

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 12 November 2018 at 6.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Peter Smith (Chair), Gerard Rice (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas (*arrived 18.04*), Andrew Jefferies, Tom Kelly, Jane Potheary (*arrived 18.01*) and Sue Sammons
- Apologies:** Councillor John Allen and Peter Ward, Business Representative
- In attendance:** Steve Cox, Corporate Director Place
Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director - Lower Thames Crossing
Mary Patricia Flynn, Strategic Lead - Communications
Helen Forster, Strategic Lead - Place, Environment and Community Public Health
Ian Wake, Director of Public Health
Natalie Warren, Community Development and Equalities Manager
Lucy Tricker, Democratic Services Officer
- Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative
Linda Mulley, Resident Representative
Westley Mercer, Thurrock Business Board Representative
John Speakman, Business Representative
- Dermot Scanlon, Peter Brett Associates
David Manning, Highways England – Development Director
Chris Stratford, Highways England – LTC Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor
-

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.

25. Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Allen sent his apologies. Peter Ward, Thurrock Business Representative sent his apologies, and John Speakman acted as his substitute.

26. Minutes

The minutes of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force meeting held on 15 October 2018 were approved as a correct record.

27. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

28. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

29. Highways England Update on Consultation

The Highways England (HE) Development Director began by stating the consultation process was almost halfway through, with 4 events and 1 mobile event already held across the borough. He described how there were 3 more events in Thurrock those being: 14 November at the Linford Methodist Church; 16 November at the Brandon Groves Community Centre; and 7 December at Chadwell St Mary Village Hall. He also stated there were 8 more mobile events happening throughout November and December, the details of which were on the LTC website. The HE Development Director went on to discuss how responses to the consultation had been high, with over 500 responses per day. He then listed the main themes of consultation responses so far, which were:

- Concern with the location of the proposed route, although residents recognised the need to relieve traffic at the Dartford Crossing and A13.
- Concern with the A13 junction and the lack of West facing slip roads.
- Discussion of the height of the route and how this could have visual impacts and impact on air quality.
- The lack of the Tilbury link road and how this may affect businesses within the area.
- How the LTC will help businesses within Thurrock.
- The change to 3 lanes and how this may increase traffic noise and air pollution.
- The removal of spoil and construction traffic on the local road network as building work will be happening on site for 6 years. The HE Development Director explained that in the New Year detailed traffic assessments would be taking place which would look at this issue.
- Local issues such as the realignment of Rectory Road. The HE Development Director asked residents to include local issues in their consultation responses.
- The proposed rest/service area and the impact this could have on residents. The HE Development Director discussed this issue and stated that the rest area would help stop the problem of HGVs parking on local roads, and would include charging points to promote good air quality in the borough.

The HE Development Director summarised by asking residents to continue to submit consultation responses, and asked them to encourage others to do the same.

The Chair began by stating that all panel members had attended at least one event and then opened the floor to questions. The Vice-Chair initiated discussion and raised concern that residents outside the redline boundary had been informed by their bank that Highways England had written to them regarding the LTC proposals. He asked if residents outside the redline boundary, who wanted to sell during the construction period, had lawful provision that Highways England would buy their homes. He stated that he felt worried residents would become 'land locked' by the scheme. The HE Development Director replied that compensation was available for those outside the redline boundary, and residents concerned should visit an event or go online to the LTC website. He stated that 350,000 leaflets had been dropped to affected inhabitants. The Vice-Chair asked if the Task Force could see the letter sent to banks by Highways England, as well as leaflets dropped. He felt it was important for people to be able to sell their homes if they chose and receive good guidance on how to claim for compensation.

The Resident Representative continued the discussion on compensation by stating that it did not solve the issue of people being able to sell their homes, as they would still be 'land locked', and felt Highways England needed to go further. She believed that if Highways England had contacted people's banks, then it should be compulsory for them to buy the houses. The HE Development Director replied that a team of caseworkers were on hand to talk with landowners on a one to one basis. The Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG) Representative then discussed the issue that people were waiting up to 15 working days for a response from the Highways England property team and asked if this could be improved. The HE Development Director replied that he would take this away and look into it.

The TCAG Representative then asked what plans Highways England had to reduce carbon emissions during construction. The HE Development Director replied that Highways England would undertake traffic modelling to show carbon emissions and then work on ways to mitigate this. He continued by saying Highways England had to work to construction code to reduce issues such as dust, air and noise pollution. He added that Highways England were also looking into using electric vehicles during the construction period.

The Vice-Chair then questioned what Highways England were doing to protect communities such as Chadwell St Mary, Bulpan and Orsett along the route, such as cut and cover to protect people from the risks of COPD. He added that the proposed route fell within 500 yards of properties in Chadwell St Mary, and the depth of the route was still unclear. The HE Development Director replied that the project was being delivered through the National Policy Statement framework which means they have to mitigate social and economic effects of the route, and therefore protect local communities. He described how Highways England had explored cut and cover, and the

reasons for rejecting the proposal had been discussed at the last Task Force meeting. He added that the route had been lowered after the November 2017 route announcement, and false cutting would be pursued which would include embankments on either side of the road to reduce visual and noise impacts.

The Resident Representative felt that Highways England were not meeting LTC objectives as set out in their Innovation, Technology and Research documents, and that health and environmental effects were not being mitigated against. She continued by stating the route lacked efficiency as people would have to drive to Stanford and back on themselves to access the route. She added that the route should be put under the railway line, and should include cut and cover, to improve the local road network. The HE Development Director replied that Highways England had to show the Planning Inspectorate they are mitigating effects of the route, and in addition two external bodies would be reviewing the route submission. He continued that everything was open to consultation, but that LTC would provide relief around the A13 and Stanford.

The TCAG Representative questioned what would happen when an incident occurred at the Dartford Crossing, M25 or LTC, as traffic would back up along the A13 which may inhibit emergency vehicles. The HE Development Director responded that they were working with the police and fire authorities and they were involved in the design. He continued that the LTC would increase capacity across the river by 90%, as now when an incident occurred at the Dartford Crossing, it could be shut for between 3 and 5 hours. He also stated that Highways England were working on ways to inform people better when incidents were occurring which would use the latest technology. The Chair continued the debate by discussing how Highways England had recently objected to a planning application in the borough which would have placed additional load on Junction 30, as he felt the LTC would increase traffic at Junction 30 anyway. The HE Development Director answered that the LTC would provide between 30% and 70% relief at west bound Junction 30.

30. Task Force Priorities List

The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing began by discussing how Cllr Kelly had requested the Task Force Priorities List to be a standing item on the agenda, to make sure the questions remained at the forefront of the Task Force's mind. She described how the format had changed since the last agenda, as it was now presented in a table, with responses to questions added. She added how Highways England had responded to the majority of questions asked, although a couple had not been answered as the Task Force Priorities List had been sent to them late last week. She stated that items 1d, 5a, 6b, 6d and 7h were original questions, but 8 and 9 had been added which had emerged from consultation events. She asked if members had identified any new questions and were happy with the format.

Cllr Potheary began by discussing the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and asked when the Task Force would see this document, and what methodology

had been used to produce it. The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing replied that Highways England had agreed to produce a full HIA, in-line with that produced for the M4 project. She discussed how Thurrock Council had formulated a group with other affected local authorities and together they had produced a joint letter which stated what the HIA should cover, to which Highways England had agreed. She described how it takes time to produce as it is a large scheme and Thurrock Council had asked for lots of detail. She mentioned that the HIA ran in parallel with the scheme, and no tangible documents would be produced until the Development Consent Order (DCO) submission.

The Vice-Chair then discussed point 5e in the Task Force Priorities List and how the new crossing would affect areas such as the Mardyke Valley. He also asked if Thurrock would be involved in the design, and could help protect residents. The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing replied that Highways England have to be compliant with the National Policy Statement, and as a part of this had to produce a HIA to mitigate effects. She also stated that in addition, there is a National Policy Statement provision to enhance the area. She discussed how Officers regularly met with Highways England to discuss the design, although for the National Policy Statement only a level of design for structure is needed. She continued by reiterating that Thurrock want a say in the design panel, but that Highways England will only do detailed designs in stage 5 of the scheme, after the Development Consent Order, when contractors are bought in. The Resident Representative queried point 5e and the elevation of the route around East Tilbury, Linford and the railway line. The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing added that she would like a more detailed answer to point 8 of the Task Force Priorities List.

31. Verbal Update: Response to Consultation

The Representative from Peter Brett Associates (PBA) stated that they had considered the Task Force Priorities List and the Mitigation Schedule, and the response to Highways England would consider the following concerns:

- National Policy Statement and testing whether Highways England's design achieved what was laid out in the policy framework.
- Design principles and mitigation in terms of transport, heritage and future-proofing.
- Specific designs such as the Tilbury link road, the rest area and Orsett Cock roundabout junction.
- Specific issues including environment and health impacts, such as air quality, flood risks and risks to public health.
- Making Highways England aware of the impact on Council operations.
- The Development Consent Order, adequacy of consultation, and discharge of requirements.

- Next steps such as traffic modelling and design.

The Vice-Chair felt that as projects such as HS2 were spending £2billion on cut and cover tunnels in London, the LTC should consider it in urban areas in Thurrock, some of which were less than 500 yards from the route. He felt that Highways England should be taken to judicial review and the high court to challenge them. The Representative from PBA replied that once the results were back from the HIA, Highways England could then be pressured to provide mitigation.

The TCAG Representative asked if the Task Force could receive the minutes from meetings held between Officers and Highways England. The Corporate Director Place replied that too many meetings occurred for this to be a possibility, but a summary could be provided at a future Task Force meeting.

32. Verbal Update: Business Views

The Thurrock Business Board Representative began by stating at the most recent meeting of the Thurrock Business Board they had discussed 'what was in it for Thurrock' in regards to the LTC. He discussed how they felt Highways England lacked vision around the A13 and Tilbury link, as well as the proposed rest area. He mentioned the Local Plan, and how the scheme could impact future housing, regeneration, and movement of goods around the borough. He felt that the additional cost of the Tilbury link road would be offset by the connectivity it could bring to businesses. The HE Development Director replied that he would be happy to meet with the Thurrock Business Board to discuss, as Highways England were already meeting regularly with Tilbury Port. The Thurrock Business Board Representative stated that he would welcome meetings between the two, and in this time of economic uncertainty, as Thurrock was fundamental to the UK economy, improvement to the A13 and a Tilbury link road should be considered further. He went on to state the Thurrock Business Board felt the LTC was simply a 'big bypass' that wouldn't benefit the area, particularly without the Tilbury link road. The HE Development Director replied that the LTC would improve journey times by 30%, which would provide extra capacity for businesses. He went on to describe how there was not enough traffic for a south bound Tilbury link, with only 18-20 lorries per hour in peak times. He added there may be future possibility to expand as Tilbury port and surrounding businesses grow.

The Chair then asked what was in the scheme for residents and businesses, as he agreed that the current form of the route was a bypass. The TCAG Representative added that the A1089 southbound served not just the port, but other businesses and residents too. She added that if there was enough traffic to justify a northbound link, there must be enough traffic to justify a southbound link, as if traffic travelled northbound it would have to go southbound first. The HE Development Director replied that northbound access to the LTC would decrease journey times by 30%, which was critical for expansion of the port. He added it would also decrease journey times on the A13 and M25. The Chair added that he did not want to see mistakes

made 20 years ago with the A13 and East facing slips repeat itself on the LTC. The HE Development Director responded that they were working with the Department for Transport and local businesses to look at connectivity across the borough.

The Vice-Chair asked if the road was fit for a 100+ years, as to be environmentally friendly Highways England should consider a dual tunnel with a rail link to reduce the need for HGV freight. The HE Development Director discussed how rail had been considered but there was not a viable business case for this. He mentioned how tramways had also been discussed with private franchises, and again no business case had been viable. The Corporate Director Place added how this issue had been raised in the mitigation schedule, but they had not been aware of the tramways.

The Resident Representative then mentioned how the A13 was not just a network road, but also served local people and the impact the scheme would have on local traffic. The HE Development Director responded that a traffic model had been shared with Officers and the relief provided by LTC would speed up journey times. He added that a study of the A13 with every facing slip road connected had been conducted and was found to negatively affect the local road network.

33. Next Steps for Consultation: Timeline and Decision Making

The Corporate Director Place described how the council had asked for additional time to respond to the consultation, to be able to discuss the response at Full Council in January, but this had been denied by Highways England. He confirmed that the council now had until the 20 December to respond and make a strong case. He added that the draft council response would now go to Full Council on 28 November, and then to the Task Force on 10 December to reflect on Full Council's comments and add their own. He mentioned the mitigation schedule would be on the December Task Force meeting to consider this again. The Chair stated that there would not be much time between considering Full Council and the Task Force comments and submitting the council's response. The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing clarified they had 5 weeks and 3 days to consider thousands of pages of documents. She added this was because Highways England delayed the start of consultation; and therefore it does not fit in with the council's governance process.

The Chair asked if the Council had enough resources and people to deal with formulating the council's response. The Corporate Director Place replied that they did, but were under a lot of pressure. He added that the Council also had the help of the external consultancy, Peter Brett Associates. The TCAG Representative asked why Highways England cannot extend the deadline to receive the council's response. The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing explained that the minimum time for consultation was 28 days, and as Highways England had provided 10 weeks they had done their statutory duty, even though the Council had asked for 12 weeks consultation.

The Resident Representative added that filling out the response form alone was a difficult task, as many answers had to be cross-referenced with the consultation booklet which takes time. She felt that the Council were fully justified in asking for a time extension to submit their response. The Assistant Director Lower Thames Crossing confirmed she would write again to Highways England on behalf of the Task Force to formalise comments made on the extension of the deadline.

34. Work Programme

The Chair suggested that the Task Force invite members of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and Essex County Council to a Task Force meeting, as they were pro-LTC and it would be an opportunity to test where they were coming from.

The meeting finished at 19.12

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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