillor Alan Michael Ridgers (Chair)
Cllr Lesley Boycott (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Rob Halpin
Peter Scollard
Lauren Sullivan (KCC)
Diane Marsh (KCC)
Bryan Sweetland (KCC)
Susan Lindley (Shorne Parish)

Please note: Cllr Anthony Pritchard and Cllr Brian Sangha were in attendance and were allowed to present their petitions to the Board.

Kevin Gore District Manager – Gravesham (KCC)
Carol Valentine Highways Manager, West Kent (KCC)
Nick May Parking Services Manager (GBC)
Darren Bow General Manager, Northfleet Arriva
Michael Jennings Commercial Manager, Northfleet Arriva
Ben Clarke Committee & Scrutiny Assistant (Minutes)

91. Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from Parish Cllr Roland Graves (Vigo), KCC Cllr Tan Dhesi and Cllr Leslie Hills.

92. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair stated that the response time to some of the issues raised at the Gravesham Joint Transportation meetings wasn't good enough and suggested that there should be quarterly reports. Those reports would advise on the progress of issues raised, when they would be finished, reasons for delays and detail any that couldn't be resolved.

The District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) agreed that quarterly reports could be created for the Board and then gave an update on the issues requested in the previous minutes:

- Cross Hatching outside of the Civic Centre – The task has been given to the contractor but they have advised against removing it until March due to the cold weather. Once it is warmer, the lines will be burned off and a centre line will be painted on
- Bus Lane in Clive Road/Barrack Road – An email was received from Richard Shelton which the Parking Services Manager was also copied into; it looks likely that ANPR enforcement cameras will be installed in that area to deter motorists using the bus lane

- Dering Way works – The works are all part of a section 106 agreement and KCC are waiting on the developers to respond; more information will be available on that in the future
- Street Lights near Pepperhill roundabout – The street lights were repaired at 10:36 am on 16 January 2019; there was a power fault with an external company

Referencing the cross hatchings outside the Civic Centre, the Chair added that focus should also be given to Wrotham Road and Windmill Street as the give way sign is not clear. Wrotham Road only has 'no entry' painted on the road; it needs to also have a no entry sign put up so that drivers can clearly see it as snow or slush could cover up the warning on the road.

A few Members took issue with the wording of 'Bus Gate' at Clive Road but the Parking Services Manager advised that 'Bus Gate' is the correct wording under the law and has to be named as such.

The Chair questioned why the vegetation and two trees adjacent to the building on Lion Garage roundabout hadn't been removed yet. The District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) advised that he would follow that up with the Horticultural Team at KCC.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2018 were signed by the Chair.

93. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Rob Halpin declared an interest as he is a resident of Pepperhill.

Cllr Brian Sangha declared an interest in item 6 of the report as he is a resident of Lennox Road.

94. Order of the Agenda

The Board agreed that items 7 and 8 would be taken first due to Cllr Pritchard having a pressing issue to attend to after the meeting.

95. Petition - Request for double yellow lines on The Fairway, Gravesend – petition to follow.

Cllr Pritchard addressed the Board regarding a petition to GBC/KCC to introduce yellow lines to both sides of the corner at the Fairway to prevent dangerous parking; the yellow lines that are proposed are shown in the supplementary report.

The Parking Services Manager advised that the petition comes at a very convenient time as a consultation will be going out in the near future to certain areas asking for their opinions on the need for double yellow lines. The Fairways can be added to that consultation and if the residents give strong feedback for the implementation of double yellow lines then it's likely they will be added to the road. The surrounding roads, Hillingdon Road and Dennis Road will also be added to the consultation as it is likely they will want the similar double yellow lines if they are implemented in the Fairways.

Cllr Pritchard thanked the Parking Services Manager and the Board for their time and solutions proposed.

96. Petition - Commuter Parking in Chalky Bank, Gravesend - petition to follow.

Cllr Pritchard addressed the Board regarding a petition for double yellow lines at the bottom of Chalky Bank road as well as a parking scheme in order to deter aggressive drivers, commuter parking and dropping off points for builders as outlined in the supplementary report.

The Chair explained that he had had a long chat with the Parking Services Manager about the unintended consequences that could be caused if the commuter parked vehicles were moved from the lower part of Chalky Bank to residential areas. At the moment, they are mainly parked on an empty part of the road and the parking scheme could cause disturbance for more densely populated residential areas. Another issue would be that the residents would then have to pay for a permit for their visitors/carers/builders etc; as most have dropped kerbs already they may not want to have to pay for a permit.

However, the Parking Services Manager stated that if residents really did have an appetite for a parking scheme then it could go to a consultation so that they could voice their views on the matter. Double yellow lines could be implemented at the bottom of the road but that could end up causing the unintended problem of cars moving up the road and parking over driveways or closer to resident's vehicles etc.

After a brief discussion, the Parking Services Manager agreed with Cllr Pritchard that Chalky Bank would be added to the double yellow lines consultation. If there was still an appetite for a parking scheme after that then Cllr Pritchard would create a petition asking for a parking scheme in Chalky Bank and gather as many signatures as possible before submitting it to Parking Services.

Cllr Pritchard thanked the Parking Services Manager and the Board for their time and the solutions proposed.

97. Introduction from Darren Bow, General Manager and Michael Jennings, Commercial Manager (Arriva - Northfleet) and general discussion to gauge bus issues within Gravesham - oral item.

The General Manager, Northfleet Arriva and the Commercial Manager, Northfleet Arriva were introduced to the Board and gave an oral presentation to the Board on the Arriva Bus Service in Gravesham.

The Commercial Manager, Northfleet Arriva outlined the key points Arriva would be focusing on in 2019:

- On the 27 January 2019, brand new ticket machines that allow contactless payment will be installed in all Arriva vehicles; going contactless means there will be fewer delays as customers can just tap their card on the machine and buses should be able to become more punctual
- In February, fourteen new vehicles will be brought into Gravesham for the 480/490 route so residents can expect increased bus times throughout the week. The fourteen buses will be brand new and top of range including leather seats and Wi-Fi enabled etc

- The rest of 2019 will be focused on sharpening the routes, trying to make them more efficient so that residents are happy with all routes and the buses are on time more often

The General Manager, Northfleet Arriva outlined some of the problems that Arriva face and the improvements that have been made in Gravesham:

- Without a doubt, the biggest problem the buses face when carrying out their routes is the amount of traffic; traffic is multiplied every year due to the ever increasing amount of cars on the road. Some roads become too heavily congested which makes the buses run late; other routes have had to be amended due to some roads becoming too tight for buses with the amount of traffic and parked vehicles on them
- Arriva regularly attend meetings with KCC to see where routes can be improved and try to work with them to improve the infrastructure for public transport. Talks are also being held with KCC regarding installing cameras in bus lane areas to ensure that only bus and taxis are using those lanes
- One positive change over the last year is that the FastTrack B service has seen a 12% improvement on punctuality due to a new timetable which hopefully will be rolled out to other bus services later on in the year
- A minibus service was used for some of the roads that are very tight due to traffic/parking and have a smaller regular passenger load

The Arriva Managers were questioned over the potential use of electric vehicles for their fleet; the General Manager, Northfleet Arriva advised that an electric vehicle trial was carried out in conjunction with KCC. The biggest issue with the trial was the infrastructure and what the buses would require to fully convert to an electric fleet; there wouldn't be enough charging points along the routes that are necessary. Version 1 of the electric bus could travel roughly 25 miles before needing to be fully charged however a new version 2 extended that travelling time to 70 miles. In terms of charging, it only took around 4 minutes to give the bus a quick charge. Arriva and KCC are both dedicated to make the bus fleet electric one day but before that happens the whole depot would need refurbishing to cater for electric vehicles and the infrastructure would need to be overturned to accommodate charging areas. Due to those issues it's not likely anything will change for at least 5-10 years.

Following further questions and comments from Members, the General Manager, Northfleet Arriva advised that:

- With regard to the 308 and 306 performance, an improvement test was carried out in September and underlying issues were found which have now been rectified producing a more punctual service
- The Arriva Buses do suffer a lot of vandalism with windows frequently being smashed every month; Arriva do their best to try and catch the vandals using the 7 CCTV cameras that are on every bus. However, the culprits are often young teenagers wearing hoodies and it's usually very dark making identifying them nearly impossible. However, it was advised that one member of the team has been fully assigned to the role of going through CCTV and complaints in an attempt to catch some of the perpetrators. The staff member has even visited a few schools and shown photos to teachers of students spitting on drivers in an attempt to identify who they are; in a few cases the teachers have recognised the students and they have been dealt with by the school

- With regard to Bus Drivers not knowing geographical knowledge well enough, Northfleet wasn't doing very well a year ago as they were 30 drivers short. But as of July, the Northfleet Bus fleet has been fully recruited too and the drivers are experienced. Before, when Arriva were short-staffed the drivers were spread out and didn't know all the local areas they were servicing. All of the new drivers attend a training school at the Bus Depot and then have multiple reviews upon completion of the training over a set period of time to ensure that the drivers can help customers with their route. The General Manager, Northfleet Arriva, added that the drivers have a mentor and pack to help them on their journeys; main geographic features such as the Clock tower and Civic Centre etc could be added to the packs
- To add a route to 'Go Coach' there would need to be a much higher volume of passengers; a new journey would require 2000 passengers a week but requests for additional stops can be added to existing journeys if they are warranted
- There wasn't enough passengers a week to add a bus service to the hospital so the public are advised to get a bus to Bluewater where there are services they can transfer (using a transferable ticket) to get them to the Hospital

Members raised issue with the bus route of the 481 stating that it was difficult for the bus driver to manoeuvre down Newman's Road with the heavy flow of traffic and the tight turns as well as the fact that the route going towards Bluewater and the route coming back from Bluewater meet on the road by the Cemetery causing heavy congestion.

The second issue was concerned with the lack of Bus services in the Northfleet area, specifically around near St Joseph's School, the top of Vale Road and Springhead Road area.

The Chair complained about the website as it was cumbersome and hard to understand; the Chair had found it difficult to search particular routes.

The final issue stated by a Member was that the 7:10am bus for Pepperhill always ran late and needed reviewing as it was the first bus to leave the garage and should be on time.

Addressing the four points raised, the two Arriva Managers advised that:

- 481 Bus Route – That route is particularly challenging as Arriva are limited in the vehicles they can use; a big bus has to be driven due to the very large amount of passengers that use that service. The roads are difficult as vehicles park awkwardly and the angle of the roads cause congestion however if a smaller bus size was used then residents would be impacted
- Lack of Bus Service – The 481 Bus Service was pulled from the Waterdales in November due to the roads becoming too tight for the bus to manoeuvre on safely. A lot of the roads in Northfleet are the same and cannot accommodate a bus which is why some of Northfleet has a reduced service
- Website – Arriva recognised that the website was cumbersome and it is being completely revamped later on in the year
- 7:10am Pepperhill Bus – That bus should run on time and it will be looked into to rectify the punctuality of the service

Cllr Sullivan requested the Parking Services Manager add Milroy Avenue to the consultation for double yellow lines at the top of the road due to the tight turn for the buses.

The Board thanked the two Arriva Managers for their time and responses, it was also noted that Arriva should be invited to the Board annually.

98. Lennox Road Residents Petition - petition herewith.

Cllr Sangha presented the Board with the petition from residents in Lennox Road addressing the issues of speeding vehicles and the worsening condition of the road surface. Cllr Sangha described the issues that the residents faced including increasing usage as it is the only link road between London Road and Darnley Road. He requested that KCC carry out a traffic count and a speed survey to identify how much of a problem speeding is on Lennox Road. His second request was that funds be used to fix the potholes and general road surface as the road is liable to flooding and even the speedbumps have eroded away so much that they have become ineffective.

The District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) apologised to the Board as the speed survey was meant to be taken place prior to the meeting but it was delayed; KCC made contact today and it will be programmed in the next few weeks.

The District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) happily informed Cllr Sanga that due to the influx of new money, KCC have gone onto the road and marked up all the potholes for repair; roughly 350 metres of the road surface has been marked up for patching and improving the general road surface. Hopefully that will fix the issues that the residents face as an entirely new road surface would be too expensive and actually cause speeding to increase. Once the speed survey is completed, it will give KCC more information about Lennox Road and they can identify what speeding measures could be implemented on the road.

The Highways Manager, West Kent (KCC) stated that there is a report going to the ETCC Committee and Full Cabinet at KCC reviewing budgets for the new year and one proposal is a three year allocation for Capital Spend instead of an annual one. That allows Asset Management to look ahead for longer term programming. That fund will have a local element to it and will allow roads from West Kent to bid for that money to repair the roads; more information on that proposal will be fed back to a future JTB meeting.

Cllr Sangha thanked the officers for their help with the matters and would relay the information back to the residents.

99. Issues surrounding the junction at Hall Road/Painters Ash - oral item.

The Board received a presentation from Cllr Halpin on the issues surrounding the junction at Hall Road/Painters Ash (please see supplementary).

The Chair agreed with the points raised in Cllr Halpin's presentation stating that congestion at the northern end of Painters Ash at the T junction with Hall Road had definitely increased; the bus stop on the eastern side of the road causes traffic as cars park behind it and all down either side of the road. The Chair asked that better signage be looked into to deter speeding drivers.

The District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) responded to the points made in the presentation:

- KCC utilises a Transport Planner who has visited several schools to discuss parking with the school and how to properly do it when dropping off and collecting children; that information is then passed onto parents and has proved effective in the past. It

has been agreed with the officer that she will visit the schools in that area to discuss with them the effect bad parking is having on the roads around it

- The vegetation in Hall Road will be investigated to see if it is obscuring signs and the drivers line of sight; it will be passed to the relevant department
- The Schemes team will be contacted to see if the traffic island outside the school can be made bigger for pedestrians
- At the next Gravesham JTB meeting on Wednesday, 13 March 2019 an update can be given on those three issues

The Parking Services Manager explained that nearly all the schools in the Borough faced similar problems and the Civil Enforcement Officers try to cover as many schools as possible but it's not feasible to be at every school during peak times. Generally what happens is that when a Civil Enforcement Officer is at a school during drop off/collection, the parents will park normally but the next day when the Parking Warden is at a different area, they will go back to parking illegally.

The Chair thanked Cllr Halpin for his informative presentation.

100. Gravesham Highway Works Programme (Information only) - report herewith.

The Board was presented a report updating Members on the identified schemes approved for construction in 2018/19.

Following Members questions and comments, the District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) explained that:

- The drainage scheme on Lennox Road was completed and it is now with the Roads and Footways team; they are trying to get the surfacing works on the road and around the junction completed before April 2019
- The intention is to have a County Members briefing at KCC and then it will be given to Gravesham Members after to make everyone aware of what is happening with the bus gate at Barrack Row
- The white give way markings for Valley Drive have already been costed and passed over to contractors but they are holding off all non-critical lining until the colder weather has passed
- An update on the extension of the footpath from Bellmouth for approximately 50m in the direction of Valley Drive will be sought and brought to the next Board meeting
- The PLA agreed to pay for new road surfacing in Denton Wharf, Mark Lane that had been worn down by lorry use. KCC approved the contractors and the work was completed mid last year; KCC will keep an eye on the surface but overall it is a very good success story that saved KCC £60K/70K
- Fortnightly meetings have been scheduled with the schemes teams and engineers to keep the public apprised of the work that is going on in their Borough; hopefully that will inform the public of all the changes they need to know such as the reduction of speed from 40mph to 30mph at the top of Valley Drive

101. Gravesham Winter Report (Information only) - report herewith.

Members were presented with a report outlining the arrangements that have been made between Kent County Council and Gravesham Borough Council to provide a local winter service in the event of an operational snow alert in the borough/district.

Following Members questions and comments, the District Manager – Gravesham (KCC) and the Highways Manager – West Kent (KCC) explained that:

- KCC has already checked and refilled all the salt bins in Gravesham and are in the process of handing over salt bags all the Parishes which should be completed by Friday, 18 January 2019
- KCC have a County wide plan that is approved by Cabinet; the winter service period starts on 26 October and finishes on the 26 April so that the County is prepared for any early or later winter weather. KCC are fully stocked with salt and have a large reserve amount of over 20000 tonnes that is ready to be shipped out to the roads at a moment's notice. If similar weather to the 'Beast from the East' occurs over the next few months, KCC will be ready. KCC also encourages residents to help themselves and their neighbours as communities need to work together with Councils to help keep the roads clear
- With regard to pavement clearance of snow and ice, as part of Gravesham's Local Plan there are maps available on all the areas where hand salting is carried out. The map will show where the pavements will be cleared and can be emailed over to Members to help inform their residents
- Footways are prioritised as resources are available; residents have to recognise that the footways will not be cleared the next morning and will only be cleared if there are still resources available after the main routes have been salted
- The District Managers send out twice daily updates on what footways have been cleared during heavy snow; those updates are communicated over various platforms and Members should feel free to share that information with their residents

The Chair asked that the salt bin in the Market car park be checked again as it was previously full of empty bottles; it needs all of the rubbish taken out and filled to the brim with salt to prevent further littering.

A typo on page 17 of the report was pointed out by a Member; it should read 'Gravesend' instead of 'Vigo'.

102. Well Managed Highways Report (Information only) - report herewith.

Members were presented with a report outlining KCC's strategy for implementing the new Code of Practice for highway maintenance management which becomes fully effective in October 2018.

The Chair thanked the KCC Members, Gravesham Members, Parish Councillors and all of the officers for their attendance and input during the meeting.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9:02pm.