

Gravesham Joint Transportation Board

Wednesday, 29 November 2023

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Lenny Rolles (Chair)
County Cllr Conrad Broadley (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Aaron Elliott
Karina O'Malley
Tony Rana
Jordan Meade (KCC)
Alan Ridgers (KCC)
Lauren Sullivan (KCC)
Bryan Sweetland (KCC)

Please note: Cllr Lyn Milner was also in attendance.

Nick May	Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager
Kevin Gore	Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC)
Jamie Watson	Project Manager, Active Travel Infrastructure Team
Sebastian Bures	Active Travel Infrastructure Team Leader
Ben Clarke	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

169. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Deborah Croxton.

170. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on Wednesday, 30 August 2023 were signed by the Chair.

171. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

172. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

The Chair asked Members to contact himself or Committee Section prior to a meeting if that they had an item to raise so that it could be investigated, and a response given at the meeting.

The Chair noted that the issue with double yellow lines on Cruden Road hadn't been included within Matters Arising.

The Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager advised that the works were within KCCs remit; the Chair that asked that an update be given at the next meeting.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) advised the following on the matters arising from the previous meeting:

Traffic Issues raised on Whitehill Road

Emma Tilbury should have maintained discussions with Cllr Rana outside of the meeting.

Issues Crossing Valley Drive

Work was still underway to determine the types of issues being encountered in Valley Drive; any work carried out in that area would have to wait as they would be done in line with the package of works that were required as a result of the Lower Thames Crossing. A further update could not be provided until the Planning Inspector had concluded their work on the LTC.

Improvements to Northfleet Roundabout

County Cllr Sullivan stated that she had not received an update on the matter.

Cllr Meade explained that the anchor that was pulled out of the Thames near Northfleet was at Chatham Dockyard undergoing refurbishment, but he was unsure how far that had progressed. Cllr Meade felt that it was important to move forward with the matter in order to ensure the anchor to stayed in Gravesham, as it was an important part of the Boroughs heritage.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) confirmed that KCC were happy for the anchor to be placed on a roundabout in the Borough, but it would have to be a large roundabout in order to avoid the potential for cars damaging the anchor. The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) would liaise with County Cllrs Sullivan, Broadley and Meade outside of the meeting.

Cllr Meade agreed to raise the matter with the Port of London Authority.

Perry Street – White Lines

The works had been scheduled for 15 September, but the Team arrived to a burst water main and the works had to be rescheduled; the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) was hopeful that the works would be completed before Christmas.

Whitehill School – Zebra Crossing

The West Kent Improvements Team should have taken the matter forward outside of the meeting.

Cllr Rana explained that a Zebra Crossing could not be added to Sun Lane as the pavement was not wide enough; instead, lights would be placed on approach to the blind spot that say 'slow down, children crossing'.

Valley Drive turn into Marling Way

No update was available; a further update would be provided once the Planning Inspector had concluded their work on the LTC.

Bus Gate – Barrack Row

A request was made for an officer to attend but they were on holiday, however a written response was received from the Network Manager regarding use of the bus gate by taxis and private hire vehicles. The Network Manager agreed to attend the next meeting of Gravesham JTB; by that time a new back office supplier and equipment would be in place and further details and reasoning could be shared about why taxis and private vehicle vehicles were excluded from use of the bus gate.

A discussion was had on the issue as Members concluded that it did not makes sense to exclude taxis and private hire vehicles from the bus gate as it meant that they had to go all way round the one way system lengthening journeys and increasing costs both for the driver and the customer. It was noted that other Boroughs had similar bus gates that were used by taxi and private hire vehicles.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) advised that he, County Cllr Sullivan, and the Director for Highways had visited the site and noted that excessive use of the bus gate caused traffic on Rathmore Road and Darnley Road due to Barrack Row receiving priority.

In response to a question, the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) confirmed that taxis and private hire vehicles were not allowed to use the bus gate and would receive enforcement action once the ANPR cameras were installed.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) agreed to arrange a meeting in January 2024 with the Network Manager, the Chair and the Chair and Gravesend Taxi Drivers to discuss the issue prior to the next meeting.

The Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager added that, with previous KCC decisions, they had just mirrored what the current traffic regulation order stated which was why they may have excluded those vehicles. The Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager believed that a formal consultation should take place so that all the relevant taxi and private hire associations could express their views on the matter.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) confirmed that the only way forward was to ask KCC to amend the traffic regulation order and KCC would need to conduct a consultation to do that; the Chair agreed to pursue the matter with the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) outside of the meeting.

The Chair requested that it be placed as an item on the next agenda and the officers behind the decision attend the next Gravesham JTB meeting to explain why the decision was made and how the decision could be changed to allow taxis and private hire vehicles to use the bus gate.

KCC Pothole Blitz – Southern Water

The work to fix potholes was not an issue; the issue was with utility companies digging up the road using emergency permits; emphasis had been placed, by the Cabinet Member, on cracking down on emergency permits as they also interfered with planned works on road resurfacing. There had been positive conversations with some utilities company such as Thames water and it was hopeful that those positive conversations could be replicated with all utility companies.

Traffic Calming Solutions in Sole Street

County Cllr Sweetland stated that a speed camera van was in place in September/October time on Sole Street and requested feedback to how many motorists were penalised and what speeds were seen on the road.

Secondly, it was agreed previously with Emma Tilbury that traffic recording to look at motorist speeds be implemented on Sole Street, and he also requested feedback from that exercise.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) agreed to follow up the matters and provide the requested information.

ATC Speed Checks

County Cllr Broadley had received no update since the last meeting. The speed checks had been carried out and there was discussion around reducing the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph along the top stretch of Springhead Road.

Tree Stump/Pavement Damage Hillingdon Road

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) had visited the area with KCC Tree Officers; the whole area had issues with tree roots, and they all had to be inspected individually to see what could and could not be removed. If the roots could not be removed, then the only option left was to use flexipave which cost around £8500-£11000 per tree which was well outside of the budget.

Cllr Meade informed the Board of the reports from local parents and elderly people about how dangerous the roots were as a tripping hazard; Cllr Meade agreed the cost was high for flexipave but asked that it be weighed against any claims by the public if they hurt themselves and the Conci were already aware of the area.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) explained that KC had to protect the trees and if the tree stump was dead then it would be removed, and another tree would be placed there or multiple trees if the stump was large. There had been a recent change on tree legislation which meant that KCC now had to class them as capital assets.

The Chair asked the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) to pick up the issue with Cllr Meade outside of the meeting.

174. Reports from Officers

174a. Gravesend Active Travel Scheme

The Board were presented with a consultation report on the proposed Gravesend AT2 West Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Route.

The Active Travel Infrastructure Team Leader summarised the details of the public consultation that had been undertaken on a proposed walking, wheeling and cycling route connecting the Northfleet to Gravesend.

Members of the board could recommend to:

- a) Proceed with the detailed design of the scheme taking into consideration the feedback from the latest consultation and continue to work with key stakeholders, advertise any Traffic Regulation orders (TROs) and proceed to construction provided there are no significant alterations to the advertised scheme.
- b) Abandon the scheme and move allocated funds to another Active Travel project (this may have a revenue liability for KCC and other Active Travel Projects across the county).
- c) Take forward aspects of the scheme that were supported, such as the pathway improvements for pedestrians and the one way system on Gordon Road and other aspects to be discussed at JTB. To take these recommendations to the DfT for approval.

The Board was asked to agree to 'option a' and implement the active travel scheme, described in the report, using funding that had been secured from the Department for Transport, Active Travel England.

The Board discussed the proposed scheme and Member suggested the following points:

- The residents objected to the scheme during the last consultation due to concern over loss of parking, the disruption caused to daily life by the cycling path and the large amount of bus stops which would disrupt the flow of traffic. Cyclists using footpaths could be dangerous and further research needed to be undertaken on that area to determine the dangers. Consideration should be given to 'option b' as the inconveniences to local residents outweighed the benefits for the cyclists
- Officer recommendations, outlined on page 14 of the report, advised that 'option c' was a non-starter; further information was required to inform the Board of the options available to them as taking forward certain aspects of the scheme was better than losing the funds altogether
- The proposed cycle path should be scrapped and 'Option c' should be explored further in order to retain the funds within Gravesham and use them to improve existing walkways and footpaths. It was important not to lose any parking spaces

In response to Members questions and concerns, the Active Travel Infrastructure Team Leader explained that:

- The team were able to discuss alterations to the Scheme that Members were happy with and raise them for discussion with Travel England where they could be accepted; if Travel England were not happy with the proposed amendments then the funds could be moved to different schemes in the County. Opting for 'option b' would be the Board ensuring the funds being released and going to a different Borough in Kent
- The improvements to the walking areas meant providing additional crossing points, priority junctions and ensuring a continuous walking flow. Widening footways related to the creation of shared spaces for cyclists and pedestrians; as the cycle lane proposal was being scrapped the footpaths would not be widened

The Active Travel Infrastructure Team Leader advised that he would raise the proposal with Active England and the DfT and consult with KCC Members and the stakeholders.

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) reminded Members that even if 'option c' was pursued it wouldn't mean that all footpaths would receive priority time and funding; the forward works programme and KCCs' maintenance responsibility would still be the priority. Additionally, the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) noted the discussion around damaged walkways and asked Members to email him evidence of any damaged footpaths/walkways so that they could be incorporated into the forward works programme.

As a general point, the Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager explained that the plans in the report incorporated the discussion he had with County Cllr Sullivan regarding the Hill and traffic calming there such as zebra crossings that benefitted the area.

Following further discussion, the Board agreed that 'option c' should be pursued with the proposed cycling path scrapped and the improvements in the report for walkways and footpaths progressed.

The Active Travel Infrastructure Team Leader explained that he would discuss the amendments with County Cllrs Lauren Sullivan and Conrad Broadley outside of the meeting before taking it to Travel England for approval. At the Chair's request, the report would then be brought back to a future meeting of Gravesham JTB.

The Chair thanked the KCC officers from the Active Travel Infrastructure Team for attending the meeting.

175b. Gravesham Highways Works Programme Report

The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) presented the Board with a report that updated them on the identified schemes approved for construction.

In response to Members' questions, the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) explained that:

- A crossing at Ordnance Road, Chantry Academy was being investigated by Emma Tilbury; the Chair had received an email on the matter with Mark Herne copied in. The Chair agreed to forward the email to the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC), County Cllr Meade and Cllr Milner
- The Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) had received no update from Jacksons regarding the new bus lane on Bath Street; he agreed to speak to the Project Manager, Graham Gillick, and bring a response back to the Board
- With regard to King Street, works were being completed within a budget line; so far, 30k had been spent on tarmac. The Parking & Environmental Enforcement Services Manager added that a quote had been received, that day, from the Council's supplier to remove the three bus shelters; a purchase order would be raised but there was no current date for the works to be carried out
- Various Geotech surveys had been carried out on Galley Hill Road and they were almost at a stage where a report could be brought to the Board; KCC did not own the chalk land and there was a significant amount of legal work to be completed between the various landowners. It was hoped that the survey document would be published in the next couple of weeks and allow for various methods of stabilisation to be investigated. Works could not be started in the area until it was made completely safe. The Chair asked that the Dartford & Gravesham District Manager (KCC) keep County Cllrs Sullivan and Broadley updated outside of the meeting

The Board noted the report.

175. Issues raised by Councillors with the approval of the Chair

a) Traffic Calming Solutions at Sole Street

The Chair advised that this matter had been dealt with under Matters Arising.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 20:39pm.