

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held at the Town Hall,  
The Broadway, Crowborough on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at 7.30 pm

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Present	Councillors	Quentin Burch Michael Cooke Elizabeth Fermor Philip Fermor Beverley Johnstone Kay Moss Ronald Reed Wendy Scrace Andrew Steen Sandra Timms	Vice Chairman        Chairman
Also present		John Coleman Philippa Hewes David Foot Susan Barnard 1 member of the public	Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Comm. Town Clerk Operations Manager Operations Administrator

\* *Denotes non attendance*

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## **APOLOGIES**

None

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

## **MINUTES**

### **Minutes – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

**7232** **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014 as confirmed be signed by the Chairman.

### **Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)**

#### **Pedestrian crossing at Beacon Academy**

The installation of the crossing has now commenced. NOTED.

#### **Lighting improvements at Jarvis Brook pedestrian crossing (7073)**

*An application has been submitted for match funding – the closing date for the first round of applications is 31.07.14.* NOTED.

Planting at Clokes Corner (7023)

The planting is now well established and the hanging basket trees look most effective. There has been positive feedback from members of the public about the planting throughout the town. NOTED.

Grazing at Palesgate Lane Meadow (7071)

The ponies were removed after grazing the land, but may return later in the season. NOTED.

**RAILWAY REPORT**

John Coleman reported on the continuing problem of overcrowding on the Uckfield line. Govia, which will absorb the Southern franchise in July 2015, has promised additional capacity but no diesel rolling stock is expected to become available until after electrification elsewhere (after 2019). MP Charles Hendry has been written to on this matter and future prospective parliamentary candidates will be invited to future committee meetings in order to establish ongoing political support.

Cllr Beverley Johnstone reported on the station project and the installation of two planters on the grass verge adjoining the car park. The prize-winning posters are to be displayed at the station. Packs of artistic postcards have been produced and are available for purchase at various outlets in the town.

Discussions have been held with Network Rail concerning the provision of additional parking along Farningham Road.

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT****The condition of major road signs**

Many road signs are in poor condition and either too dirty to be clearly seen or obscured by overgrowth. Town Council grounds staff clean some of them whilst pressure washing bus shelters but cannot take on all the work necessary throughout the town.

It was **AGREED** that Councillors would attempt to identify the worst cases and that the matter would be raised at the next Strengthening Local Relationships meeting and brought to the notice of the Safer Wealden Partnership.

**To consider items for the Strengthening Local Relationships meeting 1<sup>st</sup> September**

It was **AGREED** that the following items would be submitted for the agenda:-

- 1) The condition of major road signs and the possible implications of organising sign cleaning groups via Neighbourhood Watch and other bodies.
- 2) Extending the 30mph town centre speed limit to cover the A26 in the vicinity of the entrance to Goldsmiths Recreation Ground.

- 3) The issue of traffic and parking on Crowborough Hill at the Brook Surgery.
- 4) The provision of day care services when Hookstead Day Care closes.
- 5) An update on the Crowborough Traffic Study.

### **East Sussex County Council consultation on proposed changes to subsidised bus services**

East Sussex County Council is proposing a number of cuts to subsidised bus services. Under the proposed changes, service 226 which is currently operated by Wealdlink, will be reduced from the existing Monday to Saturday service to Wednesday and Saturday only.

It was **AGREED** that the Town Council would take part in the consultation (running until 28<sup>th</sup> September) and that Councillors should also do so on an individual basis.

It was **AGREED** that further information should be sought regarding costs with a view to exploring funding opportunities.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

#### **East Sussex County Council consultation on draft East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Sites Plan**

The consultation runs until 5<sup>th</sup> September and there is a drop-in information event taking place at Uckfield Civic Centre on 5<sup>th</sup> August from 2-5pm.

The proposed sites are not in Crowborough but policies need to be considered as they may impact the town in the future.

#### **To consider a request to install a dog waste bin to serve the footpath between Beacon Gardens and Old Lane**

**7233** **RESOLVED** not to install a dog waste bin to serve the footpath between Beacon Gardens and Old Lane.

**7234** **RESOLVED** to request that the Town Council sponsored PCSO monitors the problem with dog waste on the footpath at this location and issues enforcement tickets as appropriate.

Wealden District Council is conducting a trial of a new-style sign to encourage people to clear up after their dog.

#### **Litter clearance and request to remove the litter bin at Goldsmiths Avenue**

Wealden District Council, as the litter authority, has been contacted regarding public awareness/education campaigns but there are no plans to run such a campaign at present due to limited staff and resources.

A litter bin in Goldsmiths Avenue is being used for household waste. Wealden District Council is to be contacted to see if there are any measures that can be used to address the problem. Members did not wish to remove the litter bin.

### **Trees at Clokes Corner**

The majority of one tree was cut down earlier this year as it was unsafe. The condition of a second tree is being monitored by a tree surgeon but is still capable of displaying Christmas lights this year. It is proposed that both trees are surveyed in the spring with a view to their removal and replacement.

**7235** **RESOLVED** to leave both trees in situ at present and to budget for their removal next spring, subject to advice.

**7236** **RESOLVED** to replace both trees with suitable alternative trees following their removal.

### **CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS**

#### **To review report of tasks completed against Management Plans**

A list of tasks completed in June and July 2014 as part of the Management Plans for the Country Park, The Ghyll, Palesgate Lane Meadow and The Bluebell Wood was reviewed and noted.

Future projects and funding opportunities are to be considered.

### **LIGHTING**

#### **To note replacement lanterns at 4 Alderbrook Road and 11 Whitehill Road**

The lanterns have been replaced with LED versions. NOTED

### **FINANCE**

#### **Management Account Reports to 31<sup>st</sup> May and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

**7237** **RESOLVED** to adopt the Management Account Reports for the two periods ending 31<sup>st</sup> May and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

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

None

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

## **RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 29<sup>th</sup> JULY 2014**

### **MEETINGS ATTENDED**

#### **Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

East Sussex County Council attended but Southern was not represented.

It was reported that recently services have been of variable quality. In addition to the usual and growing peak time overcrowding, the reliability and punctuality of services is quite often poor: sometimes due to signalling problems and sometimes to train failures. These may happen all over the network but often affect the Uckfield line passengers. A recent lightning strike also caused severe disruption.

When there are difficulties with the services the communication of the problems and information regarding the incident and the responsive action is not being passed on to passengers. For example, replacement buses arrive at stations without having knowledge of the destinations to which they are to go and sometimes of the route they are meant to follow.

It was reported that the Committee had received a letter from Go-via (to whom it had written on learning of their success in winning the new TSGN franchise) which stated that:-

“Additional capacity will be provided as soon as possible to relieve crowding on the busy Uckfield route. Timing will depend on when suitable diesel rolling stock becomes available (likely to be after electrification elsewhere on the network). At that point an additional 14 carriages into London Bridge will be provided in the three-hour morning peak (an increase of more than 50%), and an additional 10 carriages from London Bridge in the evening peak (an increase of more than 40%).”

The letter also invited a representative of the Committee to the Southern Stakeholders' Meeting in Brighton to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> July, at which Govia Thameslink Railway would be making a presentation. It was agreed that a representative of the Committee should attend and this would be arranged.

It was noted that GTR was itself making a presentation on 10<sup>th</sup> July at Euston and that it could be useful for someone to attend here. It was agreed that I should represent the Committee at Euston, and my notes follow below.

It was also agreed that a letter be written to our MP requesting him to establish the validity of the franchise contract with regard to the provision of the additional trains/carriages.

It was further agreed that local PPC's should be invited to attend our future meetings to enable us to establish future political support.

ESCC are keen to stress the importance for economic growth that it attaches to improved rail links including the Uckfield line.

#### **Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) Stakeholders' Meeting at 3pm 10th July 2014**

The Meeting was provided with a presentation by Govia staff to give more details of their new franchise.

Go-via is a company jointly owned by the Go-Ahead transport group and Keolis a subsidiary of SNCF the French state rail system. The seven year franchise will run from September 2014. Go-via will operate the franchise under the name of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) which will include the Thameslink and Great Northern franchises (currently run by First Group as First Capital Connect) and in July 2015 will absorb the Southern and Gatwick Express franchises currently separately run by Go-via. These will retain their present branding.

Unlike most rail franchises this is a contract for the provision of services and the revenue returns and risks remain with the DfT. This is because of the complexity of operating the trains through the period of the remainder of the Thameslink project.

The service requirement has been closely defined by the DfT. The definition covers the core timetables and the train passenger seat capacities.

The presentation confirmed the information provided by the letter referred to above in respect of the franchise capacity provisions for the Uckfield line.

In addition, as far as the Uckfield line is concerned the timetables will be similar to the present one (although temporary changes are probable throughout the Thameslink engineering project).

The trains will continue to be diesel powered and the present single-track sections of line will remain.

There is no mention of any of future work towards electrification, re-doubling of the single-line sections, re-instatement of the Lewes – Uckfield line or BML2.

During the new franchise considerable benefits will be introduced and widespread over the lines served, including:-

New customer apps giving loading information, door to door journey planning and car park availability information.

Audio and visual real-time train running information.

Real-time information on replacement buses linked to station customer information systems and the apps.

New flexible season ticketing will be trialled to with the aim of reducing the cost for journeys taken outside the peak hours.

Any future fare increases will be in-line with DfT policy. (As now.)

The Key smart-card ticket purchasing will be extended throughout the franchise.

The full presentation may be viewed on the Go-via web-site under the GTR banner.

The presentation was followed by questions and answers and those relating to the Uckfield line were:-

The date at which additional trains/carriages would be provided for the Uckfield line services was not known at present: however negotiations with other operators were ongoing at the present time. The negotiations were very difficult but would be successfully resolved and the trains would be provided as soon as possible.

It was then, stated that the service improvements promised for many coastal destinations would not result in a worsening of Uckfield line services. Indeed, it was possible that the much better timetabling that had become possible should result in a better and more reliable service overall.

Later in the Q & A session Govia stated that they expected to bid for the next franchise which it is assumed will be of the normal revenue risk type and would make every effort to assist in the development work for further improvements for the Uckfield line in the next Control periods, if this was required. They have been led to understand that electrification is both difficult and expensive because of the very poor supply situation that exists in Wealden and other parts of Sussex.

It appears that any progress at all with any of these aspirations will depend upon the Network Rail Route Study and of course the DfT's view.

## **OTHER**

### **Crowborough Station Frontage**

Two large holes have been dug in the grass strip and two or more of the newly planted trees removed. Please advise Sharon Gray at the Community Rail Partnership if you know who is responsible for the damage and who owns the strip of land concerned.

### **Network Rail**

The draft of Network Rail's Sussex Route Study will be published for consultation in September this year.

Work on the new Uckfield station car park will also start in September.

J N Coleman

21<sup>st</sup> July 2014