

Tunbridge Wells Public Transport Forum

Town Hall, Committee Room A

19 September 2007 – 6pm

Minutes

In attendance:

Cllr Peter Davies (Chairman)
Norman Kemp (Nu-Venture)
Richard Powell (TWBC)
Lene Beynon (TWBC)
Kieran Healy (Network Rail)
Mike Gibson (South Eastern Railway)
David Candlin (Head of Economic & Development, TWBC)
Martin Lewis (TW Rail Travellers Association)
Bernard Place (Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust)
Brian O'Kane (Arriva)
John Goodfellow (Town Forum)
John Spurling (TWBC)
Michael Coggles (TW Access Group)
Mike Appelbe (Hawkhurst P.C.)
Richard Phillips (Sandhurst P.C.)
Graham Rumsey (Southborough T.C.)
Sue Little (minutes)

Members of Public in attendance:

Andrew Lohmam
Maurice Knight (observing for STC)

Apologies received from:

Gary Stevenson (TWBC)
Nick Green (TWBC)
Simon Johns (Maidstone & District NHS Trust)
Eric Baldock (Autocar)

Agenda Item	Details	Action By
1.0	Introduction of New members The Chairman commenced the meeting with information on the fire procedure and introductions from all present.	
2.0	Minutes of the previous meeting - matters arising/updates on outstanding items The draft minutes were discussed and agreed. PD offered his apologies for not being able to provide any further information on the limited access available to buses at the end of the High Brooms route due to planning restrictions but agreed to add a footnote to these minutes. Following enquiries with the land owners behind the bus stops at Meadow Road, work is in progress for a legal agreement to be drawn up to allow for a bench to be placed there. There is a report going to Cabinet tomorrow reference the Sunday Car Park charges with a recommendation by Officers for a 6-month pilot scheme to charge 10am –4pm in the town centre car parks. The main concerns have been the impact on church groups and local residents.	
3.0	Network Rail Project List All stations will comply with DDA regulations by 2017 and DDA will be part of all new re-build schemes. KH was not aware of when TW and PW will have disability access at the stations agreed to investigate this and update the group at the next meeting. If it is not on the current works programme a request will be made to add them to the list. It was also	KH

noted that some borough residents would use stations outside the borough as local stations. KH agreed to share with the group, the list of DDA improvements that are currently planned, specifically for the stations that serve the borough. Notes from the Staplehurst stakeholder meeting to be made available to the group.

KH

MG

RP asked for clarification on whether the responsibilities for improvements lie with Network Rail or SE Rail?

- It was clarified that they have a landlord/tenant relationship. Car Parks being the responsibility of Network Rail and that Network Rail lead on most schemes in partnership with SE Rail and other partners but Network Rail co-ordinate the partnership schemes. Schemes are often match-funded with SE Rail, Dept. of Transport and in partnership with SEEDA. SE Rail sets car park charges.

SE Rail has a specific car park programme and this includes the expansion of the car park at PW station and should be completed by April 2008. It was agreed that it would be useful to share car park charge information between TWBC and SE Rail.

MG/RP
GS

JG expressed some disappointment that the TW Siding/stapling and the tunnel work were not carried out at the same time whilst the section was closed in August 2007 and that the siding was now set to run alongside the existing Hastings track. KH explained that the decision was now final and that the new plan was devised due to ownership problems and less properties being affected. KH was unable to clarify the number of properties that would now be affected for fear of misinforming the group. It was clarified that this work would be completed by 2009, with minimal disruption to service. KH agreed to bring a project manager to a future meeting.

KH

Although support from SEEDA is not always forthcoming for schemes in TW, as it does not form part of the Thames Gateway, it was agreed that re-generation issues could look at stations further down mainlines and this could be advantageous to TW. KH suggested lobbying Dept. of Transport for any new projects/visions for the future. It was highlighted that Uckfield has a large population that wishes to come to TW, yet they have no access to TW by rail.

JG requested that consideration be given to re-opening the TW West station but the chairman decided that this was not an agenda item and it was agreed that RP and DC would arrange a meeting with JG and KH to discuss this issue further.

RP/DC/J
G/KH

RP and DC agreed to meet with KH and Rob Cottrill (TWBC) to involve Network Rail in the future plans for Town Centre Development with private sector funding.

RP/DC

KH is happy to be contacted with any questions that may arise on current or future projects.

The group thanked KH for attending the forum and sharing Network Rail information with them.

4.0 Public Consultation of 2009 Rail Timetable

SE Rail advised the group that the new timetable is to be agreed in December 2008 with the draft being completed in July/August 2008. The timetable will take effect in 2009.

It will take into consideration:

- contractual commitments
- the increase in housing since 2002/3
- major demand (via consultation)
- what passengers are prepared to pay (subsidies reduced annually)
- statistics available from the new passenger loading devices
- draft service specification (which may have some changes if they are highlighted by new data).

Concern was expressed that the timings of the Forum meetings would not fit well with the consultation period and it was agreed that an additional interim meeting would be required in June 2008, specifically to focus on the timetable consultation.

LB

The Thames link project has been approved

TW station is one of 12 stations within the SE franchise that have been awarded the 'Safer Station' status. This status is only awarded after assessments from Police (reduction in crime), Dept. of Transport and passenger perceptions. MG is happy to invite TWBC to the certificate presentations when they happen (probably in November). RP congratulated SE Rail on this achievement.

MG

MG had no information available on when consideration for this status would be made for High Brooms or Paddock Wood.

5.0 Access to Hospitals & Medical Centres

BP thanked the group for inviting Maidstone & TW NHS Trust to the Forum and updated the group with a briefing of the planned facility:

- 512 single bedded rooms (setting a new standard/smaller than originally envisaged due to change in government policy)
- the cancer centre to remain at Maidstone
- 1200 space car park
- improvements will be made to Tonbridge Road
- separation of traffic flows inside the hospital grounds
- standing area for 3 buses (stopping place) – allowing passengers to be dropped off inside the hospital grounds close to the main entrance
- set down/pick up point for cars/patients/visitors (not for parking)
- a helipad

A Transport impact assessment has already been undertaken and the importance of public transport access has been recognised along with the need for car parking spaces and the NHS Trust are working with partners to find a balance. Demand for car parking has been reduced in line with the reduction in the hospital's capacity and the reduction in staff and some constraints set by the Borough Council.

The hospital will open in phases. Phase 1a will see 41% of the hospital open in December 2010 with the rest of the hospital buildings being completed in Phase 1b, six months later in 2011. PHASE 2 will see the decommissioning of the Kent & Sussex Hospital in 2012 and the provision of car park spaces along with the landscaping of the surrounding ground.

PD requested that the group members take this information away with them and consider any public transport issues that may arise.

ALL

MC suggested to BP that consideration be given to providing a 24-hour express circuit link with Maidstone and other hospitals/medical centres in the area.

A recent survey showed that 99% of parents would take a sick child from Maidstone to Pembury in a car and MC agreed to make the survey data available to BP.

MC

Adding extra bus services to the hospital could possibly take passengers off existing services and it would seem more appropriate to fill existing seats on existing services that currently do serve the hospital. BP will be in consultation with bus companies and KCC to discuss these issues and to work towards providing links from train stations to the hospital also. JG expressed concerns over the number of bus changes that most people would require to take public transport to the hospital and asked if the transport options were adequate and realistic? BP confirmed that planning restrictions would not allow any further parking spaces to be made available.

RP reminded the group that there was already a significant sized hospital on the site, but asked if there was a need to include the hospital in a park/ride scheme if TWBC went ahead with a scheme from North Farm. BP has not investigated this but is very keen, although the NHS Trust would be unable to lead on this project. It was agreed that if interested, the NHS Trust would make both TWBC and KCC aware of this.

It was agreed that there was a need for the bus companies, TWBC, NHS Trust and KCC to meet to discuss both the long and short-term public transport issues.

The Chairman thanked BP for attending the Forum.

6.0 Updates from James Cook (KCC)

This item was deferred to the next meeting, as JC was not in attendance.

7.0 Future Agenda items

- National Rail Telephone information Service (Not giving information on disruptions due to engineering work).
- No waiting/loading at all bus stops - keep bus stops clear (needs policing).
- Mechanisms for getting money down to bus operators for free bus travel and concessionary fares.

8.0 AOB

No further issues were discussed.

Next Meeting Date:

Wednesday 30 January 2008, at the Town Hall at 6pm

Future Dates for your diaries:

Wednesday 14 May 2008

Wednesday 24 September 2008

*A need for an interim meeting was highlighted in section 4 of these minutes. The date for the interim meeting is 25 June 2008.

Footnote from Cllr Peter Davies will be added as soon as the information is available