

Tunbridge Wells Public Transport Forum

Town Hall, Committee Room A

27 September 2006 – 7pm

In attendance:

Cllr Peter Davies (Deputy Leader of TWBC/Councillor and Portfolio Holder)
 Lene Beynon (TWBC)
 Gary Stevenson (TWBC)
 Francis Rook (Cranbrook Parish Council)
 PC Paul Crane (Kent Police)
 Martin Lewis (TW Rail Travellers Association)
 Brian King (Paddock Wood Town Council)
 Mike Gibson (South Eastern Trains)
 Ray Harding (Hawkhurst Parish Council)
 Mick Coggles (Access Group)
 Bev Hillstrom (KCC Sustainable Transport)
 David Joyner (KCC Sustainable Transport)
 Ron Berry (Brenchley & Matfield Parish Council)
 Brian O'Kane (Arriva)
 Cllr Andrew Lohmann (Southborough Town Council)
 Sue Little (minutes)

Apologies received from:

Cllr Roger Manning (KCC)
 James Cook (KCC)
 David Bond (Kent Highway Services – Mid Kent Division)
 Nick Smith – (East Sussex County Council)
 Cllr Maurice Knight (Southborough Town Council & KAPC)

Agenda Item	Details	Action Required By
1.0	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Cllr Peter Davies chaired the inaugural meeting and it was agreed that this would continue until a chairman and deputy chairman could be elected.</p> <p>The meeting commenced with introductions from all present.</p> <p>It was agreed that, where possible, all correspondence would be sent to Forum members by e-mail.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Forum would discuss strategic issues and not specific individual cases.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Forum would have a key role in engaging local stakeholders to get them to work together to think about transport as a whole.</p>	
2.0	<p>Terms of Reference</p> <p>PD issued the proposed Terms of Reference and these were discussed. The following points were noted and any amendments to the Terms of Reference will be made accordingly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Forum is specifically for 'Public Transport' issues – item g) minutes will also be sent via e-mail to group members and in large print format when requested to do so – item h) Ward Members may attend, by invitation only, when necessary – the Terms of Reference should include disability/equality issues – individuals that make a request to become members of the Forum must represent a body/group of people. <p>GS agreed to ensure that a named TWBC officer facilitates the Forum.</p>	GS

	PD agreed to issue a revised Terms of Reference and it was noted that these could be changed at any time, through agreement at the Forum by members.	PD/LB
3.0	<p>Frequency & best time for meetings</p> <p>The following points were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Forum meetings would be held three times per year with any extra interim meetings being arranged if needed – meetings would be held in the middle of the months of January, May and September, thus avoiding the summer holiday period – meetings would start at 6pm and be held at the Council offices 	
4.0	<p>Membership</p> <p>It was noted that there was not a representative present from the taxi drivers and it was suggested that an invite go out to Anthony Garnett (TWBC Licensing Manager) to attend as their representative.</p> <p>It was agreed that members of the public could attend to observe but only if notification of their attendance is received in advance of the meeting so that arrangements can be made to accommodate them. Agendas will be posted on the website in advance of meetings so that members of the public can decide if they wish to attend.</p> <p>It was agreed that if all Parish Councillors and Town Forum members were to attend our group would become too large and it was therefore agreed that only one representative from each Parish Council/Forum could attend. Minutes will be issued to the Parish Clerks to be made available to the Parish Councillors.</p> <p>It was agreed that representatives from Network Rail and the Youth Council would be invited to the meetings.</p>	<p>LB</p> <p>LB</p> <p>LB</p>
5.0	<p>School Transport Assistance</p> <p>TWBC have received some expressions of concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – if the chosen school is not deemed to be the nearest school then no assistance is available – overcrowding on scheduled school buses meaning that not all children can get on and some arrive at school very late – children 16+ yrs are not eligible for transport assistance and education maintenance allowance is means tested. Not all families can afford the Adult fares which means that they are driven. This in turn causes congestion on the roads – although all buses must comply with the accessibility legislation by 2017, this will not apply to school buses. <p>It was suggested that some half-empty school buses could transport 16+ children for very little cost.</p> <p>DJ agreed to take these points of discussion back to his colleagues at KCC and it was agreed that this would be added to the agenda for the next meeting so that a KCC representative can attend to discuss the issues further.</p> <p>Discussions are under way between bus and rail operators and KCC with a view to introduce a pilot scheme at schools in Tunbridge Wells. Free travel is proposed for 11-16 year olds from families living in the county for trips within Kent. It is hoped that this can start next year.</p>	<p>DJ</p> <p>LB</p>
6.0	<p>Future projects and improvements to services</p> <p>New Rail Initiatives</p> <p>PD requested clarification of the role of South East Trains as many members of the public find the rail operation confusing. It was noted that members of the public do not know who to contact when they have issues to report.</p>	

	<p>MG clarified that SE Railways provide the train services and the day-to-day management of the stations. Network Rail is responsible for the structural brickwork of the stations and the tracks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Department of Transport are providing improvement funding for station access - SE Trains are consulting at present with a view to spending £2.85million to improve Staplehurst station. <p>Quality Bus Partnership Arriva are meeting with local MP, Greg Clark, to discuss issues but agreed that funding is an issue.</p> <p>Overcrowding on school buses was discussed and Arriva agreed that although they worked closely with KCC for the expected number of passengers, during the initial weeks of the school year there can be some overcrowding, but this usually settles after the first few weeks. It was agreed that this would be put on a future agenda to be discussed further.</p>	PD/LB
6.1	It was agreed that agendas would be planned in advance of each meeting and any questions to be raised at meetings must be put to PD in advance of the meeting to ensure appropriate representation at a meeting for a response.	
6(a)	It was agreed that future agenda items would be identified at each meeting and recorded in the minutes. Each agenda item will remain in the minutes until it has been dealt with, providing a rolling programme of agenda items.	LB/PD
6(b)	<p>Future Agenda Item Suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation on the Community Plan - overcrowding of school buses - school transport assistance - funding for accessibility improvements at railway stations - disability access to taxis - take-over of rail franchise in April 2006 (currently the operator has strict guidelines for provision of services until December 2009 – but after this time they will be able to introduce their own agenda of timetables/services) - funding of rural transport services - Paddock Wood – future plans for the Medway railway line - 'need for' and 'use of' bus lanes - reliability of bus services – congestion/parking enforcement. 	
7.0	<p>AOB</p> <p>Suggested publications that the Forum should have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Railways for all – The Accessibility Strategy for Great Britain Railways - Rail Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 - Bus & Coach Accessibility Regulations 2000 - Network Rail Specifications – Disability - Dept of Transport Guidance on Tactile Paving Surfaces - Inclusive Mobility <p>Avenues for members of the public to make complaints were highlighted as an issue. It was agreed that initial complaints need to be directed to the individual services, but that TWBC has an Access Officer who will assist with access complaints.</p> <p>Arriva agreed that the reliability of buses in congested town centres was difficult to solve especially the significant problems at peak times on services between Tonbridge and TW. Arriva are continually working on this issue but timetable changes can confuse the public and they are working with KCC to minimise disruptions due to road works. Problems cannot be eliminated but can be alleviated. Re-routing buses is not always an option.</p>	

	<p>It was suggested that the use of Camden Road as a bus route was not good, but Arriva confirmed that they are using Camden Road to follow the route as per agreement with the fund provider of that route, but pointed out that this is currently on an experimental basis and the route will be re-assessed.</p> <p>It was noted that KCC fine utility companies that over-run on their road works and as traffic on the roads has doubled in the last 25 years it is proving difficult to tackle congestion hotspots.</p>	
8.0	<p>Next Meeting Date: Wednesday 31 January 2007, at the Town Hall at 6pm</p> <p>Future Dates for your diaries: Wednesday 16 May 2007 – 6pm Wednesday 19 September – 6pm</p>	