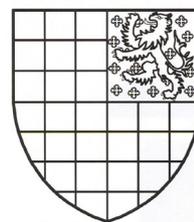


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Transport Committee**
held on **Tuesday 13th April 2021**, online via Zoom Meetings at **3:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs. J Baah; M Bird; S Catlin; R Handy; O Henman; I Makepeace (*Chair*); M Milner; R O’Keeffe; Vernon and R Waring. Also (*not appointed to the Committee*) Cllr Dr W Maples

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

Invited contributors: S O’Sullivan (*Cycle Lewes*); K Moore (*Lewes Living Streets*); S Murray (*Lewes Chamber of Commerce*); S Watson (*‘SlowDown Malling’ campaign*); Cllr A Ross (*Lewes District Councillor, Lewes Bridge*)

This was the first meeting of a Council body in the period of national mourning following the death of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The meeting paused for a moment’s contemplation.

TraCom2020/007 QUESTIONS: There was a question regarding the East Sussex County Council feasibility study that was to be considered at the meeting. It was explained that this had been commissioned by the Town Council under the East Sussex County Council *Community Highways* programme and this was the first meeting of the Committee since its completion.

TraCom2020/008 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: No message had been received from Cllr Herbert.

TraCom2020/009 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none.

TraCom2020/010 MINUTES: It was noted that the final sentence of the Minutes contained an error, related to the closing statement of the Chair, and this would be corrected. Subject to that correction, **it was resolved that:**

TraCom2020/011.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020 were received and agreed as an accurate record (*subject to amendment of final sentence*).

TraCom2020/011 REMIT of the COMMITTEE: Members noted the remit of the Committee as defined by Council, which is to:

- › Work with statutory bodies (including LDC and ESCC), agencies, community groups and stakeholders on transport related issues.
- › Facilitate a Lewes transport policy that is both sustainable and integrated. This would use the work prepared during the drafting of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan and earlier work by the Town Council’s Traffic Working Party on a ‘Lewes transport forum’, as a starting point:
- › Work with residents and businesses to consider and possibly fund traffic measures such as crossings, signage and speed limits.
- › Continue to monitor the LTC-funded Compass bus service, reporting back to Council.
- › Work with the Council’s Planning Committee, ensuring that any recommendations are reviewed before consideration by Council.

It was noted that there had been a focus on cycling; walking, and traffic in Committee meetings to date and it was acknowledged that bus and other public transport matters should be considered.

TraCom2020/012 BUSINESS of the MEETING:

It was noted that officers from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) had been invited, to facilitate discussion on specific issues, but the Transport Planning Manager had regretfully declined having “taken advice in respect of the current

Continues...

County Council Purdah* period” This would unfortunately limit the discussion that would be possible on matters of detail/status of projects, although a brief update had been provided against the two items on the agenda for which ESCC officers were invited to attend. The Chair wished to record the committee’s disappointment that this was the second meeting at which ESCC contributions had been so limited.

**(related to prohibited publicity/ actions during a pre-election period).*

1 *Cycle Route 90:* Improvement of local sections of regional cycle Route 90 was a project identified as a high priority by Cycle Lewes (CL) and had been noted in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan (s11.7) as a project listed to benefit from future receipts of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). There was a vital “missing link” between Brighton Road and Cliffe High Street/South Street. To complete the mostly on-road route required several elements of signage and physical features to be added within the town.

ESCC’s Transport Planning Manager had provide the following statement:

“Following discussion with Cycle Lewes, the proposed route was split into a number of sections with the aim being to deliver at least some of the sections over time, if the whole route from the A27 at Southerham to the A27 at Brighton Road is not achievable as one scheme.

Proposed plans for the eastern section of the route, from the A27 at Southerham to Cliffe High Street, will be going out to key stakeholder consultation after the local government elections in May. The County Council member for Ringmer & Lewes Bridge ward will be notified of the proposals before they go out to consultation. ESCC made a bid to Highways England for a contribution to the signalised crossing of the A26 at Cliffe Industrial Estate but we were unsuccessful and are on their reserve list.

Western section (Cliffe High Street to Brighton Road) via Pinwell Road, Bell Lane Recreation Ground and Winterbourne Lane: A large number of options have been considered but there are very challenging technical and financial obstacles to overcome at a few key points (Pinwell Road, Bell Lane, and the gradient from Winterbourne Lane to Brighton Road).

Western section (Cliffe High Street to Brighton Road) via School Hill, High Street, Western Road.: With the challenges posed by the indirect route (above), officers were asked to look at an on road route following the ‘spine’ of Lewes. An initial RAG study into this alignment has classified sections into the following achievability ratings, using latest guidance from the Department for Transport (LTN 1/20): Red (difficult) Amber (moderate) Green (straightforward). The result of this study now needs to be considered in terms of implication for deliverability.

County Council officers will be happy to discuss the next steps for taking forward RR90 with the two ESCC Members after the County election in May.”

Cycle Lewes had formed a joint working group on the C90 and would provide feedback to the Committee in due course.

There followed a discussion on recent resurfacing works adjacent to Bell Lane Recreation Ground, carried out by Lewes District Council. This was not related to the C90 proposals but had raised some concerns regarding the ‘desire route’ taken by cyclists where cycling was, technically, prohibited. No increase in use had been noted, but it was observed that some cyclists had become ‘bolder’ and were traveling faster. Signage that had been removed was to be replaced in a more up to date format.

2 *Safe School Streets:* ESCC’s Transport Planning Manager had provide the following statement:

“The School Streets six-week trial project started on 15 March 2021 and will finish on 7 May 2021. The first part of the trial ran from 15 March to 1 April. Sustrans is supporting the school [Southover] to deliver the School Streets

project and has received positive feedback from the staff and pupils at the school about the benefits of reducing the amount of traffic on the streets around the school at drop off and pick up time.

The scheme will undergo a full review at the end of the six-week trial period. We will be monitoring the impact of the measures and will listen to feedback from residents, businesses and the school community. Once the review has been undertaken on all six of the School Streets projects around the county, we will be able to determine whether or not the project could operate on a permanent basis subject to funding and local support.”

The committee discussed a number of matters ancillary to the project and were interested to know if this should be interpreted that analysis of a county-wide result might affect local implementation. This could not be answered definitively, but it was understood that discrete projects would be assessed on their merits. Locally, Southover School was a test-site. Feedback from parents and observers suggested that the experiment was already showing beneficial results, although a view was expressed that the levels of activity in the area were untypical due to Covid restrictions, and this would distort any analysis. It was noted that activity related to Western Road school was also a factor, although they were not formally involved. This point was acknowledged, although it was understood that ESCC would take some account of these factors. There was general approval of the scheme, and conclusions were awaited with interest.

3 Community Speedwatch: The Coordinator of Lewes Community Speedwatch (LCS) presented a report on the initiative, which described:

Lewes was one of the many Community Speedwatch groups organised by the Police in Sussex and expanding into Police forces across England. The Police provide equipment (speed gun and badged high viz yellow jackets) and send out warning letters to offenders. Volunteers work in pairs to identify speeding motorists at roadside spots agreed with the Police and input the results to the Community Speedwatch website. It is “educational” in that motorists are not fined, but after two letters they are visited by the local Neighbourhood Police team.

As a result of LCS activities, since 2013, over 11,000 speeding motorists had been sent warning letters, including over 1,000 in the last three months. LCS operate on the 20mph, 30mph and 40mph areas in and around Lewes using the Police threshold for enforcement action (10% plus 2mph above the speed limit). The Group decide where to be present and tend to operate where there is local concern about speeding.

Most motorists were observed to slow down when they see yellow jackets. LCS expect to record a speeding motorist every two minutes. Much of the speeding is thought to be carelessness and it was believed that warning letters were taken seriously and led to attempts to change driving habits. Around 80% of those identified as speeding are travelling 5 to 10mph above the speed limit, but that was still too fast for people to feel safe enough to encourage walking and cycling.

The new Sussex Police Chief Constable had indicated support for Speedwatch groups and had appointed a Chief Inspector to that end. This was likely to include Police Officers joining Speedwatch sessions and stopping and talking to motorists and/or serving fixed penalty fines (with the option of speed awareness courses).

It was agreed that the Council could help Community Speedwatch by publicising its work and encouraging people to sign up as volunteers for the Lewes group at <https://communityspeedwatch.org/FRONT-v2-Home.php>

There followed a discussion regarding the ability of police to prosecute *all* offenders, and the practicality of theoretical thresholds for prosecution. There was debate as to the real effect of 20mph limits, and statutory controls on their introduction. The Town Council had supported 20mph limits for many years and had contributed funds toward introduction. There was general support among committee members for a town-wide 20mph restriction.

4 *Feasibility appraisal iro A26 Malling Hill:* Lewes Town Council (LTC), had requested a feasibility study to be carried out by East Sussex Highways (ESH) on measures to reduce vehicle speeds along the A26, Malling Hill, Lewes and investigation of options to reduce the volume of traffic along this section of the A26. It was envisaged that the reduction of vehicle speeds and volumes would provide a safer environment for residents.

The committee considered the report (*ESH ref ABSL-0898, copy in the Minute Book*), which had taken account of traffic speed and volume data including an ESCC survey in 2018, and crash/injury data from Sussex Safer roads Partnership. Based upon the available crash data ESCC “would not consider the site to be a safety issue or priority”.

Traffic speed and volume data had been captured in a count carried out in April 2018. This was collected by automatic data collectors mounted on existing street lighting columns north of the pedestrian crossing on Malling Street. The data had not been updated to reflect the current situation, but it was considered a useful guide to typical vehicle speeds and volumes.

The report stated that: on the basis of the recorded speed data neither ESCC or Sussex Police would consider there to be a speeding issue and given the status of the road, the recorded traffic volumes were “at a level to be expected”.

The focus of the commission had been reduction of vehicle speeds and volumes along Malling Hill, and various measures had been proposed. ESH initial response to these was:

Suggested measure	East Sussex Highways’ response
Reduction in Traffic Volume	Not supported by ESCC / Sussex Police
Safety Cameras	Would not meet criteria
Vehicle Activated Signs	Would not meet criteria
Additional speed reminder signage	Legislation would not permit
Pedestrian Crossings	Not achievable based on demand and available space.
Traffic Calming*	Typical horizontal and vertical measures aren’t achievable but option to install central islands could be viable subject to further design.
Footway widening / road narrowing north of Orchard Road	This option is viable but expensive.

Due to the nature and importance of this A26 route as a part of the strategic road network through East Sussex, diverting traffic onto alternative routes would not be supported by either ESCC or the Sussex Police Authority. As such this option could not be considered further.

*Traffic Calming measures were explored in the report, and two options which ESH would contemplate were detailed and costs indicated:

- A. A series of central islands between Orchard Road and Church Lane (approx. £80,000) At this stage it was not possible to determine if any further carriageway strengthening was required to facilitate the central islands. There is a risk that by introducing new islands traffic is directed to the edges of the carriageway and experience had that the road can fail if strengthening is not undertaken. This could only be determined as part of the design process.
- B. Carriageway narrowing between Orchard Road and Church Lane (approx. £150,000). This estimate included the narrowing of the carriageway by realigning the kerb line along both sides of the A26 over a distance of approximately 700m.

The report concluded with the following statements and recommendations:

- a) “Crash data has been analysed for the site from which it has been determined

that there is insufficient evidence to justify a scheme from being promoted.

- b) 34% of recorded vehicle speeds exceeded the 30mph speed limit but the majority of these were recorded as travelling between 31 and 36mph. Only 8.8% of drivers are recorded as exceeding the Police enforcement threshold, which would not be considered a speeding issue by either ESCC or Sussex Police.
- c) Of the options suggested and considered, only two present themselves as a possible way of encouraging driver compliance with the speed limit, the installation of a series of central traffic islands or the physical narrowing of the road between Orchard Road and Church Lane. Traffic islands would be the least expensive option to progress.
- d) All of the other potential ways of reducing vehicle speed and volume have been discounted on the grounds of either being unsupported by ESCC / Sussex Police or not being permitted due to legislation.
- e) Although it cannot be guaranteed that narrowing of the road or the introduction of central islands would have the desired effect on vehicle speeds, the measures should encourage slower speeds.”

The committee discussed these conclusions at length, and local residents and others agreed that physically restricting the carriageway was likely to force vehicles (particularly HGV's) toward the kerb and thus increase the sense of vulnerability felt by pedestrians. There was some criticism of the specific location selected as the sampling point for speed data: it was believed to be too close to a crossing where speeds should be expected to be lower. Traffic speed was still considered by the majority of those present to be the worst dimension of the issue. It was suggested that different phasing of the crossing lights might have a beneficial effect.

Conclusions: Consensus was that better enforcement was preferable, while a more refined approach to 'hard' measures could be researched. A town-wide 20mph speed limit was favoured, which would affect all residents. The Malling Hill matter was considered to be specific to the local residents. The report should be shared with the community and there should be consultation with residents on these issues and the calming options presented in the report. Council would be asked to endorse these views.

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

The meeting closed at 5:25pm

Signed:

Date: