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Minutes of the meeting of the **DOVER JOINT TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 12 September 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor E A Biggs

Councillors: J S Back
M Bates
D G Beaney
T A Bond
P M Brivio
S S Chandler
G Cowan
D G Cronk
M F Hibbert
O C de R Richardson

Also present: Mr M Walters (Deal Town Council)
Mr G Wanstall (Dover Town Council)

Officers: Dover District Manager (Kent County Council) (attended remotely)
Transport Strategy Manager (Kent County Council) (attended remotely)
Transport and Parking Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer

125 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from District Councillor D J Parks, County Councillors N J Collor, S C Manion and D P Murphy, and Mr K Gowland and Mr A P Minns (Kent Association of Local Councils).

126 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor P M Brivio had been appointed as a substitute member for Councillor D J Parks.

127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

128 MINUTES

Some Members raised concerns that they had not received responses to queries raised at the last meeting which were included in the draft minutes.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that it was not appropriate to raise these matters under this agenda item which was only concerned with the accuracy of the minutes. However, she would liaise with the Dover District Manager (Kent County Council) outside the meeting about a response.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Transport Strategy Manager (Kent County Council) (TSM) presented the report on the Local Transport Plan 5 which was the subject of public consultation from 17 July to 8 October 2024. He advised that the Plan was a statutory document which carried weight with the Department for Transport and within the planning system and was therefore given due regard in decision making. Whilst the county's previous Local Transport Plan was not due to expire until 2031, there had been significant changes in government policy and the challenges faced by the county since its adoption in 2017, as well as substantial delivery of its proposals. It was therefore considered appropriate to refresh the Plan to ensure the county was prepared for any new funding opportunities presented by a new government. Following public consultation, the aim was for the Plan to be adopted by Kent County Council (KCC) in December 2024. The main point arising from the consultation undertaken so far had been the inadequacy of the county's bus services.

Councillor E A Biggs flagged up the importance of the document as a means of obtaining funding from central government to address the impact of international haulage traffic on the district's roads. Councillor O C de R Richardson commended the aspirations of the Plan and sought further information on the number and location of consultation events. Councillor M Bates raised concerns that the consultation had not been adequately publicised, particularly to the towns and parishes. The timing was unfortunate in that the consultation had started at a time when many people were on holiday. There was a lot of concern about rural bus services, and he questioned whether there would be separate consultation about the bus service improvement element of the Plan.

The TSM advised that a press release had been issued on the day the consultation was launched and it had been publicised on KCC's website, through social media and at the venues themselves. In addition, key stakeholders (including the Kent Association of Local Councils and district and borough councils) had been written to. However, he undertook to check whether the towns and parishes had also been notified and would send notifications out to anyone that had been missed. He reminded Members that there had been a consultation on bus services two years previously.

In respect of high-speed trains, the number of passengers using the service now was similar to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, Eurostar had advised that trains would not stop in Kent until EU checks had been introduced and settled down. Whilst the government maintained it was a commercial decision for the operator, KCC would continue to lobby Eurostar and engage with MPs about the issue.

Responding to comments made by Councillor T A Bond, Councillor E A Biggs expressed disappointment at his negative attitude towards the consultation and encouraged him and others to take part. The TSM stressed that KCC did not have the means to fund the majority of these schemes. Whilst small schemes could sometimes be funded by Section 106 contributions and developers, the large schemes could only be funded by government. Although the Plan was aspirational, it was important to include these schemes to ensure that the government was aware of KCC's priorities. He also made the point that if schemes were not included then they would never be delivered. Kent was no different to other counties such as Wiltshire and its longstanding plans for the A303. Turning to bus services, he agreed that a better public transport system and funding model were needed.

Finally, he advised that the Plan did not include timelines for delivery as it was not designed to be a funding or delivery plan.

In response to Councillor P M Brivio, the TSM undertook to check whether Dover Town Council and community rail partnerships had been notified about the consultation. In response to Councillor D G Beaney, the TSM clarified that the Plan was a list of priorities but there was no prioritisation of the projects as such. Should funding materialise, a separate exercise would be needed to prioritise the list, including further engagement/consultation with stakeholders and the public. That said, dualling of the A2 between Lydden and Dover would almost certainly appear high on the list. For the benefit of Councillor Bates, he confirmed that Dover access was a scheme within the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) 3 programme which would be funded by the government and delivered by National Highways. The scheme had now been pushed back to the next RIS programme which covered the period 2035-2040. All schemes in the RIS 'pipeline' had been paused and some had been cancelled following the change of government. He added that local contributions were always important and helped with the business case.

In relation to bus services, Councillor M Walters (Deal Town Council) suggested that, rather than going to sealed bids, direct negotiations should take place with the owners of private coach companies, and frank discussions held around which of them was willing to provide revenue-generating and non-revenue generating bus routes. The TSM undertook to pass the comments on to Phil Lightowler, KCC's Head of Public Transport. He agreed with the cross-subsidisation of bus routes as suggested. Significant changes were coming to bus services, but funding was always an issue and the model clearly did not work. The deregulation of buses in the 1980s had been caused by reduced patronage and the cost of providing services was now falling on local authorities and taxpayers.

Councillor G Cowan referred to the length of time schemes such as the dualling of the A2 had been kicking around. He stressed the importance of including them in the hope that one day they would be delivered. Dover was the gateway to Europe and Members should be getting behind the Plan and encouraging others to submit their comments so the government would take it seriously.

RESOLVED: (a) That the Transport Strategy Manager be requested to check whether all town and parish councils and the community rail partnerships had been directly notified of the consultation, and to pass on comments about future bus service provision to KCC's Head of Public Transport.

(b) That the report and presentation be noted.

130 HIGHWAY FORWARD WORKS PROGRAMME 2024/25 AND 2025/26

The Dover District Manager (DDM) presented the report which provided an update and summary of schemes programmed for delivery in 2023/24 and 2025/26.

The following points were raised by Members:

- Dover Access Improvements/Road Capacity Improvement Scheme – whether the completion date of March 2027 was the result of a further extension being granted by the Levelling Up Fund/Department for Communities, Housing and Local Government

- When an announcement would be made about the commencement of the Fastrack service
- Street-lighting – when works on Freemens Way, Middle Street and London Road, Deal were due to start
- Bridge Works (Upper Walmer Footbridge – Remedial Works) – to clarify the meaning of the report’s reference to ‘job finished and H&S returned. To be closed.’

The DDM advised Members to e-mail him with any queries about specific locations and he would follow them up with the team.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm.