

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGHWAY WORKING GROUP HELD ON TUESDAY 31ST JANUARY 2006 AT 7.30 p.m. AT THE PAVILION, MANOR FIELD

Present: Cllr Mr D Brazier (*County Councillor – co-opted*)
Cllr Mr M Harris (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs M Solman
Cllr Mr C Ward (*arrived at 7.32 p.m.*)

In attendance: Mrs J Hoad (Clerk)
5 members of the public

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Mr B Ramsay and Cllr Mr V Sewell.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Highway Working Group held on 7th December 2005 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Cllr Mr C Ward arrived at 7.32 p.m.

4. Castle Hill

The Working Group considered a letter dated 12th December 2005 from Mr B Fitzgerald, Transportation Engineer at Kent Highway Services and subsequent e mail dated 11th January 2006 confirming that their technical contractor, Jacobs Babbie, had been commissioned to analyse the traffic aspects of Castle Hill and examine the design options to address the problems explained during a site visit on 20th October 2005.

RESOLVED: That, the letter dated 12th December 2005 and subsequent e mail dated 11th January 2006 from Kent Highway Services be received and noted.

5. Fairby Lane

The Working Group considered a report setting out the current position regarding a request from residents to close Fairby Lane at the junction with Ash Road to vehicular traffic whilst still maintaining access for pedestrians and bicycles. The Working Group noted that no progress had been made since the last meeting of the Working Group held on 7th December 2005, other than confirmation received from Mr M Linfield, Principal Engineer, that Mr J Cook, Assistant Engineer, had been asked to provide the Council with an update on the progress of the scheme.

The County Councillor explained that the Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board continued to meet on a regular basis and that at these meetings Board Members, consisting of County Councillors and District Councillors, were offered the opportunity to prioritise highway works and question Officers from Kent Highway Services. He expressed his frustration over the poor performance of Kent Highway Services since the recent re-organisation.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

6. Interactive Sign

The Working Group considered a report and an e mail dated 9th January 2006 from Mr R Dines, Transport Manager at Kent Highway Services setting out the current position regarding the

Council's request for the installation of an interactive warning sign at a northbound site on Ash Road in the vicinity of Chantry Avenue. The Working Group expressed its frustration over Kent Highway Services failure to understand the Council's request for the provision of an interactive warning sign and not an interactive 30 mph repeater. The Working Group was extremely disappointed over the lack of progress with the installation of the interactive warning sign. This was due entirely to Kent Highway Services refusal to use of the sign, which the Working Group considered was particularly frustrating as the Highway Authority had not been asked to provide any financial support for the provision of the sign.

The Working Group noted that a number of automatic counter sites had been set up on the section of Ash Road between the roundabout at the Milestone School and Chantry Avenue to establish the profile of speeds along Ash Road.

The Working Group noted, with interest, that the London Borough of Bromley permits solar powered portable interactive warning signs to be fitted on street lighting columns and other posts around the borough and that as these signs were moveable and non permanent, therefore were not considered permanent signs within the Traffic Signs regulations.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

7. Road Closures

(a) The Working Group considered a letter dated 20th December 2005 from Mr A Burton, Programme Delivery Manager at Kent Highway Services, apologising for the congestion and disruption caused on the evening of 19th October 2005, as a result of a diversion set up along Castle Hill during the closure of Hartley Road for re surfacing.

RESOLVED: That, the report be noted.

(b) The Working Group considered a letter dated 11th January 2006 from PC S Ridley of the North Kent Traffic Management Unit in response to the Council's letter dated 19th December 2005 requesting consideration be given to setting up a temporary one way system in the parish to enable access for emergency vehicles, in the event of a serious road traffic accident blocking Ash Road.

PC Ridley advised that if there was a serious road traffic accident, it would not be viable to make the carriageway on a rural road one way, as most accidents on rural roads cause the carriageway to become completely blocked. He further advised that Police Officers attending road traffic accidents would assess the length of time that delays were likely to occur and in doing so, give consideration to implementing road closures and diversions. He explained that whenever diversions were set up on rural roads, congestion would inevitably occur due to the increases in traffic flow. The immediate priority of the Emergency Services attending road traffic accidents would be to preserve life and then investigate the cause, with a view to establishing whether any offences had occurred.

For all of the above reasons, PC Ridley informed the Working Group that the North Kent Police would not be able to support the suggestion of a one way system or offer any other solutions.

RESOLVED: That, (1) the letter dated 11th January 2006 from PC Ridley of the North Kent Traffic Management Unit be noted and, (2) that road traffic speed statistics currently being recorded on the southern section of Ash Road be forwarded to the North Kent Traffic Management Unit when available.

8. Ash Road

(a) The Working Group considered a letter dated 13th December 2005 from Mr J Cook, Assistant Engineer, Kent Highway Services in response to the Council's letter of 9th August 2005 detailing a list of outstanding works relating to the traffic calming scheme and improvements to the road signage carried out on Ash Road last year. Mr Cook explained that the original schedule of works relating to the works on Ash Road produced by Sevenoaks District Council and agreed with the Parish Council, had subsequently been revised by Kent Highway Services. He explained that one of the omissions to the original scheme had been the installation of a new village nameplate, as at the time discussions were in progress

regarding the provision of an interactive speed sign. He also explained that the Fairby Lane sign was retained as it had been assessed as being in the correct position. The elderly person sign, the new extension post and the removal of the neighbourhood sign had also been retained, but he explained an order could be raised for their removal, if the Council so wished.

It was reported that a response to Mr Cook's letter had been sent on 9th January 2006, pressing the Kent Highway Services for the installation of the village gateway sign as approved by the Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board and removal of the elderly person sign and post. In addition, it had been requested that a copy of the agreed signage and lining work and a breakdown of the expenditure spent to date on the scheme be provided to the Council.

RESOLVED: That, the letter dated 13th December 2005 from Mr J Cook, Kent Highway Services be noted and the Clerk's response in a letter dated 9th January 2006 be confirmed.

(b) The Working Group considered two letters received from a resident suggesting that the Council may wish to consider the provision of mini roundabouts at the junction of Ash Road with St Johns Lane, Church Road and Wellfield and cited other locations in the area where the provision of mini roundabouts had been successful. The Chairman explained that the Council had, in the past, sought the provision of mini roundabouts at each of these locations on Ash Road, but for a number of differing reasons, the Council's requests had been rejected by the Highway Authority.

RESOLVED: That, the letters dated 12th December 2005 and 16th January 2006 be noted.

9. Speedwatch

The County Councillor gave a brief report on the Speedwatch scheme. He explained that it was an initiative set up by the Kent Police and that the scheme was run by teams of volunteers put forward by the Parish Council, ideally working in groups of four. Training would be provided by the Police and each site for the location of the interactive equipment would be risk assessed by and agreed with a Police Liaison Officer. The County Councillor confirmed that anyone could volunteer, even parish councillors, provided they had undertaken the required training. The equipment would be calibrated to work at the maximum speed limit plus 20 % plus 2 mph, so that in a 30 mph maximum speed limit area the equipment would be set to flash at speeds in excess of 38 mph. The registration number of any vehicles triggering the equipment would be recorded by the volunteers and entered by the Police into a central database. If the vehicle details were entered into the database twice, a warning letter would be sent to the registered owner of the vehicle and if entered three times, a stronger warning letter would be sent.

The County Councillor reported that it would be possible to rent the speed indicating equipment, at a reasonable cost and informed the Working Group that Fawkham Parish Council was considering purchasing the equipment. It was suggested that neighbouring Parish Councils may wish to work in partnership, possibly to share the purchase cost of the equipment or to volunteer manning the equipment in neighbouring parishes, thus avoiding any confrontation with offending motorists who may be personally known to the volunteers. It was reported that only one volunteer from Hartley had come forward, but it was felt that more volunteers may come forward if the likely commitment in terms of time was explained in more detail. The Working Group was concerned not to make the commitment to the scheme too onerous and suggested one hour per week may be acceptable.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the report be noted,

(2) a report be included in the next newsletter,

(i) correcting information contained in the last newsletter, so that it be made clear that parish councillors are able to volunteer for the Speedwatch scheme

- (ii) inviting residents to volunteer for the Speedwatch scheme, giving some indication of how much time they may be asked to commit to the scheme,
- (3) the cost of the rental of speed indicating equipment be investigated and,
- (4) neighbouring parishes be contacted to establish their level of interest in participating in the Speedwatch scheme and to assess whether they would be interested in working in partnership with Hartley.

10. Stack Lane

The Working Group considered a report on a complaint received from a resident of Stack Lane about the condition of the unadopted road. The resident had stated that the condition of the unmade surface was made worse by the volume of cars and large delivery vehicles associated with the local Primary School, as the only pedestrian and vehicular access to the school premises was off the unmade section of Stack Lane. The resident also complained about the inconsiderate parking of parents outside the School.

Whilst the Working Group expressed some sympathy with the resident, it believed that as the road was unadopted, the matter was in fact a private affair and one that the Council could not get involved with. Nevertheless, the Working Group felt it may be helpful to obtain a copy of the original planning permission in connection with the building of the Primary School, in order to establish whether there were any conditions imposed on the planning permission regarding the maintenance and upkeep of the access to the School. In addition, the County Councillor offered to make enquiries with Kent County Council's property group to establish whether there were any commitments regarding the upkeep of the access to the School.

RESOLVED: That. (1) a copy of the original planning permission relating to the construction of the Primary School be obtained and, (2) the Community Warden be informed of the parking problems outside the school and asked to attend the site.

11. Parking restrictions

The Working Group considered an e mail dated 9th January 2006 from Mr Boorman, Senior Parking Officer at Sevenoaks District Council informing the Council that he would be asking the parking attendants to patrol Cherry Trees, but informed the Working Group that there were no enforceable parking restrictions in place in Round Ash Way or Fairby Lane at the entrances to Hartley Primary School.

It was reported that warning notices against illegal and inconsiderate parking had been prepared and that the Community Warden had agreed to distribute these notices to parents picking up and dropping off children at Hartley Primary School, if they had parked illegally.

RECOMMENDED: That, the e mail dated 9th January 2006 from the Senior Parking Officer at Sevenoaks District Council be noted and representations be made to the Highway Authority to introduce parking restrictions at the two entrances to Hartley Primary School in Round Ash Way and Fairby Lane.

12. Trees and the Highway

The Working Group considered a letter dated 29th November 2005 from Kent Highway Services enclosing a report identifying a number of problems to various trees located along Ash Road. The report highlighted a problem to the crown of a tree located on Hoselands Green, but the report incorrectly identified the land owner as being Hartley Parish Council. Consultants acting on behalf of Kent Highway Services, Jacobs Babbie, were advised by e mail on 7th December 2005 that the defective tree was in fact located on land owned by Sevenoaks District Council.

RESOLVED: That, the letter dated 29th November 2005 from Kent Highways Services and the Clerk's response in an e mail dated 7th December 2005 be noted.

13. County Lengthsmen Scheme

The Working Group considered two work schedule requests for the County Lengthsmen to repair potholes in Manor Drive and Banckside.

RESOLVED: That, the two work schedule requests be actioned.

14. Kent Highways

The Working Group considered a report on highway problems which had referred to Kent Highway Services for attention and the responses the Council had received to date.

RESOLVED: That, the report be received and noted.

15. Councillors reports

Cllr Solmon reported a pothole outside no 2 Hartley Wood Corner, Manor Drive.

The Chairman reported that a complaint had been received from a resident about the condition of Church Road, in particular the erosion of the earth banks and the condition of the road surface. The resident was informed that the Council had expressed concerns about the condition of Church Road to Kent Highway Services in January 2005 and had requested that provision be made within the 2006-11 Local Transport Plan for the road to be re surfaced.

However, Kent Highway Services had advised that it would not be possible to include such works within the Local Transport Plan, as the Plan was used to fund safety improvements and promote alternative transport modes, in order to reduce reliance on the motor car and therefore could not be used for maintenance purposes such as resurfacing.

The resident was further informed that the Council had sought a reduction in the speed limit along the south section of Church Road, but had been informed that a reduction in the speed limit along this section of road would only provide a minor safety improvement and Kent Highway Services would not be willing to support this proposal for inclusion in the 2006–11 Local Transport Plan. Kent Highway Services further advised that if it was found the unrestricted speed on this section of Church Road was inappropriate and did not fit the national criteria for a de restricted roads, then a consultation exercise could be undertaken to reduce the speed limit.

RESOLVED: That, (1) the County Lengthsmen be asked to fill the pothole outside 2 Hartley Wood Corner, Manor Drive and, (2) Kent Highway Services be asked to confirm when Church Road is next scheduled for resurfacing.

16. Date of the next meeting

Tuesday 28th February 2006 at 7.30 p.m. at Hartley Library.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

Signed:.....
Chairman

Date:.....

Public Question Time

Public question time commenced at 8.45 p.m.

The resident of Church Road explained her concerns over the condition of Church Road in more detail, (see minute item 15).

Another resident of Church Road produced a copy of letter in which it referred to a letter dated 28th April 2004 from Sevenoaks District Council confirming a survey of Church Road would be undertaken during the summer of 2004, with a view to applying for funding to re surface the road during 2005 or for the re surfacing work to be undertaken over a 2 year period. The resident also referred to an e mail dated 18th January 2006 sent to the Parish Council about the condition of Church Road, to which the sender had not received a response. The Clerk informed the Working Group she had not seen the e mail, but would look into the matter.

Public question closed at 9. 10 p.m.

Note: The e mail of 18th January 2006 referred to in public question time has not been received by the Council.