

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING, MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE ON WEDNESDAY 4 MAY 2016 AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor B E Read (Chairman)
Councillor K G Basson
Councillor P M Harman (ex-officio)
Councillor J A Hayes
Councillor Ms L C Howes
Councillor D J Mote
Councillor B R Parry
Councillor A S Reach

ALSO PRESENT: Graham Blew – Town Clerk

ABSENT: There were none.

635/15-16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were submitted and accepted from Councillors' Dr J M Harman (stuck in traffic), Mrs C K Openshaw (other commitments), K M Kelly (other commitments) and S J Ryan (work commitments).

Recommended: That the apologies for absence and reasons, as listed, be formally approved.

636/15-16. SUBSTITUTES.

There were none.

637/15-16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

There were none.

The Chairman gave the opportunity for the meeting to be adjourned at this point to accept questions from the public.

638/15-16. ITEMS DEEMED URGENT BY THE CHAIRMAN / MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES AND THEIR POSITION ON THE AGENDA.

The Town Clerk apologised to members and confirmed that application DA/14/679/EC had been listed in the agenda incorrectly and should in fact have been in item 7.3, Granted Decision Notices.

639/15-16. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2016.

Recommended: The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2016 were confirmed and signed.

640/15-16. REVIEW OF KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (KCC) FUNDED BUS SERVICES.

Members considered the consultation, which they had been sent on 22 March 2016, and which had a deadline for responses of 15 May 2016. Members noted that none of the services covered by the review were within the Town.

Recommended: That the item be noted.

TOWN PLANNING:

641/15-16. The below planning applications had been received and responded to by the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, due to the timescales for responses.

DA/16/00037/COU	Change of use from an Events and Exhibition Venue (Use Class D1) to a cinema and other family orientated leisure uses (Use of Class D2), restaurant facilities (Use Class A3) together with internal and external reconfiguration and associated works incorporating demolition of some existing floor space and construction of new floor space. Glow, Bluewater.
OBSERVATIONS:	No observations.

Recommended: That the comments submitted be endorsed.

642/15-16. PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL / EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION FOR MEMBERS' OBSERVATIONS.

DA/16/00610/FUL	Erection of four storey rear extension to provide 3 flats with associated parking and vehicle access onto Bean Road. 11 Cobham Terrace, Bean Road, Greenhithe.
OBSERVATIONS:	The Town Council object to the application on the following grounds : The proposal would by reason of its siting, overall bulk, design and appearance result in an overbearing impact on surrounding residential properties and would be out of character with the surrounding area. The proposal would provide inadequate parking to serve the

	needs of the development.
DA/16/00620/FUL	Provision of a rooflight in pitched kitchen roof and change the existing patio doors on rear elevation to a window of same width. 2 College Place, Greenhithe.
OBSERVATIONS:	No observations, please ensure all neighbouring properties are consulted prior to the decision of the application.

643/15-16. **GRANTED DECISION NOTICES SUBMITTED BY DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION.**

The following granted decision notices were noted.

DA/15/01771/COU	Change of use of the ground floor unit at Ingress Park 4E from Use Class A1 (retail/Class A2 professional and financial services) to Use Class D1 (clinic/health). Commercial Unit 32 Grove House, Wainwright Avenue, Greenhithe.
DA/15/01497/REM	Submission of reserved matters relating to appearance, layout, scale and landscaping pursuant to outline application DA/12/01325/OUT (granted on appeal) for the erection of 40 residential dwellings (comprising 16 x 3 bed, 13 x 4 bed, 7 x 5 bed houses and 4 x 1 bed maisonettes) and provision of public open space. Former Empire Sports Ground south of Knockhall Road, Greenhithe.
DA/16/00161/FUL	Erection of a single storey rear extension. 27 Pentstemon Drive, Swanscombe.
DA/14/679/EC	Construction of building to accommodate plant for the processing and transfer of construction, demolition and excavation wastes and commercial and industrial wastes with weighbridge and office, external processing plant, storage bays and fencing. Plot 14 and Units C1 and C3, Manor Way, Swanscombe.

DA/16/00214/FUL (tabled at meeting)	Erection of a single storey rear extension. 15 Eglinton Road, Swanscombe.
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644/15-16. **REFUSED DECISION NOTICES SUBMITTED BY DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
FOR MEMBERS' INFORMATION.**

The following refused decision notices were noted.

DA/16/00162/FUL	Conversion of rear part of garage into habitable room. 2 Park Cliff Road, Greenhithe.
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There being no further business to transact, the Meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairman)

From: Graham Blew
Sent: 24 May 2016 14:31
To: 'Samantha Eastwood' <Samantha.Eastwood@dartford.gov.uk>
Subject: Reply: Northfleet West Sub Station - SNN Consultation
Importance: High

Sam

The Town Council has no objections to the 9 names listed below.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Blew
Town Clerk

SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL

From: Samantha Eastwood [<mailto:Samantha.Eastwood@dartford.gov.uk>]
Sent: 24 May 2016 10:18
To: Andy Lloyd <Andy.Lloyd@dartford.gov.uk>; Ann Allen <Ann.Allen@dartford.gov.uk>; Chris Shippam <chris.shippam@dartford.gov.uk>; Jeremy Kite <Jeremy.Kite@dartford.gov.uk>; Keith Kelly <Keith.Kelly@dartford.gov.uk>; Pat Coleman <Pat.Coleman@dartford.gov.uk>; Patsy Thurlow <Patsy.Thurlow@dartford.gov.uk>
Cc: Graham Blew <graham.blew@swanscombeandgreenhithetowncouncil.gov.uk>; Maria Kelly <Maria.Kelly@dartford.gov.uk>; David Mote <David.Mote@dartford.gov.uk>; Keith Kelly <Keith.Kelly@dartford.gov.uk>; Kerry Dempsey <Kerry.Dempsey@dartford.gov.uk>
Subject: Northfleet West Sub Station - SNN Consultation

Hello,

I am consulting on names for a new development in the Borough.

This is the first phase of the development of the Northfleet West Sub-station that falls under Greenhithe Ward, Swanscombe & Greenhithe Parish and is on the Swanscombe Ward boundary. There was not much history on the site itself to provide any names so I have taken them from the Suitable Names list based on the Parish links.

This phase consists of the first part of the spine road linking the development along with eight other roads, giving a total of nine names needed.

Name	Notes
Ackers	Stanley Ackers (1909-1988) was a chemist who opened his original shop in Milton Street, Swanscombe in 1936 where he helped preserve a fragment of the Swanscombe skull that was discovered in the nearby Barnfield Pit (now Swanscombe Heritage Park). A later branch of Ackers' chemist business was opened in Church Road, Swanscombe and that business is still going today as Ackers' Chemists. In October 1974 he was awarded the Meritorious Service Certificate with bar after he saved a 15 year old girl's life in Gravesend where he happened to witness a car accident.
Candy	Rev. Thomas Candy (Rector St Peter St Paul 1868-1888) organised a pro-cement march to stop the cement works being closed by court action. 5000 people from Swanscombe & surrounding areas took part in the rally in 1874 and the case was dropped. He also fundraised for the repair of the church tower which was destroyed by fire.
Ekman	Carl Ekman was a Swedish chemical engineer who opened the Ekman Pulp & Paper Mill, Northfleet (within Swanscombe Ward boundaries) in 1886. He went on to help establish a number of other mills worldwide.
Frost	James Frost began the Swanscombe Cement Works in 1825. The family still have links to the area as the local undertakers
Glover	Mr A Glover was the manager of the Swanscombe Cement Works during the 1870s and part of the committee who founded the Swanscombe National School (now Manor Road Primary).
Hildefirth	St Hildefirth's (6 th century bishop and writer) bone relic was kept at St Peter St Paul Church and allegedly was used to cure insanity & depression. Many pilgrims visited the shrine on the way to Canterbury
Owen	FC Owen was the first Vicar of All Saints Church, Swanscombe in 1894.
Stopes	Marie Stopes, the pioneer in family planning, lived in Swanscombe during her childhood in the Mansion House on Swanscombe Street. Her father, Henry, had a keen interest in prehistoric archaeology and spent time with Marie gathering archaeological specimens from Swanscombe Woods. Henry Stopes died in 1902 is buried in Swanscombe.
Wilson	Sir Erasmus Wilson, who was a great skin surgeon and renowned for bringing Cleopatra's Needle to London, lived in the area as a child and was taught by a local Rector. In 1873, he donated £2000 to St Peter St Paul Church towards having the tower restored.

If you have any comments on the names, please let me know by Monday June 6th at the latest.

Thank you
SAM

Address Management & GIS Officer, Property Information, Dartford Borough Council

Graham Blew

From: Graham Blew
Sent: 21 April 2016 13:36
To: Cllr Alan S Reach; Cllr Bryan E Read ; Cllr Bryan R Parry; Cllr Cheryl K Openshaw; Cllr David J Mote ; Cllr Dr Josephine M Harman ; Cllr John A Hayes; Cllr Keith M Kelly ; Cllr Kevin G Basson ; Cllr Laurie D McFadden; Cllr Lesley C Howes; Cllr Lorna M Cross ; Cllr Maria B Kelly; Cllr Peter M Harman ; Cllr Richard J Lees; Cllr Simon J Ryan ; Cllr Susan P Butterfill
Subject: Presentations from the recent Special Joint Transportation Board meeting 12 April 2016
Attachments: Revised Joint KCC-HE mark II presentation Dartford JTB.pdf; FINAL presentation on severe_weather_closures_at_Dartford_for_120416_JTB.pptx

TO ALL MEMBERS

Attached are copies of the 2 presentations received by the DBC Special JTB on 12 April 2016. As you will see from the presentations, they focused principally on the M25/A282 corridor, its junctions and its immediate environs - these being the key cause for congestion in the local network but also looked at some wider issues, especially around Bob Dunn Way and Princes Road. When the minutes of the meeting are published they will provide further information and I will ensure these are included on a future Planning, Major Developments, Transportation & the Environment Committee agenda.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Blew
Town Clerk

SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL
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www.swanscombeandgreenhithetc.kentparishes.gov.uk/

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DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting of the Joint Transportation Board held on Tuesday 12 April 2016 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor K M Kelly (Chairman)

Mrs. A Allen MBE
Mr. P Harmen
Mr. J Kite MBE
Mr. T A Maddison
Mr. J Ozog

Councillor J A Hayes
Councillor R Lees
Councillor Mrs. J A Ozog
Councillor C J Shippam
Councillor R J Wells

ALSO PRESENT Lewis Boudville, Sheri Green, Tanis Smith, (all DBC) Andrew Westwood, (KCC), Scott Wilson, Amelia Yeodal (Highways England), David Cook, Ian Kennard (Connect Plus M25)

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor E J Lampkin (Substitute Cllr. C J Shippam) Cllr. Mrs D Page and Mrs P Cole.

The Chairman welcomed all Board and other Members present and thanked them for attending the special meeting of the Board to discuss the continuing issue of traffic congestion in Dartford.

The Chairman also extended a warm welcome to guests and Officers including: Andrew Westwood, KCC Transport Manager; Amelia Yeodal, Highways England M25 Network Performance Manager; Scott Wilson Highways England Communications Officer; Ian Kennard, Connect Plus M25 Route Performance Manager; David Cook Connect Plus Operations & Maintenance Manager Dartford; Supt. Ian Hall and Inspector Gary Woodward from Kent Police.

Attending Officers included Sheri Green SD (ES), Tania Smith Infrastructure Delivery Officer (IDO) and the Transport Services Manager Lewis Boudville.

The Chairman expressed his gratitude to Member Services for organising proceedings in the unexpected absence of the Clerk to the Board.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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57. TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN DARTFORD

The Chairman advised that Members would receive an initial presentation from Connect Plus, the operator for the Dartford Crossing on their decision to close the QEII Bridge on 8 February 2016 due to high winds followed by a Q&A session. Kent County Council and Highways England would then give a further separate presentation entitled Dartford Local Network Improvements, followed by a separate Q&A session.

(i) Dartford Crossing: QEII Bridge closure 8th February 2016

David Cook, Dartford Operations & Maintenance Manager for Connect Plus, the operator for the Dartford Crossing, covered the following major points in his presentation to Members:

- The QEII Bridge is an exposed structure with a roadway height of some 60m. In the event of high winds in excess of 60mph (crosswinds) or 70mph (headwinds) Connect Plus as the Bridge operator closes the structure for the safety of road users in accordance with a published protocol;
- Connect Plus made their decision to implement the Protocol on 8 February and close the QEII Bridge based on forecast data from the Met Office and actual wind speeds and direction as measured on the Bridge in accordance with the published terms of the protocol;
- The Protocol for strong winds involved 3 stages: Stage 1 an advisory speed limit of 30mph was issued based on 50mph crosswinds and 60mph headwinds; Stage 2 involved closing 2 of the 4 lanes when winds reached 55mph and 65mph for cross and head winds respectively; Stage 3 – full closure implemented from on-site monitoring of 60mph and 70mph for cross and head winds respectively combined with Met Office forecasting;
- In the event of full closure of the QEII Bridge alternative traffic arrangements are implemented: Southbound traffic is diverted through the East tunnel and Northbound traffic continues to use the West tunnel to ensure traffic can continue to move safely albeit at a reduced capacity;
- Highways England informs road users when the QEII Bridge is closed using VMS signing covering the South East region, informing the media and travel media with updates on Twitter advising road users to plan their journeys around the Bridge closure and allow extra travel time;
- Following closure of the Bridge Connect Plus/Highways England hold an internal de-brief, plus separate de-briefs with Kent and Essex Police;
- Future measures being undertaken by Connect Plus (as operator) was a review of the closure forecast modelling with the Met Office, initiatives to improve the deployment and removal of QEII Bridge procedures and the improvement of customer communication.

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Members were then taken through the specific sequence and timing of the operational actions undertaken by Connect Plus management and staff on 8 February leading up to the final closure of the QEII Bridge.

The Chairman thanked Connect Plus and Highways England representatives for a comprehensive presentation. He acknowledged the need for a reasonable and proper traffic management process to be in place in the event of extreme weather conditions affecting the Dartford Crossing and the need to consider closing the QEII Bridge when circumstances dictated. However, he expressed his concern over certain aspects of the events of 8 February 2016 and the time taken by Connect Plus and Highways England to resume 'normal' services at the Dartford Crossing the following day, 9 February. In particular he sought details for traffic queue lengths on the 8th from Junction 4/5 on the M25 in Kent and from Junction 28 of the M25 to the Crossing on the Essex side. The Chairman also asked when full service was resumed at the Crossing on 9 February 2016.

The Connect Plus (CP) Operations & Maintenance Manager conceded that as the Crossing operator he did not have precise details for the length of the 'tail-back' queues from the Bridge on 8 February. However he was able to confirm for Members that a full service was restored at the Crossing by the early hours of Tuesday 9 February 2016.

The Chairman next addressed the question of measures to deal with over-height lorries [in excess of 4.8 metres] at the Crossing. In particular, when southbound traffic is diverted through the East tunnel when the Bridge is closed and northbound traffic is forced to use the West tunnel only.

The CP Manager advised that in such circumstances; when conditions deteriorated and the QEII Bridge was likely to be closed; traffic safety systems were deployed at the Crossing to identify and extract over-height lorries from the queues and advise their drivers to seek alternative routes. In addition, traffic advisory measures were increased by Highways England on the M25, M20 and M2 via VMS (Variable Message Signs) media and Twitter feeds to deter traffic approaching Dartford and Thurrock from using the Crossing and to seek alternative routes. The response from lorries and other traffic to these strategies had been perceived as positive and the weight of traffic had gradually decreased during the day on 8 February.

In answer to further questioning from the Chairman, the CP Manager was unable to confirm the number of lorries that had been forced to queue on 8 February and conceded that, once lorries had become gridlocked in traffic on the way to the Dartford Crossing from Kent or Essex; there was little if anything to be done to solve or alleviate their situation.

The Leader of the Council, present as a Kent County Council Member, asked what adverse weather conditions would trigger the closure of the QEII Bridge e.g. ice fog etc. and what measures were in place to combat individuals intent on self-harm or terrorist incidents/attacks.

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The CP Manager advised that the QEII Bridge was covered by 3 (three) Incident Support Units (ISU) on a continuous 24/7 basis. In conjunction with Kent County Council (KCC) and Kent Police, an ICU team were able to secure and clear the Bridge within 90 minutes.

In response to separate specific questions from Dartford Members the CP Manager advised that:

- In the event of adverse weather conditions abating for a period (as was the case between 11.30 to 12.30 on 8 February); a balanced decision had to be taken whether to reopen the Bridge based on the intermediate Met Office forecast, allied to the 90 minutes required to make the Bridge operational again. On 8 February by the time the Bridge would have been made operational [13:00] the next forecast adverse weather front would have already arrived 30 minutes previously [12:30]. There was therefore no point in re-opening the Bridge only to close it again 60 minutes later. He added that KCC were examining the case for the use of improved technology to better monitor the ebbs and flows of an adverse weather situation as it unfolded;
- Diverting Dartford Crossing traffic to the Blackwall Tunnel was not an option, given the traffic flow considerations at that smaller site and the likelihood of it being overwhelmed. It was not in any case the policy of KCC or Highways England to give drivers specific advice in such circumstances. The KCC de-briefing exercise which followed all incidents assessed the measures that had been taken by partner Agencies to seek improvements wherever possible including better on-line data being made to the public.

The Chairman expressed particular concern over the lack of information, data and options given to road users and the public on 8 February and the knock-on effect closure of the Bridge had had for both Dartford and Thurrock residents. He asked what collaboration had taken place between the principal Agencies and Kent Police on 8 February.

The Connect Plus M25 Route Performance Manager, advised that this aspect of events from 8 February would be covered in detail in the second presentation but confirmed that a full de-brief had taken place with all Agencies and both Thurrock and Dartford Council Officers following the events of 8 February..

The Chairman next addressed the question of Kent Police involvement on 8 February, in particular, the deployment of police officers.

Superintendent Ian Hall, Kent Police Operational Support Group, advised Members of the limited number of police officers at his disposal on a Kent-wide basis for deployment to major traffic incidents. That deployment of police officers to major incidents of traffic congestion as occurred on 8 February was

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only sanctioned if the situation was assessed as life threatening to motorists. This had not been the case on 8 February and no Kent police officers were deployed to the Dartford Crossing and surrounding areas on that day.

Kent Police and all partner Agencies recognised the need for better technical resources to educate drivers regarding the need to stick to speed limits and not constantly change lanes during periods of extended congestion. Work was being done with the major road haulage organisations to educate their drivers regarding behaviour in times of congestion and the need to observe advance warnings of the need to seek alternative routes at the earliest opportunity. With regard to individuals on the Bridge superstructure whose intentions were uncertain, each incident was assessed on an individual basis regarding risk, harm to the individual and/or others and threat presented to other Bridge users in general. In the event of traffic to be stationary for over 8 (eight) hours in adverse weather conditions e.g. children de-hydrating in hot weather; consideration would be given to the deployment of Kent Police officers on humanitarian grounds.

The Leader of the Council put forward the case for Dartford to be treated as an exceptional case in national terms, on the evidence of the unprecedented traffic congestion endured by the Borough's residents over the previous 10 years. He suggested that exceptional solutions were needed to solve the continuous traffic congestion issues affecting residents of the Borough on a daily basis. He judged that annual income generated by the Dartford Crossing operation amounted to in excess of £100M per annum. He proposed that a fraction of that income could be used to financing 2 Police Officers dedicated to solving and alleviating Dartford's continuing traffic congestion issues. He gave the example of a similar such dedicated deployment of Highways Officers to the Bluewater shopping complex over the Christmas festive season each year.

The Traffic Manager for KCC Transport informed Members that KCC Highways Officers had no enforcement powers under existing legislation to re-direct traffic or take any other direct action in relation to motorists. He advised that the solution to traffic congestion lay in better driver education and the increased use of enhanced technology. He re-iterated the point that Police Officer deployment would only be considered in the event of extreme threat to motorists and the public.

The Chairman sought a timeframe for the implementation of the enhanced technology to educate drivers and whether new legislation was envisaged for Highway's Officers to receive enhanced powers.

Superintendent Hall was unable to comment on the likelihood of new legislation in the current Parliament. Educating drivers that used the strategic network of major roads in the Dartford area, the M25, A2, M2 and the M20 and deployment of technology e.g. VMS (Vehicle Messaging Signage) dependent on central government funding which was constrained in the current climate. He noted that all revenues from the Dartford Crossing operation accrued directly to the Treasury not to the County or Borough

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- Highways England to invest in a review of signal timings to optimise the efficiency of the roundabout at Junction 2;
- Improve driver behaviour by updating white line markings and signalling around the Junction;
- Surveys of the Roundabout revealed that large numbers of vehicles were red light jumping and enforcement cameras were proposed to deter such behaviour.

Future Opportunities

The presentation concluded with some suggestions for future opportunities to take action, and KCC/Highways England representatives agreed to keep Members informed of any new proposals.

The Chairman thanked KCC and Highways England for their joint presentation and invited Council Officers to comment on what was proposed over the forthcoming 12 months to improve the local Dartford transport network.

The Infrastructure Delivery Officer advised that Dartford Officers had been involved in the proposals to suggest future opportunities for actions to improve the Dartford local transport network. Some proposals held particular sensitivities for Dartford residents and Members would wish to give them careful consideration. Any proposals that were implemented in the future would need to be carefully monitored by KCC and Highways England to ensure they produced discernible benefits for Dartford residents.

The Chairman led the subsequent Member debate on the joint KCC / Highways England presentation. He welcomed the new variable messaging proposals to better inform motorists, but cautioned against re-routing all M25 traffic through Dartford Town Centre during periods of difficulty at the Crossing. In this respect he welcomed the proposals to measure journey times in the Town Centre and Dartford as a whole. He welcomed the measures to identify over height lorries before such vehicles reached Junction 1a and any measures to reduce lorry traffic on Bob Dunn Way and Crossways given the impact of that traffic on congestion in Dartford as a whole. The work to improve the use of Yellow Box Junctions to better regulate and improve traffic flow was also welcome.

The KCC Traffic Manager advised that Dartford was being prioritised by KCC and Highways England and would be the first Borough to benefit from the Collaborative Traffic Management System being deployed by the County and the Agency in a pilot scheme. New operational protocols between KCC and Highways England would enable greater joined-up working with a series of traffic gateways employed to identify evolving traffic issues from a greater distance at Junctions 2, 1b and 1a and enable effect preventative action to be taken as soon as possible.

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The Leader of the Council repeated his assertion that Dartford was unique nationally in suffering the impact of overspill from a major road network (M25) and a strategic road installation at the Dartford Crossing. He noted in particular, the high monthly statistics for lorries triggering the height detection sensors, including the number of repeat offenders. He asked what penalties were available to Highway Agencies to fine persistent drivers and whether repeat offenders were in fact breaking the law. He also proposed penalties for 'rat runners' from Junction 2 joining 1b and the implementation of a 'Serious Congestion' phase for Junction 2, by banking over height lorries in a park before they reached the actual Crossing; rather than stopping lorries on a piece-meal and extracting them from the queues at the Crossing.

Chief Superintendent Hall advised Members that lorries involved in rat running from Junction 2 to 1b had to have an impact on road safety, before Kent Police could take action. However, lorries who persistently triggered the over height sensors were monitored by Kent Police's Commercial Vehicles Unit. Repeat offenders were subject to a regime of graduated fines of up to £100 plus 3 penalty points on their licence. Fines could also be issued at the Crossing by the operator Connect Plus. In the absence of appropriate legislation, offending lorry drivers could only be advised to seek alternative routes at times of Tunnel closure and congestion, avoiding Dartford and the Crossing; drivers could not be instructed to do so. Kent Police had formed a Task Force with representatives from the Road Haulage Associations to agree advice and best practice measures for relaying to their members. Penalty clauses for delayed delivery were standard to most haulage contracts and served as a further carrot to contractors.

Members were advised that over height lorries were presently extracted from the lanes at the Crossing into holding bays and then escorted through the West Tunnel in 14 vehicle convoys, with resultant delays to other traffic. It was not possible to institute a rolling block operation in Lane 4 for over height lorries within the Dartford Crossing approach because of the low speed restrictions. A traffic light system would have to be installed at the Tunnel entrance before such a scheme could be considered; but it held attractions in terms of freeing up time in the West Tunnel.

In response to specific questions from Members; KCC officers explained that an extended Yellow Box Junction preceded by a traffic light on the slip road at Junction 2 would enhance the flow of the cross traffic from Princes Road going east and west. The monitoring of journey times within the Town Centre, Dartford and the Parishes as far as Junction 3; was required to monitor and adjust real-time traffic signal settings. Junction 3 was being reviewed including the roundabout and the fact that the local route around Wilmington and Sutton at Hone & Hawley Parishes was currently advertised as a Satnav option when other Dartford routes were congested. Officers accepted the need for KCC and Highways England to look at the impact of overspill traffic in holistic terms on Dartford as whole not just individual Junctions. The Chairman's suggestion for VMS signage between Junctions 5 to 8 of the M25 in addition to Bob Dunn Way was also acknowledged by Officers.

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Members were advised that all revenues from Dartford Crossing tolls accrued directly to central government. No toll revenue was retained or made available to Highways England or KCC as a dedicated funding stream to address ongoing Dartford local transport network issues. Dartford's MP had lobbied in the House of Commons for Dartford to be made a 'special case' and to receive Dartford Crossing revenue directly to finance solutions to local traffic issues. The Leader of the Council had also written to the Secretary of State for Transport with a similar request with no positive outcome to date.

In the absence of dedicated central government funding for the Dartford local transport network; the financing of VMS and lineage was borne by KCC as part of its overall annual running costs and Highways England made money available from its central government funding grant to finance assessments and update Junctions, roundabouts and measures to address over height vehicles. Within these fiscal constraints KCC and Highways England advocated low cost / high impact solutions in conjunction with Kent and Essex Police Forces to address continuing difficulties in Dartford's traffic network. The assessment of Junctions 1 and 2 was ongoing, expanded VMS installation was predicted to take 2 months, lane painting and traffic signalling was also estimated to take a further 2 months. Junction 2 signalling was being revitalised but Junction 1 b measures were more complex. The Tunnel was also being upgraded on a continuous basis. Further suggestions from Members were welcome.

The Member responsible for liaison with Dartford's Town and Parish Council's advised that Parish Members and residents were particularly concerned with the broader Dartford road network and its impact on their local quality of life. Specific concerns were:

- The impact of the A282 ON Bluewater;
- Congestion at Junctions 1a, 1b, 2 and 3 and the backflow of traffic impacting on the Parishes ;
- Crossways and the A2 corridor congestion;
- Traffic management at the Dartford Tunnel Crossing
- Congestion at the Bean Interchange and the impact on Bluewater;
- The need for broader correlated traffic management of the A2, M2 and the M25

Members were advised that Highways England were undertaking a specific assessment of the Bean Junction and its relationship within the surrounding Dartford road network and looking to constantly update its Smart Communications operation to supply meaningful information to motorists in 'real time' with good choices for viable alternative routes using in-car technology rather than simply shifting traffic problems to an adjacent area and authority.

Initial discussion undertaken by Members of the proposals in the joint KCC / Highways England presentation that required more local consideration were inconclusive. Members identified both advantages and disadvantages to

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solutions proposed for Dartford sensitive issues at Pilgrim's Way, the Blue Star Roundabout and Princes Road. It was proposed that a JTB Working Group be convened to give the mooted proposals further consideration.

The Chairman thanked KCC and Highways England Officers for their presentations and Council Officers for attending and invited them to return to JTB in 6 months' time to update Members on the progress achieved, including the outcomes of any monitoring of new traffic measures that had been instituted in the interim period.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

CHAIRMAN

- (a) FIELD
- (b) FIELD_TITLE

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