

TUNBRIDGE WELLS PUBLIC TRANSPORT FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 24 September 2008 at the Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

Present:

Councillor Peter Davies (Chairman) (PD)
 Councillor David Belchem (Southborough Town Council) (DB)
 Lene Beynon, Borough Engineering Officer, TWBC (LB)
 Cheryl Clark, Committee Administrator, TWBC (CC)
 Michael Coggles, Chairman, Access Group (MC)
 James Cook, KCC, Senior Transport Planner (JC)
 Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, Southeastern (MG)
 Martin Lewis, Chairman Tunbridge Wells Rail User Group (ML)
 John Goodfellow, on behalf of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum (JG)
 Daryl Jones, Economic Development & Business Liaison Officer, TWBC (DJ)
 Norman Kemp, Company Secretary, Nu-venture (NK)
 Murray Motley, Acting Route Enhancement Manager, Network Rail (MM)
 Brian o'Kane, General Manager, Arriva (BoK)
 John Spurling, Principal Planning Officer, TWBC (JS)
 Daniel Washington, Public transport Planner, KCC (DW)

Members of the Public in attendance:

None

Apologies received from:

David Candlin, TWBC
 Colin Carey, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
 Councillor Brian Ransley, TWBC
 Gary Stevenson, TWBC

**Action
By:**

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

ACCURACY

- (1) The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 May 2008 (previously circulated) were agreed as to accuracy.

MATTERS ARISING OR STILL OUTSTANDING

- (2) **Update still to follow on the access to buses at the end of the route at Barnett Woods, High Brooms.**
 PD had discussed and understood there was currently no demand. MC advised there was a disabled resident in the area and would check to ascertain whether there were any issues. Otherwise this item would be dropped from the agenda going forward.
Action: MC to check whether any issues from disabled resident

MC

- (3) **Sharing of car park charge information between TWBC and Network Rail.** MG advised that stakeholders were advised by means of their website and were happy to add any stakeholder to their mailing list.
Action: DJ mentioned that the Paddock Wood Town Partnership were looking at this issue and he would pass on their details for inclusion on the mailing list. DJ
LB also to discuss further with MG outside this meeting. LB/MG
- (4) **Southern Rail connection to Gatwick.** LB advised that TWBC had made a number of representations and encouraged anyone else to do so and to use the service as much as possible. ML confirmed also responding on the loss of the service. For information MG confirmed those bidding for the Southern Rail Connection were as follows:
- National Express
 - Stagecoach
 - Nedlloyd
 - Go Ahead Group

UPDATES FROM NETWORK RAIL

- (5) **Consultation for 2009 Timetable changes and interim services:** MG drew attention to their latest newsletter as at September 2008 (attached as an appendix to these minutes) and highlighted that the performance figures shown were the best for years. He also drew attention to their latest campaign on off peak fares and promotions. As far as timetables were concerned there were only some minor changes this December and these would not affect Kent main line services. Changes from December 2009 had been agreed with the DfT on peak services and 4 services would be re-introduced on the Hastings mainline (three starting from TW).
- (6) DJ advised that businesses in TW town centre were always interested in timetable changes as these affected their staffing and their ability to recruit. MG reiterated that any contact details should be sent to him to add to their stakeholder email list. MC asked for information on the Maidstone Branch line and DB queried changes affecting High Brooms.
Action: MG to check on detailed timetable alterations and update in this respect. Subsequent to the meeting MG confirmed that a through service between Maidstone West and Tonbridge will be introduced off peak (including Saturday and Sunday) in the Dec 2009 timetable. MG/LB
- (7) **Repainting programme at stations and taxi rank signage:** MG advised that repainting was underway at TW station. PD thought that the public were confused over who was responsible and MG confirmed this was **not** part of the National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP) but part of Southeastern's responsibility for maintenance of basic wear and tear. LB had spoken to the station manager and the new taxi rank signage should be installed within the next two weeks.

UPDATE FROM NETWORK RAIL

- (8) **National Station Improvement Programme(NSIP):** MM advised that this was a DfT funded programme to address issues and make improvements in areas such as toilets, drainage, accessibility, platforms at stations particularly those highlighted by CSI surveys. Although principally a Network Rail initiative, Sub-committees had been set up jointly with the Train Operating Company (TOC) Southeastern to avoid duplication of effort.

- (9) A report would be produced for each station following a workshop for stakeholders and this assessment process was due to start in TW on 10 November 2008 and in Paddock Wood two weeks later. **MM** advised amounts allocated for TW and Paddock Wood at £1.5m and £704k respectively and scoping of the projects against budget should be completed by December. NSIP monies were allocated in phases and actual work would commence in April 2009 (Countrol Period 4 under the scheme) when the funding became available.
- (10) **MM** clarified that the DfT strategy 'Railways for All' was a completely separate programme to NSIP and neither TW nor Paddock Wood were due to receive an allocation from this pot.
- (11) **MC** warned that central government funds would be made available to prosecute any relevant authority who breached the Disability Duty of Care. He asked for an update on the provision of a lift at TW. He also reiterated his previous suggestion relating to the type of lift installed at the St Johns' Sports Centre. **MM** advised that this was a Southeastern project and **MG** confirmed it was still live but did not have an update available. Consequently he would liaise with **LB** and update for next meeting. In the meantime he confirmed that it was not a wilful failure and thought it was probably a budgetary issue.
Action: MG to update on the installation of a lift at TW. Subsequent to the meeting he confirmed that this was due to be carried out by Southeastern during summer 2009. **MG**
- (12) **Clearing of rubbish and litter behind railings at Tunbridge Wells Station:** **MM** advised that this would be considered as part of the NSIP programme. Rather than retrieve the litter, it might be more appropriate to change the fencing or shrubbery to stop rubbish being thrown over in the first place. **MG** also advised that Network Rail did have enforcement officers but it was highly unlikely that they would be in situ when an incident occurred.
- (13) **Paddock Wood Car Park:** It had been noted at the previous meeting that there was no reason to stop work going ahead with the extension of car parking facilities. Planning permission had been granted and **LB** would liaise with **MM** and **MG** and add a note to these minutes. In answer to a query from **MC**, it was noted that the number of disabled spaces would increase in direct proportion to the overall number of spaces. **MM** mentioned that the current footbridge at Paddock Wood needed replacing but the cost if it were to include lifts at either end would be prohibitive (in the region of £1.5m).
Action: MG confirmed subsequent to the meeting that the extension of the car park was due to be completed in Spring 2009. **LB/MG**
- (14) **Siding work:** **MM** advised the deadline to resolve was 13 December 2009 but there were major problems. At the request of **JG** he outlined these as follows:
- Gradient – to ensure this was not steeper than proscribed by regulations, substantial excavation and shoring-up would be required and the cost would run into several £m.
 - Equal distance to running line required on both sides
 - Old signalling – needed simplifying and replacing but had knock on safety issues where connected to other old signalling.
- ML** asked whether line closures would be involved and **MM** confirmed up to 52 hours at weekends if excavation work was involved or even longer as the deadline approached.

QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP FOR TUNBRIDGE WELLS AND SOUTHBOROUGH

- (15) **BoK** advised that they were increasing the service on the 277 route. They were also obtaining more 'easy-access' buses including 4 for Tunbridge Wells and 4 for Maidstone and anticipated that the whole fleet would soon be 'easy-access', possibly by the end of the year. He thought that the Arriva Board were more inclined to invest as a result of the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP). **BoK** also advised of further service provision on the 281 Shopper Hopper route due to increased patronage. In answer to queries from **MC**, **BoK** confirmed that the 281 service was wholly 'easy access' although the No. 6 service was not. **MC** was concerned that when 281 buses were withdrawn for maintenance they were not replaced with 'easy access' vehicles but it was suggested that perhaps the 281 service was being confused with the 218 evening service to Tonbridge.
- (16) **NK** expressed an interest in Nu-Venture joining the Quality Bus Partnership and **JC** explained that although this was not a multiple operator partnership, KCC would be happy to consider other individual arrangements.
- (17) **ML** welcomed the enhanced service to Sherwood but failed to understand the lack of funding and lack of integrated transport resulting in the cuts to Knights Park via Longfield Road, especially with the increasing commercial, leisure and shopping facilities located there. A number of suggestions were made that might encourage greater provision of public transport for example integrated cinema and bus tickets or commercial sponsorship. In addition to the previous s106 agreement, there had been an arrangement partly funded by the Odeon Group and **DJ** had a meeting arranged with them to discuss a potential new deal. It was noted, however, that they had been the first to pull out of the previous arrangement. **BoK** advised that there was still a late service on Fridays and Saturdays but even though many young people had the Kent Freedom Pass, the service received little patronage. **PD** had thought that the Youth Councils would support an increased service and **MC** suggested that perhaps the Chairman might engage the support of Greg Clark, MP.
- (18) **JG** asked about the extent to which the bus operators benefited from the Concessionary Fares Bus Pass and whether it rewarded investment success. **BoK** advised that this was not the case at all and many operators including Arriva were launching appeals for adequate reimbursement. **JC** agreed that the scheme was inadequately funded by Central Government and both the operators and local authorities were losing out. There was apparently a marginal profit element allowed with the operator's charges but this was effectively just pennies. KCC had been reviewing the situation and it was expected that by 2011 the scheme would be managed financially at County rather than at District level and this would help to iron out some of the inequities and make it easier to ascertain correct levels of reimbursement.
- (19) **MC** advised that the Access Group would be undertaking a survey on behalf of the DfT relating to usage of bus travel. He commented on the high usage of buses by pensioners and gave his views for possible alternative Central Government strategies.

UPDATE FROM KCC

- (20) **New facilities in Hawkhurst:** **JC** confirmed that information had improved. All of the bus stops were now lettered and their whereabouts indicated on maps displayed at each one. Agreement had been reached with the Parish Council to erect new bus shelters including one outside the cinema and installation was due in a matter of weeks. **PD** wondered whether there was any news on the old bus depot site but no facts were available.

MEADOW ROAD BUS STOP

- (21) **Shelter, seating, timetables and information:** **LB** explained that there was a large lay-by in Meadow Road that was used by a number of bus services to wait between journeys. There was also a bus stop but the footpath between the lay-by and No. 1 Meadow Road and the YMCA was not wide enough to cater for a shelter and seating, without restricting through access for pedestrians. There was a low-level wall with planting behind that might accommodate a wooden slat bench. Unfortunately, however, there were existing metal spikes part way along the top of the wall and it had proved impossible to obtain permission to adapt the area.
- (22) **DJ** advised that TWBC had been negotiating with the agent to the property owner and initially there had been some progress but latterly the agents had simply ignored any communication from the Council. **JG** felt this was unacceptable behaviour by the Agent and thought that action should be taken at the highest level by the Council to contact the property owner and bypass the agent completely. He also suggested that the Council might consider compulsory purchase of the planted corner of land behind the bus stop.
- (23) **MC** suggested that the bus stop might be moved to another location for example near the Gateway (existing bus stop actually outside the Body Shop) which was more central. It was also suggested that there was much more space on the footpath on the other side of the road outside meadow road car park which might be utilised.
- (24) **PD** proposed that **DJ** ascertain the freeholder for contact purposes, **PD** would involve the Leader and the Portfolio Holder and KCC Highways should be asked to assess realigning road lanes and footpaths or look at possible alternative sites. All for update at the next meeting.

Action:

DJ to research as above on behalf of TWBC

PD to engage the Leader and Portfolio Holder

JC to refer to KCC Highways

MC also volunteered to write and provide evidence from a DDA perspective.

DJ

PD

JC

MC

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- (25) **Masterplanning:** It was agreed at the last meeting to add a standing item on this subject for the purposes of considering public transport implications at an early stage in the Masterplanning process. DJ advised that the legal aspects were still being finalised in September and a report would be submitted to Cabinet in October. ML asked whether the Southborough Hub was part of the Masterplanning exercise and DJ confirmed this was the case.
Action: Standing item to be added to next agenda. **LB**
- (26) **Terms of Reference:** **LB** advised that these were to be reviewed at the next meeting. **All**
- (27) **Link with new hospital at Pembury:** **NK** reminded that no update had been provided and requested an update be provided at next meeting. In the meantime he asked about a Transport Planner post that had been advertised and it was suggested that he contact Jenny Thompson at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust outside this meeting. MC repeated comments made at previous meetings about the importance of providing public transport to links with PCT facilities.
Action: Any further agenda items for the next meeting should be submitted to the Chairman by 09/01/08 and copied to LB. **All**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (28) **Turning Area at Paddock Wood Station for Buses:** **NK** raised this issue as there was currently no turning area. **LB** noted subsequent to the meeting that discussion would be required between all relevant parties namely the Bus and Rail providers and KCC Highways. **LB** to initiate discussions outside this meeting. **LB**
- (29) **Medway Valley Rail:** **NK** suggested that they might be invited to present at a future meeting.
Action: NK asked to supply a point of contact. **NK**
- (30) **BoK** complained that there had been serious delays caused by the roadworks at Bidborough Corner and school buses had been running up to 45 minutes late in the morning. He did not think they were being monitored properly and asked whether TWBC or KCC could do something about it.
Action: PD to raise at the next Joint Transportation Board on 13 October 2008. **PD**

NEXT MEETING

- (31) **LB** advised the next meetings were scheduled for 21 January 2009 and 10 June 2009. **All**