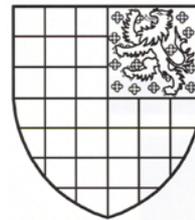


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Working Party** formed to address **Traffic/transport-related issues in Lewes** held on **Tuesday 7th June 2016**, in the **Yarrow Room, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs S Catlin (Wischhusen); W Elliott; H Jones; I Makepeace; M Milner; S Murray; R O’Keeffe, and A Rowell.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

Mr Barry King, *Compass Travel*; Mr Derek Barnett, *CTLA*; Mr Andy Gardner *Manager, Lewes Rail Station*; Mrs Sam Lear, *Sussex Community Rail Partnership*; Mr Nigel Denton *Rail Futures*

TIWP2016/01 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN:** Cllr Milner was elected as Chairman of the Working Party for the 2016/17 municipal year.

TIWP2016/02 **QUESTIONS:** A question had been received and was presented, regarding cycling provision. The question and the answer given are appended to these minutes. Three members of the public were present.

TIWP2016/03 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr J Lamb who had a work commitment in Salford. No message had been received from Cllr Watts. *NB: following the meeting it was discovered that a message had been received shortly after commencement, explaining that Cllr Watts was delayed at work.*

TIWP2016/04 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Cllr Elliott declared that he was the holder of a Network Saver Card. Cllr Makepeace noted, with regard to any discussion on the issues regarding the forecourt of Lewes Station, that she worked part-time as a local taxi driver. Cllr O’Keeffe was a regular hirer of a community bus.

TIWP2016/05 **MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting on 7th January 2016 were signed as an accurate record.

TIWP2016/06 **BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:**

Pedestrian crossing, Church Lane, Malling: The Council was funding a new crossing and East Sussex County Council officers had confirmed that relevant consultation had now been completed regarding the impact upon parking availability near the site, and some amended design details had been finalized. It was anticipated that construction would take place during the school summer holidays.

Pedestrian crossings: Cllr O’Keeffe raised the matter of crossings in Offham Road (A2029) (two sites) and Brighton Road (A277), adj Montacute Road. A residents’ group had submitted a bid for funding to ESCC for a crossing in Offham Road close to the junction with Prince Edward’s Road, and it was now confirmed that there would also be ‘developer match’ funding from s106 agreements. There was a long-standing demand for a crossing further toward the junction with the A275, near to the steps giving access to Wallands School, and residents and parents were building support for this.

There was a project in progress, following a petition by residents, for a crossing in Brighton Road (A277) near to its junction with Montacute Road. This would be light-controlled, and would cost approximately £120,000 to construct, plus design costs. An ESCC contribution was agreed for 50% of this and a private individual was prepared to contribute £35,000. Following reports from the previous meeting of the Working Party, the Town Council had earmarked £25,000 as a contribution to this project in its 2016/17 approved budget.

Bus services in Lewes: The meeting welcomed the representatives from Compass

Travel and CTLA. As there was no-one present representing Brighton & Hove Bus Company it was agreed that Councillors with questions related to those services should pass details to TC who would write on Council's behalf. These were in the areas of:

- the exclusion of Lewes from the City Saver fare structure;
- timetable changes which offset improvements to late night services by reducing early mornings, which was said to affect many who lived in Lewes and worked in Brighton.
- Delays on service 28 and 29 due to driver changes.
- Compromises to the "Companion Plus" Card, where a companion was no longer able to travel in both directions.

Compass Travel bus services: Mr King recounted early issues with the routes supported by the Town Council, which had begun at the time significant traffic disruption was caused by major road works in the Malling area. Services were now stable, and passenger numbers continued to increase. Questions arose from Members as:

- Q Were the improvements considered to be a trend, or temporary? A: thought to be a reliable trend.
- Q Was the contribution from LTC sufficient to cover the improvements? A: the funds were essential to maintain the current frequency of service.
- Q How was passenger data gathered? A: electronic ticketing
- Q Was the increase in numbers slight or significant? A: significant
- Q Why is Lewes Bus Station not used by all services? A: this is under consideration. Use of the facility is charged.

Mr King offered some general information which members found interesting: Brighton & Hove Buses had indicated boundary changes long in advance of their implementation, which had allowed various reciprocal agreements to be established. A "Keycard" facility was in use that was not currently operable across providers, but this was being investigated.

A resident raised a question regarding service to the Wallands area. When raised earlier with service operators, it appeared that the area was poorly-understood. Negative factors had been cited as obstacles such as "speed bumps", when in fact there were none in the area, and insufficient demand which, it was argued locally, could be a reflection of the absence of an available service for over 30 years. Compass Travel were investigating the feasibility of an occasional diversion of existing Nevill routes to include the area, perhaps once or twice each week, and had conducted a route survey. Mr Bartlett noted that CTLA operated their "dial-a-ride" community service for everyone and it was not, as often mistakenly thought, only for elderly or disabled users. This could offer a solution for some passengers from the area. They were also prepared to consider diversion of their Sunday service to include Wallands, and happy to investigate a scheduled service using smaller vehicles. Councillors offered to facilitate a round-table meeting of interested parties if that was thought helpful.

CTLA bus services: Mr Bartlett recounted the background to the services supported by the Town Council. These were considered to be extremely successful and May 2016 had seen record use, following a trend of growth in patronage year-on-year. The increase in Sunday passengers was noteworthy. A new vehicle would soon be deployed on the routes, which offered electronic display, and CTLA would gradually introduce "smart-ticketing". They had recently secured government grant for the promotion of routes and their leaflets would be more 'targeted' in future.

Bus operators were asked whether a single consolidated timetable was feasible. There exists a single timetable published by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), and this was being gradually improved as interlinking of services developed.

Rail services: The meeting welcomed Mr Gardner, Station Manager at Lewes, and

Mrs Lear of the Sussex Community Rail Partnership (SCRP). Mr Gardner answered a number of questions regarding potential changes to services at the station. Ticket office closure proposals were understood to be undecided at present and, if implemented, were described as a change of role for staff rather than a cost-cutting measure although it was conceded that there may be a slight reduction in numbers. He believed that the changes proposed represented an improvement in customer service at certain times. There had been a long-standing plan to introduce the role of 'Station Host'. When asked if the demand for this came from passengers, Mr Gardner understood that an assessment of customer profile indicated less than 30% of tickets were purchased through a counter service.

There was widespread criticism of the website and ticket machines, and information on service problems was described as "hopeless", being controlled from Three Bridges and often announced only after an event. Cost and value-for-money were said to be detrimental to a healthy rail service.

Recent timetable changes and service disruption were attributed to an ongoing dispute with Conductors, where levels of sickness absence had doubled. Short-notice of absence was extremely disruptive, and so pre-emptive cancellations were put in place to attempt to minimize "shock" to the network.

Regarding the continued absence of effective controls for parking and traffic manoeuvring on the station forecourt, it was understood that discussions were still in progress between Network Rail; ESCC; the parking contractor, and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). Concerns were expressed regarding the delays in implementation of a parking Order. It was noted that the station closed at night before the arrival of the last train, and travellers were often confused as to how to exit. The fact that there was an open exit via the car park was not advertised and Mr Gardner agreed to introduce signage to this effect.

The matter of vacant business units on the concourse was discussed, with Members keen to support local business. Mrs Lear advised that SCRП promoted local opportunities so far as they were able.

It was acknowledged that there was no likelihood that replacement bus services on Sundays would cease in the foreseeable future. There was no plan to reintroduce refreshment trolley services, and it would remain the case that some trains would not offer toilet facilities.

A report was expected in Autumn regarding the potential reinstatement of a Lewes-Uckfield rail link. It was understood that there was no plan to electrify the line beyond Uckfield.

A member of the public was recognized by the Chairman and stated that her understanding of local opinion on these matters was that no blame was attached to front-line staff, who were seen to be doing their best in trying circumstances, but that unpopular plans and many attendant difficulties were the responsibility of senior managers and politicians. The aspect of safety was raised and the effect of reducing staffing levels as proposed. The rail operator's argument was that mobile staff offered more reassurance and could be more helpful *in extremis*.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Mr Gardner for his attendance and for dealing so professionally and helpfully with many questions on policy and other matters that were acknowledged to be outside his remit as station manager.

TIWP2016/07

Members thanked the service operator representatives for their attendance and their helpful and informative contributions.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 8:55pm

Signed:

Date: