

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held at the Town Hall,
The Broadway, Crowborough on Tuesday 28th July 2015 at 7.30 pm

Present	Councillors	Margaret Brain Quentin Burch Peter Ellefsen Martyn Garrett David Larkin * Alan Penney Ronald Reed Heather Rogers Greg Rose Wendy Scrace Matthew Street * Sandra Timms	Chairman
Also present		John Coleman Cllr Richard Stogdon Cllr Jeannette Towey Philippa Hewes David Foot Susan Barnard 2 members of the public	Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Comm. East Sussex County Council Wealden District Council Town Clerk Operations Manager Operations Administrator

* *Denotes non attendance*

APOLOGIES

Cllr Matthew Street – personal reasons.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

MINUTES

Minutes – 2nd June 2015

7511 **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June 2015 as confirmed be signed by the Chairman.

Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)

Lighting improvements at Jarvis Brook pedestrian crossing (7073)

The columns and lights have been installed and the request for the transfer of power supply is being progressed by UK Power Networks. NOTED

Widening of footpath by new pedestrian crossing at Beacon Academy

The work was carried out on 27th July. NOTED

Crowborough Cross Traffic Signals Improvement Scheme

East Sussex County Council has advised that the detailed design is still awaited. Once received, any relevant CCTV footage may be used as part of the design review and safety audit process. NOTED

RAILWAY REPORT

In support of his written report, John Coleman provided further information on the planned infrastructure improvement work. For Crowborough this will mean a seven week closure of the line south to Uckfield early in the New Year and two four week periods with no off-peak services (November and March). Some parking spaces will be temporarily lost due to the works compound to be sited at the south end of the station car park. The platforms will be extended at Crowborough and essential maintenance work carried out on the tunnel.

Service has been poor recently, with many off-peak cancellations, reduced numbers of carriages and insufficient drivers. The promised additional trains will not be available until next year due to the extent of work needed to make them compatible with existing trains on the line.

The CRP development officer has offered to assist with transport aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal for additional parking spaces for rail users along Farningham Road has been deemed to be non-viable due to the costs involved in land stabilisation; Network Rail is willing to consider alternative sites.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**Strengthening Local Relationships – next meeting 7th September**

Councillors were invited to suggest items for the agenda by notifying the Town Clerk up to two weeks before the meeting. Traffic calming measures in Green Lane, flooding and the road surface in Myrtle Road, and a crossing or dropped kerbs in Church Road/Gordon Road to assist crossing the road with pushchairs, were all suggested.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**I Care for Crowborough event 21st – 26th September**

Further to a meeting of the working party, schools and local groups/organisations have been contacted to invite them to participate, a draft timetable of action has been drawn up and grant funding has been secured from the Joint Action Group. There has been a very positive response from many local organisations and some schools. There will be a big launch for the scheme at the beginning of September once the

holiday period is over. Councillors were invited to contribute ideas for the poster and leaflet design and to suggest areas needing attention which are not part of an obvious neighbourhood.

To approve nursery supplier

As agreed at the Environment Committee meeting of 30th September 2014, a price comparison of nursery suppliers was considered by Councillors.

7512 RESOLVED to continue to use Jordan's Nursery as the Council's nursery supplier until 31st March 2020.

Request from Women's Institute for winter planting to celebrate centenary

It was **AGREED** to proceed with the request from the WI for celebratory planting in the anniversary bed.

It is expected that a request will be made for special planting next year in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Crowborough's twinning with Montargis.

RIGHTS OF WAY

East Sussex County Council's Rights of Way and Countryside Sites Consultation

Cllr Richard Stogdon explained that East Sussex County Council is considering handing over management of some Countryside Sites to other, suitable bodies. This has already been done with some success by other County Councils. Other options being considered include setting up a local authority trading company, incorporating land management into Highways contracts, and using small contractors to carry out specialist work.

CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS

To review Ranger's report of tasks completed against Management Plans and other work

The Ranger's report covering work at the Ghyll, Country Park and Bluebell Wood was considered by Councillors. It was noted that Exmoor ponies will be returning to the Palesgate Lane Meadow in August. Work continues to resolve the issue of a fallen tree in Tollwood Road.

FINANCE

Management Account Reports to 31st May and 30th June 2015

7513 RESOLVED to adopt the Management Account Reports for 31st May and 30th June 2015.

7514 **RESOLVED** that this Committee excludes the public and press from this meeting on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. This is in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 section1.

TO CONSIDER A CHANGE TO CONTRACT FOR RANGER

7515 **RESOLVED** to increase the Ranger's contracted hours by 8 hours per week as from 1st September 2015.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

A question was received regarding which authority should be contacted for reporting locations of Japanese Knotweed; enquiries will be made.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 28th JULY 2015

MEETINGS ATTENDED

Sussex Community Rail Partnership – Uckfield & East Grinstead Lines Steering Group Meeting 16th June 2015

The meeting was informed that the development of the SCRP's next 5 year business plan was a valuable exercise that was going well.

In brief, it details how the SCRP plans to continue its work within the new franchise period (this commences on 26th July 2015) with a strong commitment and with basic funding in place for the next 5 – 7 years. However, in order to operate at the same levels of activity half of the funding is still required.

Gatwick and Kent County Council have been the first to put their first year grants in place and these are very welcome.

The Sussex CRP recently took part at the National CRP organised "Community Rail in the City" event at London Blackfriars station. Their stall was thought to be the best on show around all of the London terminal stations, and it was felt that considerable interest was generated that will hopefully lead to more people visiting Sussex by rail.

The SCRP Line Action Plan has been updated and is being implemented.

Sharon Gray, the CRP development officer, is available if requested, to assist in transport aspects arising in the preparation of Council's Local Neighbourhood Plan.

Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee 10th July 2015

Unfortunately, it was reported that the current service shows little change from the time of the May report. Only a slight improvement in the morning peak may have been achieved.

Southern and Network Rail were both represented at the meeting and presented the July update of their service Improvement Plan put together by Network Rail, Thameslink and Southern that commenced in March 2015.

So far, the Public Performance Measure for Southern services improved from 75.2% in January, to 86.5% in May, but dropped back slightly to 85.7% in June.

(Last week not only were there cancellations on four weekdays, the sole normally 8-car train in the evening peak was reduced to 4 carriages.)

Work on all the promised initiatives continues and was said to be on schedule: the one with the most immediate help to our line is probably the qualification of 58 new drivers by the end of this month from the start of the year. Some of the most recent train cancellations have been due to unavailability of staff.

The meeting was advised that the promised additional trains require technical upgrades, in addition to all the other work mentioned previously, in order to be compatible with the existing trains on the line, which embodied later changes in the build standard. As a result their entry into traffic will not be possible before 2016. This is very disappointing.

Network Rail gave the latest details of its local projects.

The new Uckfield station car park is nearly finished and, although further delayed, should be open in early August.

The revised design for the platform extension at Uckfield has been completed and this will not require the use of part of the nature reserve.

The enabling works for all the platform extensions, to enable the longer trains to run, will commence this month (at Hever) and the actual construction work will start at various dates from October. The last to be started will be in January. Completion is still planned for all stations by July 2016.

Southern will circulate information for residents and other interested parties very shortly.

Southern advised presentations/drop-ins about the plans will take place at some of the stations (Crowborough, Edenbridge Town and Uckfield).

The works that are going to be carried out are extensive, as previously advised, and the planned engineering line possessions will have a considerable affect on passengers as most off-peak services will not run on the line. The periods concerned are in November, and then for various dates during the first half of 2016.

In addition there will be a complete closure of the line between Crowborough and Uckfield early in the New Year, which will obviously affect peak-hour services as well. This closure is necessary to enable essential maintenance work to be carried out in Crowborough Tunnel in addition to the platform works at Buxted and Uckfield.

Replacement buses will be provided for the missing services and those serving Crowbough will run to and from Oxted calling at Edenbridge Town, Ashurst, Eridge, Crowborough, Buxted and Uckfield. Hever and Cowden will be served by a mini-bus from Edenbridge Town.

Network Rail and Southern have tried hard to ensure that these plans have the minimum affect on local residents and passengers. They have avoided the main holiday periods and reduced the number of days affected from their initial figure of 192 (one long closure) to 108 days.

It is certainly to be hoped that the gain will be worth the pain and that when the new works are completed, the new franchisee will recover the ground that has unfortunately been lost recently.

UNCONFIRMED UNTIL NEXT MEETING

OTHER

The Electrification RUS is still awaited. This should not be surprising however, since as is well known, some of the agreed future electrification schemes have been put back because too much has been spent, and too little achieved to date, with the current Great Western and North Western projects.

The Government, however, definitely seems to be pressing ahead with the new study into the viability of re-opening Lewes-Uckfield and we are told that this will include a proper re-assessment of the BML2 proposal.

I understand that the proposal to provide additional car parking spaces along and/or adjacent to Farningham Road has been investigated by Southern and Network Rail car park teams that have concluded that the scheme is not viable because of the costs involved in land stabilisation to support the new surface that would be required and the vehicles thereon. Network Rail is aware of the car parking issues at Crowborough and is quite willing to investigate any larger and flatter sites that may become available in the future.

J N Coleman 20th July 2015