

## Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 26 October 2016

### **Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.**

One question was submitted from members of the public.

#### **1. From Mr Abbott to Councillor B Little**

Can we ask for specific details of what exactly the Council are currently doing to challenge and work with Highways England to deal with the almost daily misery the residents face at the current crossing? After all regardless of what or if another crossing is built the misery on Thurrock local road network will remain unless the current crossing is fixed.

#### **Mayor**

Unfortunately Mr Abbott is unable to attend tonight but I believe Councillor Little would like to respond verbally to the question tonight, am I right there?

#### **Councillor B Little**

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I'd like to wish Mr Abbott all the best in his problem that he's had today. I am sure I, and I'm sure all Councillors, share your views about the misery caused by congestion happening all too often in our Borough. Since I became Cabinet Member, Thurrock has established a dedicated highways network management team and appointed a Network Manager to help us manage our own road network better and provide a dedicated point of contact for improved joint working with partners. During office hours we have real-time monitoring of congestion on Thurrock's roads. We've engaged with partners to agree diversionary routes and protocols for variable messages on approach routes to the Crossing. I've also established a congestion task force which includes representatives from Highways England, Essex Police, Essex County Council and business. The Task Force has already delivered some quick wins; Highways England have added Thurrock Council to the list of organisations who are automatically contacted when there is an incident on the Crossing and we now get advanced warning of weather conditions which might lead to the closure of the bridge. Highways England have also committed resources to develop plans to link up Highways England's traffic management system with Thurrock Council and Essex County Council's control room in Chelmsford. They have promised portable variable message signs for Thurrock to help local traffic avoid a congested area. Thurrock has also commissioned experts to identify what investments are needed in traffic signals and junctions on Thurrock's own network to improve traffic flows; this work will form the basis of future bids for local growth funding. On 6 October Thurrock hosted a multi-agency 'Cold Debrief' in this Council Chamber to look at events arising from the last major incident on the Crossing and identifies ways to reduce the impact of incidents and their knock-on effect in Thurrock and Essex. A number of areas for improvement were identified ranging from better access protocols for vehicles

needed to repair road damage, to improve traffic management when contraflow plans are implemented in the Tunnel. The Council, including myself, meet regularly with Highways England's Director of Operations; we also have raised congestion issues with the Department of Transport, and are lobbying for changes to legislation to allow camera enforcement at box junctions which is currently only allowed in London. A full update on initiatives being taken forward by the congestion task force will be presented to Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its January meeting. Thank you.