

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held at the Town Hall,
The Broadway, Crowborough on Tuesday 29th September 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 Colin Stocks Cllr Kay Moss Philippa Hewes David Foot Susan Barnard 2 members of the public	Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Comm. North Wealden Community Transport Crowborough Town Council Town Clerk Operations Manager Operations Administrator

* *Denotes non attendance*

APOLOGIES

None

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Greg Rose declared a personal interest in the planting of the anniversary bed as a member of the Friends of Montargis.

Cllr Ron Reed declared a personal interest in the planting of the anniversary bed as a member of the Friends of Montargis.

MINUTES

Minutes – 28th July 2015

7546 **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2015 as confirmed be signed by the Chairman.

Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)**Lighting improvements at Jarvis Brook pedestrian crossing (7073)**

The improvements have been completed. It was noted that the old posts are still in position and it was agreed to ask East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to arrange for the removal of the old posts.

Crowborough Cross Traffic Signals Improvement Scheme

A revised scheme has been approved by the Road Safety Team and is scheduled for installation by the end of October. This scheme incorporates a right turn filter in the High Street and an intelligence system able to alter timing of the lights as necessary depending on traffic levels.

Strengthening Local Relationships meeting – 21st October

Items requested to be included in the agenda include:

- London Road – speeding traffic and improving the road surface to reduce traffic noise.
- New Road – speeding traffic using it to avoid the traffic lights at the Cross.

RAILWAY REPORT

John Coleman provided further explanation of the problems associated with the newly acquired additional carriages. The forthcoming closure for platform lengthening work at Crowborough station would run from 2nd – 27th November. A replacement bus service will operate from Crowborough to Oxted or Haywards Heath and tickets will also be accepted at Tunbridge Wells. The new Uckfield Station car park is due to open 5th October.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**Proposed change to speed limit on B2100 at Jarvis Brook**

ESCC is proposing to introduce a 40mph speed limit on the B2100 Rotherfield Road from the end of the existing 30mph zone to a point between the junctions of Clackhams Lane and Palesgate Lane. This may preclude the future possibility of a pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of Tesco. It was agreed to respond to ESCC requesting that the existing 30mph limit is extended to incorporate the entrance to Sybron Way.

Bus service 228 and 229 – changes introduced 1st September

The changes are aimed at reducing costs and removing the overlap with the Brighton & Hove no. 29 service, and will result in services to a larger area of Crowborough.

Bus stops – improvements

ESCC is carrying out improvements to a number of existing bus stops to make them more accessible and visible. The work includes provision of passenger hard-standing boarding areas, installation of 3m black steel poles and the fitting of bus stop flags showing the name of each bus stop. Electronic travel information signs have been installed at some bus stops. It is proposed to install additional bus stops on either side of Croft Road near Waitrose.

North Wealden Community Transport Partnership Limited report April-July 2015

The report detailed an increase in passenger numbers and fare income for the shopping service. There are concerns regarding an overall shortfall in finances and difficulties in recruiting additional volunteer drivers. An interest free loan has enabled a fifth minibus to be purchased but exceptional repairs to existing vehicles have proved to be expensive. Changes to the 228/229 timetable have resulted in more people using the 226 service.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Report on I Care for Crowborough event 21st – 26th September

There was a report on the events of the week and thanks were recorded to all those who took part. The aim had been not just to litter pick but to try to engender a feeling of civic pride. It is hoped to repeat the event, possibly on an annual basis but over a shorter period of time. The working party will hold a debrief session, with a view to making improvements next time. A list of places that the litter pickers could not access will be compiled and forwarded to Wealden District Council.

Report on the additional support for litter clearance during the summer

During the summer, additional support is provided from the seasonal staff for the clearance of litter and the emptying of litter bins. David Foot reported that for the first time this year, 120 hours were required for a dedicated helper for the Environment Warden; the cost was allocated from the groundstaff cost centre. It was noted that the Environment Warden covers a far wider area than the previous employee as she has the benefit of a van and better equipment, and that Ranger also spends time clearing litter. Wealden District Council is the litter authority and a review of its litter bin provision is being undertaken.

Request for summer planting in the anniversary bed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of twinning with Montargis

The Town Council has been asked to plant red, white and blue flowers in the anniversary bed next summer as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations. The planting will be undertaken in-house at no additional cost.

CCTV

Information report and future contract

Crowborough is one of 200 councils which form the Sussex CCTV Partnership run by Sussex Police and based in Lewes. The CCTV contract expired in August 2015 and Sussex Police is reviewing maintenance contract options with the aim of providing a new contract in 2016. In the interim, the existing arrangements continue. The equipment for the four CCTV cameras in Crowborough is relatively new and is expected to last the duration of another 5-year contract.

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 reviewed. Much of the Ranger's work has involved the removal of invasive species, particularly Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed, Rhododendron and Laurel and litter clearing. The Chair was concerned that litter clearing was not best use of the Ranger's time especially as his hours had only just been increased due to other work load.

It was agreed to create a map detailing the problematic areas in Crowborough that are the responsibility of the district council with a view to addressing the issues.

8.40pm – two members of the public left the meeting.

FINANCE

Management Account Reports to 31st July and 31st August 2015

7547 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Management Account Reports for 31st July and 31st August 2015.

Councillors were invited to put forward for consideration ideas for projects next year in order that they may be budgeted for.

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

None

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

**RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
29th SEPTEMBER 2015**

MEETINGS ATTENDED

Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee 1st September 2015

This meeting was also the Annual General Meeting of the Committee and the Treasurer/ Secretary presented the Accounts for the year which were approved but did indicate that a modest additional funding for expenses (largely for postage) would soon be needed to enable the Committee to continue. It was agreed that the parishes and towns represented should be written to and invited to provide further contributions. This would be the first such request for 4 years and it is hoped that this can be agreed by all including Crowborough. The present officers were re-elected.

GTR (Southern) was represented at the meeting but unfortunately the anticipated Network Rail representative was unable to attend.

The Committee discussed and complained of the current poor performance of the Uckfield line services both in the peak and off-peak times. The problems included cancelations, turn-backs and late running. It appeared that some other services were as badly, or worse, affected than ours. Problems were still largely down to staff shortages, train failures and infrastructure problems. Suicides and trespass incidents are also now increasing problems. The staffing problem is being tackled by the ongoing recruitment programme. The rise in train failures is difficult to deal with as the defects appear to be of a random nature. This is very disappointing as the trains have all been recently overhauled and are being maintained by reputedly one of the best teams in the country. This is not very encouraging for the forthcoming overhaul and rehabilitation programme for the eagerly awaited additional trains.

[Last week, the September progress report for the Service Improvement Plan was published and reported on the number of improvements being undertaken by Network Rail with regard to their infrastructure problems. It also reported that the most recent timetable changes did in fact seem to have significantly improved the morning peak services and benefited the evenings as well.]

The additional four trains saga has taken another turn. It may not actually be practicable to convert these trains from 3-car units to 2 and 4-car units as used by Southern! Southern are now re-looking at the possibility of running them as 3-car units. The undertaking now is that, in any event, they will be available by July 2016 as promised to and/or by the DfT.

Southern were able to brief the Committee on the Network Rail platform lengthening project and the other planned concurrent works on the line.

Contractors are at work and a main compound has been set up at Hever.

Temporary works crossings have been put in place at several stations.

Platform works have started at Edenbridge Town and Cowden.

Ground clearance has started at Ashurst and elsewhere.

Some signals have very recently been renewed and re-positioned, including one at Crowborough.

The alternative bus services to be provided during the future planned engineering possessions and line closures were discussed and some suggestions for consideration by Southern were provided.

Southern confirmed that it was working very hard to provide as good a replacement bus service as it could achieve during what will be quite demanding conditions.

The Committee were told by a member that it had been heard that under GTR policy notices with regard to replacement buses would no longer be provided by Southern, as Thameslink didn't do this. The Committee requested Southern to check if this policy change had been implemented and, if indeed it had, to reverse what was considered to be a very backward step ASAP.

At least we were told all replacement services for the planned works discussed earlier will be well publicised.

It has been learned that the Uckfield station car park is nearing completion, with work having restarted after resolution of a drainage issue and may soon actually be opened.

OTHER

Network Rail has published its Sussex Route Study. This concludes, as did the earlier draft, that in the short to medium term there is not sufficient value in restoring the Uckfield – Lewes, link either by reason of offering passengers an additional route from the South Coast to London or by offering a diversionary route in times of emergency or engineering works.

Railfuture (the Pro-Rail Lobby Group) has published some interesting propositions with regard to how, despite the above, the new study requested by the Chancellor may be conditioned by the wider scope that he requires to be considered. Essentially, Railfuture suggests that the terms of reference for this report define a comprehensive list of potential benefits to be produced and requires the study to provide a viable solution to providing as many of these benefits as possible. This solution could, it is suggested be staged, with a lower budget initial early stage, including re-opening the Lewes – Uckfield link, which would lead on to a second stage which would make further use of the infrastructure gained to provide the regional benefits. Details may be found on their web-site.

A notice has been posted at Eridge station advising passengers that unless the parking of cars in the nearby roads becomes safer, more responsible and considerate to residents and other road users then the roads concerned will be totally double yellow-lined and enforcement action will be taken as necessary thereafter.

J N Coleman 20th September 2015