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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Working Party** formed to address **Traffic/transport-related issues in Lewes** held on **Thursday 7th January 2016**, in the **Yarrow Room, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs S Catlin (Wischhusen); W Elliott; J Lamb; I Makepeace; M Milner; R O’Keeffe.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

TIWP2015/09 **QUESTIONS:** There were none. Three members of the public were present.

TIWP2015/10 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllrs Addecott and Watts, due to a family commitment, and Cllr S Murray who had a Mayoral engagement.

TIWP2015/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** Cllr Makepeace noted, with regard to a discussion on the issues for taxis at Lewes Station, that she worked part-time as a local taxi driver.

TIWP2015/12 **MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting on 21st July 2015 were signed as an accurate record.

TIWP2015/13 **BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:**

1 *Bus services in Lewes:* The meeting welcomed Patrick Warner, Business Development Manager of Brighton & Hove Buses (B&HB). Cllr Elliott had opened a public petition calling for reinstatement of late night services between Lewes and Brighton (service N29/28), lost from the timetable in September 2015. Loss of late last-buses had caused difficulties for those working in, or simply enjoying, evening entertainments *etc* in Brighton and wishing to return to Lewes or beyond. It was acknowledged that these may have been unprofitable to run, but were highly-valued by local people. Mr Warner reported that the company had already listened to public feedback on this matter and planned to re-introduce some late buses as soon as regulations allowed, in April. This would return a 12:00am and 12:30am departure from Brighton to Lewes (Malling) Mondays to Saturdays and add a 1:30am departure on Saturdays. These would not connect with the extended routes to Uckfield or wider rural services. In answer to a question as to whether these could start sooner, Mr Warner regretted that there was unavoidable delay due to formal approval from the Traffic Commissioner for any changes. April was the earliest possible for implementation. A welcome point was that the late services would not demand premium fares. A question arose as to the feasibility of providing an affordable “stop-gap” service using large-capacity taxis, but acknowledged that this was a commercial matter for taxi operators to consider for themselves – Mr Warner undertook to discuss this with operators who may approach him. B&HB would publicize the new services and provide material (leaflets) to allow the Council to assist with this.

Members wished to record their thanks for B&HB’s flexibility and willingness to adapt to public demand, and thanked Mr Warner for attending. He graciously acknowledged and made reference to the philosophy of “strength in partnerships”.

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2 *Lewes Railway Station forecourt:* The Chairman welcomed Victoria Bantock, a local taxi-driver, attending to offer insights into the situation following recent road and bridge improvements. The limited options for waiting taxis caused them to circulate around the town centre and add to congestion and pollution in other areas. They

Continues...

were limited in their ability to respond to waiting passengers and there were conflicts with deliveries and buses replacing rail services at weekends. Parking and waiting restrictions were not enforced, and 60 taxi drivers operating in Lewes were competing for 7 marked spaces. It was said that taxi drivers had not been effectively consulted over the redesigned layout. It was understood that there were discussions taking place between ESCC Highway Dept officers; Lewes District Council's licensing officers, and the Station Manager, and it was hoped that this would extend to representatives of Network Rail. Enforcement was compromised until signage could be approved and it was intended that there should then follow a temporary Traffic Order to regulate the situation for an experimental period. The pending upgrade to the weight limit on the roadbridge was expected to help with routing of heavier vehicles.

Problems in the area were generally attributed to the amount of traffic movement, and the under-used station carpark. Various options were discussed, such as a "holding rank" for taxis which was understood to be under consideration by Network Rail. It was acknowledged that effective dialogue between the parties was a key factor, and generally accepted that once enforcement was enabled and had commenced on-the-ground there should be a reasonable period allowed to elapse, to provide detail to inform re-assessment of the original layout scheme.

It was noted that these issues were relevant to policy themes emerging from work on drafting a Neighbourhood Plan for Lewes. The matter would be referred to the task-group working on transport elements of the Plan.

3 *Compass Travel bus services:* Interim passenger loading statistics were provided for the services supported by the Council since September 2015, and Members considered these; declaring themselves "tentatively hopeful" that the Council's cash contribution was proving beneficial to the community. Three residents of Malling were present, and recounted their experiences with these services and communications with Compass Travel; and related the effects of the recent road-closures. The Council had agreed a review of the arrangements in March, and Members recognized that the recent situation was disrupted by external factors. Some specific concerns were considered to be immediate, and TC would liaise with ESCC officers on regulation of services and with Compass Travel over observations reported regarding irregular charging of fares.

4 *Pedestrian crossing, Church Lane, Malling:* The Council, at its meeting on 12th November 2015, had considered the issue of the proposed crossing adjacent South Malling School – postponed in 2013 due to effects on the School's eligibility for a crossing ("lollipop") patrol. That situation had since changed, and the School were now keen for the deferred crossing to be built. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) officers had retrieved details of the design work and preliminary consultations done in 2013, and advised that the overall cost had not increased significantly. The Town Council held adequate funds in an earmarked Reserve and ESCC could accommodate this in its 2016 programme, but there was a consideration regarding a potential contribution from ESCC's Community Match fund; although this would involve additional cost and delay. To decide this matter, it was resolved (FC2015/71.1) that the Traffic Working Party be mandated to make a decision on Council's behalf.

There was a brief discussion on various constraints imposed by ESCC and the conditions of their community match grant scheme, and subsequently **it was resolved that:**

TIWP2015/13.1 The pedestrian crossing, to be sited in Church Lane Malling to the West of South Malling School, and deferred from 2013, be now commissioned from East Sussex County Council for installation as soon as possible, calling on funds as required from the earmarked reserve identified as P9 in the Council's published accounts (current balance £27,500).

5 *Pedestrian crossings:* Cllr O’Keeffe raised the matter of crossings in Offham Road (A2029) (two sites) and Brighton Road (A277), adj Montacute Road. A residents’ group had submitted a bid for funding to ESCC for a crossing in Offham Road close to the junction with Prince Edward’s Road, and it was believed that there would also be funding from s106 agreements associated with approved development at North Street. It was thought that adequate funding was in place for this, and unlikely that a request for assistance would be made to the Town Council. There was a long-standing demand for a crossing further toward the junction with the A275, near to the steps giving access to Wallands School. There was likely to be a request from residents in the near future to support such a scheme, and this was acknowledged by Members.

There was a project in progress, following a petition by residents, for a crossing in Brighton Road (A277) near to its junction with Montacute Road. This would need to be light-controlled due to its location, and it was expected would cost approximately £120,000 to construct, plus design costs. A grant contribution was likely for 50% of this (£60,000) and a private individual was prepared to contribute £35,000. Members discussed a proposal that the Council might contribute the remaining £25,000. This was considered a case deserving recommendation to Council, and would be promoted to the Finance Working Party when it considered a final review of the budget.

TIWP2015/14

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

Members agreed to recommend that Council provides for a potential contribution of £25,000 toward further pedestrian crossings in the town, and specifically the anticipated project to install a light-controlled crossing in the Brighton Road (A277) near its junction with Montacute Road.

TIWP2015/15

The Chairman suggested that a further meeting be held during March, if possible. He thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 8:55pm

Signed:

Date: