

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAIDSTONE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2023

Attendees:

Committee Members:	Councillor Claudine Russell (Chairman) and Councillors Ash, Cannon, Chittenden, Clark, Cooke, Cooper, English, Hastie, Knatchbull, Parfitt-Reid, Passmore, T Sams, Webb and J Wilkinson
Visiting Members:	Councillor Cleator
Third Party Attendee:	Councillor Neil Baker, Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coulling, Holmes, Khadka and Prendergast.

19. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor English was present as Substitute Member for Councillor Khadka.

20. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

21. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Cleator was present as a Visiting Member for Item 13 – Maidstone Integrated Transport Package and Item 14 – King Street – Moving Traffic Enforcement Update.

22. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

Note: Councillor Hastie arrived at 6:32 p.m.

23. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

The following Councillors stated that had been lobbied on Item 13 – Maidstone Integrated Transport Package.

- Councillor Carter
- Councillor Clark
- Councillor Hastie

- Councillor Parfitt-Reid
- Councillor Russell
- Councillor Sams
- Councillor Wilkinson

Note: Councillor Cannon arrived at 6:34 p.m.

24. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

25. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 AUGUST 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

26. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

27. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were four questions from Local Residents.

1. Question from Mr Gordon King to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board:

In the absence of the questioner, the Chairman asked the question on their behalf.

'Do KCC have any plans to improve the Plains Avenue/ Loose Road junction as when there is heavy congestion on the Loose Road both south bound to Loose and north bound towards Maidstone it is very difficult to safely exit Plains Avenue as you have to cross three lanes of traffic to get into the fourth south bound lane to head towards Maidstone and your view of north bound vehicles aiming to enter Park Way is blocked by stationary south bound traffic.'

The Chairman responded to the question.

2. Question from Mr Simon Moore to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board:

In the absence of the questioner, the Chairman asked the question on their behalf.

'It is with a great level of concern, frustration, amusement, anger and inability to comprehend, the ever continuing and growing use of the High Street, King Street and Pudding Lane by cars and motorcycles, when signage clearly states that these are pedestrian zones. I walk into town frequently and have to increasingly avoid vehicles when I cross these roads.'

There is no deterrent and no police presence to stop and fine the drivers who continue to repeatedly flaunt the law and pay scant regard to the erected signage

at the entrance to each road. I can not remember how long this restriction has been in situ but certainly a very long time.

I have spoken with civil enforcement officers, who have said that they can not do anything within their powers, only stationary vehicles, and that the police only tend to monitor the abuse of this prohibited driving area on a Friday and Saturday evening. Adding, people use it as a cut through / rat run to avoid the traffic lights and one way system.

It is therefore quite basically a farce having the signage and restrictions in place if drivers are going to simply ignore them, in knowing that there is to be no penalty enforced.

How long is it therefore going to take KCC to get round to making a decision to install ANPR cameras and so automatically fine these drivers who abuse these restrictions and enter the pedestrian zones. It has been implemented and put to good use in other Kent towns so why not Maidstone.'

The Chairman responded to the question.

3. Question from Mr Anthony Pearson to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board:

'I have read the statement that the closure of Cranborne Avenue has resulted in a "small" increase in traffic on Plains Avenue.

I would like to know how this has been ascertained because as a resident of Plains Avenue I have noticed a substantial increase in traffic with long queues of vehicles trying to exit Plains Avenue onto Loose Road. I am unaware of any traffic survey being carried out in Plains Avenue since the closure of Cranborne Avenue.'

The Chairman responded to the question.

Mr Anthony Pearson asked the following supplementary question:

'The yellow box only covers only half of the Loose Road, the half nearest to Plains Avenue, if that half was extended across the whole width of the road that would make things safer, because trying to turn right you have the yellow box to protect you on one half of the road and zero protection from traffic coming from the left over the other half of the road.

The constant flow of traffic during busy periods or most of the day makes it very difficult to access and egress from our driveway and has resulted in getting on stuck on Plains Avenue to try and find a gap in the traffic, reverse into our driveway and suffering abuse from drivers trying to get up Plains Avenue seeing us as the obstruction that we are trying to get up our driveway which has been distressing for my wife on some occasions.

Are there any plans to extend the yellow box across the whole width of the Loose Road to improve the safety of the Loose Road junction?'

The Chairman stated that a written response to the supplementary question would be provided at a later date.

4. Question from Mr Andrew Hammersley to the Chairman of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board

In the absence of the questioner, the Chairman asked the question on their behalf.

'I have read the statement that the closure of Cranborne Avenue has resulted in a "small" increase in traffic on Plains Avenue.

'I would like to know how this has been ascertained because as a resident of Plains Avenue I have noticed a substantial increase in traffic with long queues of vehicles trying to exit Plains Avenue onto Loose Road. I am unaware of any traffic survey being carried out in Plains Avenue since the closure of Cranborne Avenue.'

The Chairman responded to the question.

To listen to the answers to these questions, please follow this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2y5jRyyC0sQ>

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

29. MAIDSTONE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman stated that a briefing note on the future of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board had been requested for the next meeting, following the Kent County Council Scrutiny Committee recommendation to dissolve the Board.

RESOLVED: That the Future of the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board be added to the Board's Work Programme for the February 2024 meeting.

30. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman intended to take Item 14 – King Street – Moving Traffic Enforcement Update and Item 15 – Kent County Council approach to Electric Vehicle Charging, prior to Item 13 – Maidstone Integrated Transport Package, to allow the Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and relevant Officer to attend for that item.

31. KING STREET - MOVING TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the item, which provided a summary of Kent County Council's Moving Traffic Enforcement Project.

The Board expressed support for the Enforcement Project and emphasised that the current level of enforcement on King Street was not consistent. In response to a question on which authority was responsible for enforcing the objectives within point 2.5 of the report, the Major Projects Team Project Manager stated that it was likely Kent Police, but confirmation would be given outside of the meeting.

A report on the implementation of the five ANPR cameras was requested for the next meeting, to ensure continued monitoring of the project.

RESOLVED: That

1. The report be noted; and
2. A report on the implementation of the five ANPR cameras installed in Maidstone be put on the Work Programme for the February 2024 Board Meeting.

32. **KENT COUNTY COUNCIL APPROACH TO ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING**

The Chairman introduced the item and stated that it indicated the number of electric vehicle chargers in Kent and outlined any developments that had occurred since Kent County Council's (KCC) allocation of local electric vehicle infrastructure funding.

The Board was informed that the Council's Head of Environmental Services and Public Realm met quarterly with the relevant KCC officers to support the provision of electric vehicle charging.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

33. **MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PACKAGE**

The Major Projects Team Project Manager introduced the report and outlined the scheme updates as contained within the report:

- Work continued on the A249 Bearsted Road Major Infrastructure Project and that the crematorium drainage works should be completed by Christmas. A contractor for the Wider Programme was being finalised, with a focus on improvement works on minor roads until post-Christmas 2023. The Council had allocated CIL funding to improve M20 Junction 7, with KCC appointing a contractor for the programme, with construction on that section of the programme expected following the completion of work on Bearsted Road and the M2 Junction 5 to improve road space;
- The procurement exercise for the A20 Coldharbour Round/A20 London Road – Hall Road scheme was concluding, with the contract award expected in early November and the project expected to commence in January 2024.
- The A229 Loose Road junction with Sheals Crescent was paused while the impact of the works at Armstrong Road were assessed.
- The Cripple Street/Boughton Lane had been cancelled due to objections concerning the loss of green space in front of nearby shops. Alternative options had been explored but no option was able to improve the capacity of the junction.
- Work on the A20 Ashford Road junction with Willington Street would be programmed to commence after the completion of the A249 Bearsted Road project to minimise road space of the network.

- The proposed works on the A26 Tonbridge Road with Fountain Lane were still being reviewed with a consultant and was nearing completion. A meeting would be arranged with local Councillors to discuss scheme updates.
- Work on the A274 Sutton Road junction with Willington Street was not being progressed to allow schemes with Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies to take priority first.
- The A229 Loose Road junction with the A274 Sutton Road (Wheatsheaf junction) had been split into two phases, the first involving the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) closure of Cranborne Avenue, and then implementation of the final scheme. Traffic surveys were conducted before and after the closure of Cranborne Avenue and found queues to the junction were reduced significantly. The junctions at Cranborne Avenue and Plains Avenue were compared for traffic safety concerns and found that in the last five years there had been no crashes at Plains Avenue and three at Cranborne Avenue, including a fatality. The consultation on the scheme received 96 responses, of which 73 were objections and 23 in support.

The information was presented to the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, and a decision was made to permanently close Cranborne Avenue. The Major Projects Team Project Manager apologised that the decision was made before the Board's meeting, to avoid the expiration of the ETRO and re-opening the road which could confuse drivers.

The KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation was invited to address the Board, and emphasised that the decision was made following his consideration of the relevant traffic data and resident concerns, with the Local Ward Member having been consulted, and was taken before the ETRO expired to avoid the risk of highway safety if the road was re-opened and then re-closed permanently. The Cabinet Member apologised for the decision's timing, in that residents were unable to raise their concerns at the Board.

The Board expressed disappointment in the timing of the decision to close Cranborne Avenue, with it felt that residents and the Board should have had the opportunity to give their views ahead of the closure.

Concern was expressed on the lack of progress made on the Maidstone Integrated Transport Package (MITP), including projects on Willington Street, Sutton Road and Foundation Lane and that inflation was impacting project costs, and the financial resources available to support the projects. Several Members further expressed concern that more action could be taken at Armstrong Road to improve pedestrian safety.

In response to further questions, the Major Projects Team Project Manager stated that progress had been limited on some projects due to the complexity involved and that work at Armstrong Road was subject to a safety audit which would consider whether street furniture such as bollards or railings would be appropriate. It was further stated that the Kent Highways team would explore

installation of yellow box markings at Parkway and that a right turning had been considered but that this could be detrimental to improvements already made.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Note: Councillors Passmore and Sams left at 7.59 p.m. following the item's conclusion.

34. MAIDSTONE HIGHWAY WORKS PROGRAMME

In response to questions, the Highways Manager confirmed that:

- The A229 Running Horse Roundabout scheme had been rescheduled to May 2024 due to road space availability and that other schemes in the area had to be resolved first. The scheme was expected to take place six weeks to complete;
- The current status regarding the scheme on Church Road on Page 143 of the report would be updated to rectify a printing mistake; and
- Kent Highways had collaborated with conservation teams at Kent County Council regarding the bridge works at the Centenary Viaduct on Page 150 of the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

35. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30 p.m. to 8:04 p.m.