

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 14 June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present:	Councillors Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, John Kent (Vice-Chair), Fraser Massey (Chair), Sara Muldowney and Sue Sammons
Apologies:	Laura Blake: Thames Crossing Action Group Representative Westley Mercer: Thurrock Business Board Representative Peter Ward: Business Representative
In attendance:	Colin Black, Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer Chris Stratford, Senior Consultant – Stantec Robert Quick, Resident Representative

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, and livestreamed onto the Council's website.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Laura Blake (Thames Crossing Action Group Representative); Westley Mercer (Thurrock Business Board Representative), and Peter Ward (Business Representative).

2. Nomination of Chair

Councillor Fraser Massey was nominated and voted as Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force for the 2021/22 municipal year.

3. Nomination of Vice-Chair

Councillor John Kent was nominated and voted as Vice-Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force for the 2021/22 municipal year.

4. Minutes

The minutes from the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force meeting held on 15 March 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

5. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

6. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

7. Economic Mitigation List

The Senior Consultant introduced the report and stated that it had been sent to Highways England (HE) in November 2020, and had been published on the Council's website on 24 February 2021. He explained that since then, nine meetings had been held between HE and Thurrock Council to discuss the 57 mitigation items. He stated that they were split into three groups: 23 direct mitigation measures, for example future proofing and construction impact; 12 council-led support mitigation measures; and 24 legacy mitigation measures, which included the A13 trunking, East Facing Slips, the Asda roundabout, 5G provision on bridges, and the Tilbury loop line bridge. The Senior Consultant confirmed the HE had not agreed to 6 measures, and some of the remaining measures, such as the East Facing Slips access required high-level political intervention. He stated that the rest of the measures were still being discussed and that there had been some agreement on lower order matters, but discussion on bigger ticket items had been slow. He stated that Thurrock Council, including the Portfolio Holder, continued to meet with HE and the Department for Transport to discuss these mitigation measures.

The Senior Consultant then explained that only some measures could be agreed before Development Consent Order (DCO) submission, and some measures would need to be agreed later in the process, for example during the Examination phase. He explained that the Council were working hard to ensure as much mitigation was secured before DCO submission, and an update report outlining the developments of each mitigation measure would be brought before the Task Force later in the year. The Interim Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery added that there was also currently lots of work being undertaken to understand the finer detail of each mitigation measure, and numerous meetings were underway.

The Chair thanked the Senior Consultant and Interim Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery for their presentation, and asked for confirmation of the measures HE would not agree too. The Senior Consultant responded that these included:

1. M8 – construction phase trial initiatives for innovative public transport. He explained that HE had agreed to use electric buses to transport LTC workers, but no other mitigation measures had been agreed.
2. M12 - smart speed limits along the route, which would help control traffic flow and pollutant levels. He stated that although this had been ruled out at this stage, it may be possible to install these later on in the life of the project if required.
3. M18 – Hypothecation of LTC charges. He stated that a similar scheme as the one previously used some 10 years ago on the Dartford Crossing had been suggested, where charges were retained by the Council, but HE had not agreed to this.
4. L3 – Use of alignment of Haul Road to match the Tilbury Link Road

scheme. He explained that Haul Road would now be used as part of the Tilbury 2 ‘infrastructure corridor’ and would be utilised along with the private routes inside the Port of Tilbury, so this mitigation measure was now academic.

5. L11 – legacy housing provision. He explained that HE were proposing to build 400 workers accommodation units, and 80 hyperbaric units for tunnel workers. He explained that HE believed all other workers would travel to the construction site, or would find local accommodation.

6. L20 – low emission vehicle usage targets, whereby Thurrock Council would be paid if HE exceeded these targets.

Councillor Kent queried the hypothecation measure, as it was not included in the report. He felt this was an important mitigation measure for the medium and long term. He felt that this measure should be pushed harder with HE to seek their agreement. He also queried L11 regarding workers housing, as both the LTC and London Resort being built in Kent would require lots of housing. He explained that London Resort planned on using old cruise ships parked in the river to accommodate workers. Councillor Kent added that the local housing market would not be able to cope with lots of additional workers, and there would also be an indirect impact on areas such as policing and anti-social behaviour. Councillor Muldowney felt disappointed that the report had not been updated, including the L15 mitigation measure and areas of additional concern surrounding Chadwell St Mary. She asked if the Task Force could see the full version of the report. The Senior Consultant stated that the full version of the report should have been published on the Council’s website, as well as the updated version of the Executive Summary report dated November 2020 (subsequently requested to be updated accordingly by the Council’s web team – www.thurrock.gov.uk/thames-crossing).

Councillor Carter queried the M4 mitigation measure, and asked if the Task Force could see the full data background and respective measurements. The Senior Consultant responded that HE were planning to install air quality and noise monitors along the proposed route this year. He explained that the Council were currently negotiating the exceedance framework, which would include what would happen if air quality or noise levels were exceeded. Councillor Muldowney stated that of the 58 mitigation measures, only two related to mitigation of economic effects, even though the scheme would have a significant financial impact. She queried whether the economic impact of the scheme would balance out. The Senior Consultant stated that he would respond in writing after the meeting.

The response in answer to Cllr Muldowney question is, as follows:
‘The initial ‘LTC Economic Costs Study’ identified a range of quantified and unquantified negative impacts of the proposed LTC scheme upon Thurrock. This included impacts upon the transport network, business operations, local communities, the environment and future growth within the area. It considered impacts during both the construction phase, as well as the completed operational phase of the LTC, subject to the information made available by the LTC Team.

The ‘LTC Mitigation Benefits Report’ began the process of compiling a list of measures to directly mitigate against the identified shortfalls in the LTC design and construction process, but largely in an improved/qualitative way. This included the blight and disruption caused by construction, alongside a range of improvements to the transport network to ensure the LTC does not negatively affect local traffic movements. The report also sought to identify the direct and indirect resource requirements of Thurrock Council to ensure sufficient support for local workers, businesses and communities during the construction and/or operation of the LTC scheme. Then, recognising the negative impact of LTC upon the local environment, a series of mitigation measures were developed to enhance green space, support biodiversity, as well as reduce carbon emissions. Finally, a series of other infrastructure-related measures were identified to support the future growth of the area and to deliver legacy benefits that off-set the impact that the LTC infrastructure will have in terms of land losses and community severance.

Whilst it was not feasible to identify quantifiable measures that directly off-set all individually identified/quantified ‘costs’, the package of measures, taking into account elements already incorporated into the LTC design and DCO, is designed to ensure that Thurrock communities, businesses and the Council offset these overall costs and begin to build more positively on the impacts of the LTC scheme, as it was currently proposed in late 2020’.

The Chair asked if there was any alternative proposals regarding worker accommodation, as the Task Force and local residents did not want lots of non-permanent accommodation across the borough. He asked if HE would be willing to give the issue of worker accommodation to the Council. The Senior Consultant responded that there would be 480 worker accommodation units on-site, and HE proposed that other workers would need to travel to the site, obtain public/private rented accommodation, or purchase properties. He felt that HE believed these additional workers would not have an impact on the local housing market, but Thurrock Council were questioning this extensively. The Senior Consultant added that regarding the summary of the worker accommodation document Thurrock had sent lots of questions to HE regarding this document. He explained that so far no amendments had been made, and Thurrock had received no satisfactory responses to their questions. Councillor Kent felt that an influx of people looking to private rent in the area would increase the cost of rent for local residents, and queried if Thurrock Council housing officers were involved in discussions with HE. The Senior Consultant replied that the previous Assistant Director of Housing had been involved in discussions, and Thurrock were currently trying to receive the final figure of the number of workers who would travel into and out the borough from HE.

Councillor Byrne questioned L11 and asked if all worker accommodation units would be situated in Stanford-le-Hope. The Senior Consultant responded that this had originally been the plan under the previous Assistant Director of LTC,

but stated this had changed in recent months. Councillor Muldowney felt that construction workers travelling into and out of the borough would increase the pressure on the local road network, and queried if this had been captured in other documents. The Senior Consultant responded that this was captured in the Construction Framework Travel Plan, but Thurrock felt that this document was not detailed and did not make enough commitments. He stated that the Council would make it clear to HE that the document was not good enough, and would also question the reduced level of on-site parking, and required commitment that all construction worker buses would be electric.

The Resident Representative suggested that instead of updating the Hatch report, officers could bring a separate report which detailed updates on all mitigation measures. The Senior Consultant confirmed that an Update Report would be brought before the Task Force in the next couple of months. The Interim Assistant Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery added that the Council were currently negotiating on numerous mitigation measures, so a fully updated report might take some time. The Chair suggested a report be brought to the July Task Force meeting and to use a traffic light system for each mitigation measure.

Councillor Chukwu questioned L19 and if a low emission charge could be utilised in Thurrock. The Senior Consultant replied that this could form part of the government's draft decarbonisation plan, which included input from local stakeholders on how these measures would be delivered. He stated that it had been due to be published in the spring, but this had been delayed, and would therefore it was expected to be published soon. He explained that until the plan was published, he was not sure how it would relate to Thurrock.

8. Work Programme

The Senior Consultant stated that the July Task Force meeting was being held two days before HE's next round of consultation, and asked if the Task Force would like to invite the HE Executive Director to the meeting to discuss the consultation. He added that an update on the mitigation measures could also be provided at the meeting. The Chair, and the rest of the Task Force, agreed to invite HE to the July Task Force meeting. The Chair stated that he would speak with the Transport Action Network and postpone their presentation to a later date.

Councillor Muldowney also requested an update on the Health Impact Assessment, which would include a copy of the shortcomings letter signed by nine local authorities, as well as the response from HE. The Senior Consultant confirmed that this would be included at the July Task Force meeting as an Update Paper.

The meeting finished at 6.43 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