

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 25 September 2017 at 5.15 pm

Present: Councillors Tom Kelly, Brian Little, Terry Piccolo, Roy Jones, John Allen, Peter Smith, Barbara Rice and Steve Liddiard

Matt Jackson, Thames Crossing Action Group representative (Substitute)
Peter Ward, Thurrock Business Representative
Michael Loveday, Resident Representative

Apologies: Councillors Bukky Okunade

George Abbott, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place
Ann Osola, Assistant Director of Transportation and Highways
Fred Raphael, Transport Development Manager
Robert Audsley, Highways England
Chris Marsh, Highways England
Tim Wright, Highways England
Lottie Raper, 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.

1. Appointment of Chair

The Corporate Director of Environment and Place welcomed everyone and introduced the meeting outlining the role of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force. The Democratic Services Officer outlined the process for the nomination and election of Chair and Vice-Chair.

Councillor Kelly nominated Councillor B. Little as Chair; this was seconded by Councillor Piccolo. Councillor Allen nominated Councillor Smith; this was seconded by Councillor Jones.

Members were given the opportunity to vote. As there was an equality of votes, the matter was determined by the drawing of lots, in line with the Constitution. Councillor Smith was the successful nominee and the Committee were satisfied with the result.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

The Chair asked for nominations for the Vice-Chair position.

Councillor Liddiard nominated Councillor B. Rice, which was seconded by Councillor Jones.

Councillor Piccolo nominated Councillor B. Little, which was seconded by Councillor Kelly.

The Committee voted in favour of Councillor B. Rice.

3. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Highways England Presentation

Representatives from Highways England gave a presentation to the Committee which outlined key details of the design and process, including key dates to note in terms of decision deadlines moving forward.

The Thames Crossing Action Group representative asked what the expected capacity would be if three lanes were to be used, given that the expected capacity for two lanes was approximately 70,000. The Committee was advised that the increase was not linear as it would be a matter of how well the lanes were occupied. The expected figure was around 85,000-90,000.

Councillor Jones asked for clarification around the proposed height of the roads in the elevated sections. The route would be lowered where possible but it would need to be elevated in part to avoid landfill, flood risk areas and other roads. The section from East to West by North Ockendon would be 6m or 7m above ground level. Councillor Jones noted that it would be visible for miles due to its height.

The Chief Executive interjected that it was crucial that Highways England clearly outlined what aspects might be influenced by the Council and businesses and what would be beyond their control. Everyone involved was entitled to understand exactly what could be influenced before engaging with the public. The Highways England representative agreed that their intention was to make it obvious what could and could not be changed. At the time of the consultation the year before, the process was still in very early stages but now, with a more developed understanding of traffic movements, environmental issues and other factors it was possible to give a clearer picture around what aspects of the proposal could be influenced and altered.

The Chair noted that the data modelling for local traffic had been undertaken several years previously. Given the extensive works carried out along the A13, he queried whether it would be necessary to revisit this. The Task Force heard that this was definitely correct. Highways England had a requirement to

update their information regarding local traffic surveys and local plans. The forecast on both strategic and local road networks would be updated, with the last full year of data being 2016.

Councillor B. Little asked if it would be possible for Thurrock to have access to information regarding its own areas. The information would be made available where possible, some could not yet be released as it was still undergoing Highways England's internal assurance policies.

Councillor Jones enquired whether this would include data regarding air pollution. Highways England were beginning their surveys around air quality presently and the data collected would form the baseline for all future information. It was their intention to share this information too. Councillor Jones wished to clarify the public consultations process as it had been somewhat vague in the last instance. The public consultation would include a period of engagement with local forums, information would be published online and in libraries and there would be public meetings to ensure residents could be heard.

Councillor Piccolo noted that the statutory consultation was listed for mid-2018 yet surveys were scheduled to be ongoing into 2019. He felt the outcomes of these surveys would be relevant to the consultation and it seemed strange to hold the consultation without some of the information. The Highways England representative outlined that the statutory consultation would provide a snapshot of the information obtained up to that point in time and more refined information, around ecology and other areas, would continue to develop overtime. The engagement process would be ongoing up to the submission of the Draft Development Consent Order (DCO). It was not unusual to gather data in a prioritised way and it would all be presented in the DCO.

The Vice-Chair stressed that Thurrock Council still held the official position that they wished for no further crossings within Thurrock. The Task Force had been formulated to better understand proposals and represent the interests of residents. She felt the presentation assumed that this would be the road forward and while Members wanted to ensure any development was made as easy as possible for residents, the Council's position had not changed. Residents should not be an afterthought, the key issues were what would be done for residents and how would their lives be impacted upon. It was understood that the Task Force represented strong views and Highways England were keen to engage regarding impact particularly around schools, road network and the local community.

Councillor B. Little requested that if letters were sent to residents affected by the scheme they could be asked if they were happy for the Council to be contacted. During the last consultation Councillors had no way of knowing which residents had been contacted and it had therefore been difficult to engage with the necessary residents within their wards.

The Chair encouraged Co-Opted Members to join the debate as their views were important.

Councillor Allen asked whether Highways England had an interest in the health and wellbeing of Thurrock residents, particularly in terms of air quality. Levels of above 40 parts/million were considered dangerous and certain areas within Thurrock already measured levels of 56 parts/million. An increase of vehicle movements throughout the borough would increase pollution levels and he wanted to know what would be done to protect residents. It was confirmed that Highways England's assessments would account for changes in vehicle movements and vehicle quality over time, as well as environmental factors. Forecasts would be carried out and the aim was to minimise effects on local residents and pollution as far as possible.

Councillor Allen continued that the air quality was 'to be predicted' but there was already evidence of poor air quality within Thurrock. The aim might be to minimise the impact but it was unlikely that vehicles would be stopped from using the new route and therefore there were no assurances for residents. He felt the situation would become increasingly worse. The Highways England representative recognised concerns and outlined that there was a duty to explain what they believed effects would be. There was a desire to work with residents and address their concerns.

Councillor Piccolo requested data showing the figures for traffic originating in Thurrock or whose final destination was Thurrock, to assess the percentage of traffic that was actually related to Thurrock itself.

Councillor Kelly expressed his view that the group was somewhat restricted. While there was no desire to sound as though the Council's position had changed, Members also had to be pragmatic in their approach to ensure that, whatever the outcome, it was as beneficial as possible for Thurrock. He had a number of concerns regarding proposed Route 3, which he would raise at the next meeting.

Councillor B. Little highlighted that the construction phase would impact tremendously on Thurrock. If the development were to take place he asked that Highways England work to ensure the Council was comfortable with the impact and mitigation in place. The DCO had to be consulted with Local Authorities and residents. This would be a major project and therefore concerns regarding construction traffic, dust and noise would be mitigated as much as possible. There were intentions to use the Thames as much as possible to reduce the effects of construction traffic.

The Thames Crossing Action Group representative referred to the proposed elevated section at Baker Street which would be 60m high with high polluting HGVs. This section would run alongside a conservation area and he asked whether it would be possible for that section of the route to be tunnelled. He also noted that the proposed new junction in East Tilbury would have a huge impact on a small neighbourhood. The Orsett Cock roundabout would be used by DP World traffic too, so he asked whether it might be possible to

move the junction further east to mitigate the number of HGVs forced onto the Orsett Cock roundabout and roads nearby. The Highways England representative agreed to liaise with the engineering department for a response to these points. The Chair requested that a member of the engineering department attend a meeting in future to discuss possibilities.

6. Terms of Reference

It was noted that whilst the Terms of Reference were important, they were not completely defining of the Task Force.

Councillor B. Little raised the question of nominating substitutes and Councillor Piccolo agreed that he wished to discuss in more detail. The Vice-Chair also highlighted the possibility of inviting other parties to offer their input.

The Task Force agreed to discuss this item fully at the next meeting.

7. Governance and Decision Making

The Task Force agreed to discuss this item at the next meeting. Councillor Liddiard also proposed submission of written questions.

8. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

9. Work Programme

Officers noted that a number of items had been raised for the next meeting's agenda. It was agreed that a full work programme would be formulated then.

The meeting finished at 6.20 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**