

Minutes of the Meeting of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force held on 15 July 2019 at 6.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Luke Spillman (Deputy Chair), Tom Kelly, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney and Sue Shinnick
- Apologies:** Councillors Andrew Jefferies, Terry Piccolo
Peter Ward, Thurrock Business Representative
- In attendance:** Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing
Helen Forster, Strategic Lead Public Health
Luke Tyson, Business Manager
Natalie Warren, Community Development and Equalities Manager
Lucy Tricker, Democratic Services Officer
- Laura Blake, Thames Crossing Action Group Representative
Westley Mercer, Thurrock Business Board Representative
Robert Quick, Resident Representative
John Speakman, Thurrock Business Representative, as substitute for Peter Ward
- Alison Powell, People and Communities Advisor, Highways England
Chris Stratford, Lower Thames Crossing Stakeholder and SoCG Advisor, Highways England
Ben Fusaconti, External Affairs Advisor, Highways England
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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.

9. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Jefferies and Councillor Terry Piccolo. Peter Ward, Thurrock Business Board Representative also sent his apologies, and John Speakman acted as his substitute.

10. Minutes

The Thames Crossing Action Group (TCAG) Representative highlighted page seven of the agenda and clarified that ground investigations would be taking place both north and south of the river. She also clarified that on page eight of the agenda, she anticipated that additional consultation would be occurring, rather than believed.

The minutes from Lower Thames Crossing held on 10 June 2019, subject to those changes, were approved.

11. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

12. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Highways England Health Impact Assessment Update

The Highways England (HE) People and Communities Advisor gave a presentation regarding the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and began by stating that it would have a community focus, highlighting economy, places, equality, health and people. She stated that the HIA would be combined with an Equalities Assessment to ensure a collaborative approach, which would identify potential benefits and adverse effects of the scheme, whilst taking into account mitigation, existing and future communities and local area understanding. She commented that a Community Impacts and Public Health Advisory Group (CIPHAG) had been set up which was comprised of affected Local Authorities, and had an independent Chair. The HE People and Communities Advisor then went on to discuss the timeline of the CIPHAG and discussed how it had been set up in November 2018, had agreed the Terms of Reference in January 2019 and had then been involved in topic specific sessions. She clarified that each meeting related to a specific topic and outlined which topics had been discussed so far, with accessibility and road safety being discussed in April 2019, and air quality and noise discussed in June 2019. She stated that the next CIPHAG meeting would be held in September. She added that so far the CIPHAG had agreed the definition of health the HIA would use, which would be the definition used by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the social model of health to be used, the topics scoped for assessment, and the collation of localised baseline data. The HE People and Communities Advisor added that they had a comprehensive baseline dataset of Thurrock collected, which had been provided by Thurrock Council officers, and ensured the data covered local areas as well as borough-wide. She moved onto outlining the process of the HIA and highlighted that the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) scheme was currently undertaking topic-based assessments to feed into the HIA, and this included areas such as accessibility, travel time, and public transport. She summarised and stated that the HIA would consider potential impacts and benefits during construction and operation of the scheme, and outlined the next steps for the HIA over summer.

The Chair began the debate and asked how the departure of the LTC Project Lead would affect the scheme, as he felt Thurrock Council had had a good relationship with him. He also highlighted Appendix A of the report and drew the Committee's attention to the fact that areas such as Tilbury, Chadwell St

Mary and South Ockendon already had higher levels of COPD than other areas of Thurrock and England. He asked what environmental measures would be in place to protect those residents living in urban areas close to the scheme, such as cut and cover along the route. The HE External Affairs Advisor replied that the LTC Project Lead had left to develop his career, but his legacy was the relationship built with Thurrock Council, which would continue. The HE Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor added that big projects such as the LTC went through a design process that could take between one and two years, and this process was currently ongoing. He stated that HE would undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment, which would influence the final design and would identify mitigation measures. He clarified that cut and cover would not be an engineering possibility along the entire route, for example in the Mardyke Valley.

Councillor Spillman asked if HE had been aware of the high levels of COPD before the original design had been announced, and the HE External Affairs Advisor responded that although the final scheme had not yet been agreed, an appraisal had been done when choosing the proposed route. The Assistant Director LTC also responded that now the proposed route had been announced, only tweaks could be made to the alignment, as this was a nationally significant infrastructure project that favoured development. She stated that the general route was now fixed unless a new scheme was developed elsewhere.

The TCAG Representative asked why only certain sections of the borough had been included in the report, as the scheme would affect all residents in Thurrock. The HE People and Communities Advisor replied that the whole of Thurrock would be included in the HIA, but this paper only focused on communities that were in close proximity to the route, as certain issues such as noise would be more localised. The TCAG Representative then asked why HE were using the WHO definition of health, but not WHO guidance on areas such as PM2.5 along the entire route. The HE People and Communities Advisor replied that the HIA would draw on the Air Quality Assessment that used UK and EU legal standards, and modelled PM10. She clarified that PM2.5 made up a fraction of PM10, so although PM2.5 was not explicitly stated in the report, it was included as a fraction of the PM10 modelling. The Assistant Director LTC added that the HIA was a voluntary document, compared to the Environmental Impact Assessment that was a statutory document.

Councillor Mayes highlighted issues of COPD in Tilbury, and mentioned the testing of dust that was currently being undertaken. He felt it would be difficult to mitigate against health impacts, and asked for his concern to be noted by HE. The HE People and Communities Advisor responded that HE were currently focusing on environmental mitigation, but many factors caused increased levels of COPD, such as lifestyle and income. She stated that the legacy of the scheme, such as benefits in STEM education for children, could help to offset factors such as deprivation. The HE Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor added that the HIA and Environmental Impact Assessment would quantify how much the scheme would affect residents, and if the affects

could not be mitigated against then a judgement would be made at examination phase. He mentioned that decisions would be scrutinised both at the Task Force and by government during examination phase.

Councillor Muldowney highlighted the fact that the HIA was voluntary, compared to the Environmental Impact Assessment and asked if they would carry equal weight at examination phase. The HE Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor stated that only mitigation secured through requirements, protective provisions, or legal agreements were a legal requirement. He added that HE currently wanted to submit the Development Consent Order by the end of the year, but the design process and analysis of 29,000 consultation responses would take time. The HE External Affairs Advisor added that they had a commitment to getting the scheme right, and as they wanted to use lots of data to do this, the scheme would take time.

Councillor Massey highlighted that Stanford-le-Hope had not been considered in the paper, even though it was close to the route and would have increased pollution levels, and asked if it was being considered for the HIA. The HE People and Communities Advisor stated that entire borough was being included in the HIA, but Appendix A was only an extract. The Assistant Director LTC clarified that the data had been given to HE by Thurrock Council officers so could confirm it was accurate. The Resident Representative asked if further tunnelling along the route was being considered as an option. The HE Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor replied that a tunnel could not be considered along the whole route due to drainage issues in the Mardyke Valley. He added that the Environment Agency did not favour a tunnel under the Mardyke, but were considering a viaduct to avoid flooding.

Councillor Kelly highlighted the traffic flow at the Orsett Cock Roundabout, as to access Grays or Tilbury from the A128 it appeared that motorists would have to travel along the A13 to Stanford-le-Hope and then back on themselves. He asked if HE could reconsider the design of the Orsett Cock Roundabout, to avoid motorists using the old A13, which ran closer to residents' homes. He also asked if HE were still considering a Tilbury Link Road to avoid HGVs driving through the middle of the borough. The HE Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor replied that they had received many consultation responses regarding the Orsett Cock Roundabout, and this was an issue HE were considering in detail. He added that separate meetings on the Tilbury Link Road were taking place between HE, Thurrock Council and the Port of Tilbury.

The Assistant Director LTC felt that the scheme was affecting the mental health of residents, as many were unable to sell their homes and were unsure of the changes that would be taking place in their towns. She asked on behalf of the Task Force for HE to help those residents suffering with mental health issues due to the scheme, for example setting up a dedicated mental health helpline. The TCAG Representative asked if a more detailed map of ground investigation sites could be given to the Task Force. The HE External Affairs Advisor stated that a high-level map had already been made public, but a balance had to be struck to protect landowners where ground investigations

were taking place, as many were occurring on private property. The TCAG Representative then asked how many weeks' notice would be given to landowners where ground investigations would be taking place. The HE External Affairs Advisor replied that HE aimed to give two weeks' notice although this could change, as ground investigations were dependent on factors such as the weather.

The Thurrock Business Board Representative asked if legislation like that in London regarding pollution could be implemented on the LTC to reduce incidents of COPD across the borough. He added that a push towards electric vehicles from HE would also help the issue. The HE Stakeholder Engagement and SoCG Advisor replied that as the LTC would be a motorway it would be governed by motorway legislation and could not have specific pollution laws. He added that during construction phase HE would commit to a low pollution level of HGV.

14. Task Force Priorities List

The Assistant Director LTC stated that no updates had been received regarding the Task Force Priorities List, but this was a standing item on the agenda. Councillor Kelly stated that many questions on the Task Force Priorities List related to consultation, and asked if a question regarding the business case and how the LTC would be charged could be added. He felt that residents should be able to access the LTC for free, or heavily discounted, and the charging system should be linked to DartCharge to make it easier for all users. Councillor Massey asked if a question regarding the Proposed Rest and Service Area in East Tilbury be added to the Priorities List, and the Assistant Director LTC replied that this had been discussed during consultation, but when HE clarified the scheme then further discussions could be had on this topic.

15. Work Programme

The Assistant Director LTC stated that although the Work Programme looked bare, this was because HE were reviewing their consultation responses, so were not in a position to provide updated to the Task Force. She stated that consultants were currently analysing the traffic modelling data, and once this was complete a traffic modelling workshop with the Task Force could take place.

The meeting finished at 7.39 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**