

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 March 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Brian Little (Chair), Martin Kerin (Vice-Chair)(arrived at 7.15pm), Robert Gledhill, Steve Liddiard, Robert Ray and Peter Smith (left at 8.30pm)

In attendance:
David Bull
Ann Osola, Head of Highways & Transportation
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

38. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2016 were approved as a correct record.

Councillor Gledhill felt that at the meeting, there were a wide range of questions asked; which did not reflected within the minutes the good points raised by residents.

The Chair commented that he checked the minutes to ensure that they reflexed the discussion held at the meeting.

39. Items of Urgent Business

Councillor Little confirmed that he had been informed of an item of urgent business, which he had decided to allow as the material had only recently become available and he felt that it was not reasonable to wait for the next meeting of the Committee.

He informed Members that the item was in relation to the Lower Thames Crossing and would be held after Item 4.

40. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Gledhill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 5 C2C train timetable changes – update, in that his partner was a C2C service user.

Councillor Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation the urgent item on the agenda Lower Thames Crossing Consultation, as he received payments from Councillor Aker for various duties relating to Cllr Aker's role as an MEP although these were not related or linked to the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Chair of the Committee declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the urgent item on the agenda Lower Thames Crossing Consultation, as the proposed routes affected his ward, and various residents in his ward had received letters from Highways England

41. Lower Thames Crossing Consultation

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that a copy of the report had been circulated by Democratic Services prior to the meeting and had been tabled for Members.

The Head of Highways and Transportation addressed the Committee and in doing so the following was highlighted:

- Officers were working with consultants to gather further information, to include within the Council's official response to the consultation for which the closing date was 24 March 2016;
- Following the meeting of the Committee held on 9 February 2016, all resolutions had been actioned by Officers;
- A letter had been sent to the Secretary of State, seeking to an extension of the consultation which was signed by the Chair of the Committee and all Group Leaders;
- The meeting held on the 25 February 2016, at the Port of Tilbury was covered by BBC News and showed the discussions of local residents, Highway England and the MPs for Thurrock.

She continued by informing Members that since the announcement that Option A could be a possibility; Group Leaders and the Chair of the Committee had further written to the Secretary of State requesting that the consultation be stopped due to inadequate information.

Members were notified that the Thurrock Business Board convened on 29 February 2016 to discuss the proposals of a Lower Thames Crossing. The board came to the conclusion that a new crossing was necessary however the information Highways England were using was out of date and inadequate.

The Committee were advised a report would be taken to Full Council on the 23 March 2016, for Members to agree the final response on behalf of the Council to the consultation.

Mr Bull addressed Members and began to talk them through the evidence gathering report from the Council's independent advisers and in doing so he raised the following:

- The traffic movement data relied upon was historic and did not satisfy the DfT's own requirements to base assessment on more recent data;

- The route locations A and C fulfil substantially different strategic functions;
- Once the new crossing was open, combined traffic levels crossing using both crossings could increase from 140,000 a day to 240,000 a day total by 2041;
- By 2041 traffic volumes at the Dartford Crossing were predicted to be 7% lower without the scheme, as any spare capacity on the existing crossing is utilised by diverting traffic and new traffic growth;
- There was a lack of information needed to make an informed decision over any route.

It was further commented that Environmental harm needed to be investigated along with further work into Public Health and Air Quality.

Councillor Liddiard thanked Officers for the report; he stated that it was clear as to what the Councils intention should be.

Councillor Ray sought as to which Option A or C Highways England was set on. Mr Bull explained that as yet no formal publication of a preferred route had been made.

Members questioned how Highways England could make an informal decision, given that the data they were looking at was out dated. The Committee were assured they had been given the most up-to-date information and were kept inform of all timescales, throughout the whole process.

It was further stated that the Council was looking into other options such as yellow box junctions to ease traffic and were working in conjunction with the LEAP.

The Chair of the Committee sought as to whether the final report would be available for Members, prior to the consultation deadline. The Head of Highways and Transportation confirmed that the final report would be presented to Members before it was submitted as part of the consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Notes actions taken in response to resolutions of the Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Committee at its meeting of 9 February 2016 as set out in paragraph 3.1.**
- 2. Note the views expressed by attendees at the public meeting on Lower Thames Crossing at Tilbury Cruise Terminal on Thursday the 25 February 2016 as summarised in paragraph 3.2.**
- 3. Note the views expressed at the meeting of Thurrock Business Board of 29 February 2016 to discuss highways England's**

Lower Thames Crossing proposals as set out in paragraphs 3.3 & 3.4.

- 4. Call upon Cabinet to pursue the establishment of a Congestion Task Force comprised of Highway Authority, Emergency Service and business partners on both sides of the existing Dartford Crossing to develop measures to alleviate the unacceptable levels of network disruption which result from incidents or closures on that Crossing.**
- 5. Note the Draft Evidence Gathering Report (see Appendix 1) which is being developed to reflect the representations made to this Committee on Lower Thames Crossing, and which will be finalised following this meeting.**
- 6. Agree to recommend to Cabinet at its meeting of 9 March 2016 that the final version of this Committee's Evidence Gathering Report be incorporated as an appendix to the Council's Formal Consultation Response to Highways England.**

42. C2C train timetable changes - update

The Head of Highways and Transportation introduced the report explaining to Members that following the January meeting, C2C were unable to attend however had supplied information, which had been circulated by Democratic Services.

Mr Bull addressed the Committee informing them that he had spoken to a representative of C2C who had informed him that a deal with Heathrow Rail to buy more carriages had fallen through.

He continued to inform Members that the overall growth in passenger numbers compared to autumn 2015 remained strong with:

- the AM Peak having a 9.5% average growth in passengers travelling from Thurrock stations
- the PM Peak had a 14.8% average growth in passengers travelling from Thurrock stations

It was mentioned that passengers were using the morning fast train to travel from Barking to West Ham, instead of wait for another train.

Mr Bull further stated that C2C had agreed to meet with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Portfolio Holder for Transport in the coming weeks.

During discussions Members stated they were disappointed that C2C did not send a representative to the meeting, like they had agreed at the beginning of the year.

It was commented that Members were united again the change of the C2C timetable, this was shown by the motion passed by Full Council the previous week. Member further commented they felt C2C showed a lack of respect by not attending the meeting.

The Chair of the Committee suggested that if commuters were still unhappy with the service they were receiving, C2C should reduce the ticket price until such time as an improvement was made.

The Head of Highways and Transportation assured Members that the Council would continue to scrutinise the situation carefully. Councillor Little confirmed that he would be meeting representatives of C2C along with the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation to continue conversations.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the c2c update and respond thereto.

The meeting finished at 8.35 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**