

## **ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Bosley (Chairman) (Chairman)

Cllr. Grint (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Ayres, Ms. Chetram, Cooke, Edwards-Winser, London, Orridge, Mrs. Sargeant and Scholey

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. Bayley, Butler, Mrs. Dibsall, Maskell, Mrs. Purves, Searles and Williamson

Cllrs. Mrs. Ayres were also present.

### 26. Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2012, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 27. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 28. Formal Response from the Cabinet following matters referred by the Committee and/or requests from the Performance and Governance Committee (please refer to the minutes as indicated):

a) Edenbridge Conservation Area Appraisal and Management (Cabinet 12.11.12 Minute 50)

b) Annual Review of Car Parking Charges for 2012/14 and Christmas Parking 2012 (Cabinet 12.11.12 Minute 47)

c) 2013/14 Budget and Review of Service Plans 2013/14 Budget and Review of Service Plans (Cabinet 06.12.12 Minute 61)

The responses were noted.

### 29. Actions from previous meeting

The completed action was noted.

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### 30. Future Business, the Work Plan 2012/13 (attached) and the Forward Plan

Members noted the lack of items on the work plan from May 2013. It was agreed that this would be properly reviewed at the next meeting. It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Partnerships be invited to address the Committee on his role and responsibilities at a meeting in May / September 2013. Further to a request received from Edenbridge Parish Council it was also agreed to put Gatwick down as a possible future item. Members were asked to bring their ideas for future items to the next meeting.

*Action 1: The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Partnerships to be invited to a future meeting.*

### 31. Bus Services

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Daniel Washington, Public Transport Planner from Kent County Council (KCC), and the following representatives from Bus Operators in the district: Matthew Arnold from Arriva; Norman Kemp from Nu Venture and Brian Wharf and Austin Blackburn from Go Coach.

The Public Transport Planner (KCC) reported that:

- Arriva had replaced the 408 service with the 478 which was operating on a temporary basis on a KCC contract
- Go Coach 429 was now operating a Sunday service from Eynsford to Bluewater which was on a years trial basis funded through the local county Members Highway Fund
- September 2012 saw the successful introduction of the Kent 16+ travelcard more than 3000 had been issued exceeding projected demand
- Sevenoaks Bus Station had been refurbished through partnership working between KCC, SDC and Go Coach and would be formally opened on 25 January 2013 with County Councillor Brazier and the Leader of the District Councillor Fleming. There was also the opportunity for the information office to be used to sell bus tickets and provide tourist information
- North West Kent Karrier Service was due to be taken over by COMPAID

A Member asked if it were possible to see the figures for passenger numbers on routes. In response the Public Transport Planner (KCC) advised that he could request the figures for the tendered services, but for commercial routes it would be up to the bus companies. The 236 had introduced a Saturday service which Surrey County Council had been confident to fund.

All the Bus Operators present agreed that they were happy to share the figures. Representatives from Go Coach reported that they had seen growth in certain routes for example, a growth in use of concessionary fares on the 421 and growth on cash fares on the 401.

*Action 1: Bus Companies to provide passenger numbers to the next meeting they attend.*

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A Member queried whether the Kent 16+ travelcard had to be paid for up front, or whether there was the opportunity to pay instalments. The Public Transport Planner from Kent County Council (KCC) was not sure, a representative from Go Coach believed that certain schools ran their own schemes to help with funding.

Matthew Arnold, Arriva South and South Eastern, addressed the Committee.

- With reference to the 402 service, one route had covered Bromley to Tunbridge Wells and the other Sevenoaks to Tunbridge Wells via the Weald. Due to declining numbers Arriva had decided to stop this service, however KCC had intervened and subsidised it from a local County Members' Highway Fund on a trial basis until April 2012. Since then Arriva had elected to carry on the service without the subsidy until April 2014 provided there were no changes to the Freedom Pass reimbursements. They were also looking to make amendments in the afternoon to access the Sevenoaks Rail Station
- 452 was a development funded service which ran every thirty minutes
- 478 were looking at making improvements to return times especially arrival times in Swanley, and opportunities to buy through tickets to the 477 service
- 433/531 new school service to cope with the increase in passengers due to the success of the Kent Freedom Pass
- New buses were being used on the 402 service and a three month additional manufacturers comparative trial was underway
- 477 Orpington to Bluewater was being introduced in February 2013
- new lower floor double deckers for the 402 and 489 services and hoping to be 100% low floor double deckers by the end of 2013
- it was anticipated that the 308 with newer and refurbished buses by the end of the summer
- marketing for the 402 service had generated a small increase in passengers
- Arriva were looking at simplifying the 431 and 432 routes as were too complicated and requested Members to advise of any concerns
- It was hope that Smartcards, similar to Oyster cards in London, would be operational by the summer.

In response to questions he agreed to give his details to various Members to discuss particular routes and services.

Norman Kemp, Nu Venture, advised that Nu Venture only operated a limited service within Sevenoaks District via the 404. He acknowledged the benefits of the partnership working on the improvements to Sevenoaks bus station which had provided additional space.

Brian Wharf and Austin Blackburn from Go Coach explained that they had been heavily involved with the bus station improvements after taking it over from Arriva. With the help of KCC and £20,000 the result was a much better refurbished information centre, a much better service canteen and therefore better working environment. It made sense to have an information/tourist point there and fully utilise the member of staff who had to be on site all day. They had a a meeting the following week with Sevenoaks Town Council and were working with them and the Stag Theatre on a 12 week tourist bus that would run for four days bringing publicity to the town. He had managed to acquire a vintage Maltese vehicle which he expected to be the only operating one in the country.

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Go Coach was a small independent operating company mainly operating tendered school services. There were eight school services, carrying 800+ students a day. They had taken on an engineering apprentice last year from Knole Academy and hoped to possibly take on another one next year. They had recently started operating the 429 service on a Sunday which without advertising had already gained good numbers. Some leaflet dropping had taken place before Christmas and some more would take place over the next two weeks. It was a service supported by the local county Members' Highway Fund. At the moment it was operating at 50-60 passengers, if it were possible to build it up to 80-100 it would still not be commercially viable but would be cheaper.

A Member raised concerns of school children talking to the bus driver and standing too close to the front. She spoken to the Police about this issue over a year ago, but was still seeing it happen. The bus operators explained that whilst not desirable it was hard to piece and they had a good safety record. Buses were designed for standing passengers. However Go Coach undertook to speak to their drivers. It was noted that health and safety reasons would prevent a form of barrier being placed in situ.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked the bus operators for attending.

### 32. Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report which explained that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was a new mechanism for securing contributions from developers towards the provision of infrastructure that was required to support development. In order to begin charging CIL, the Council needed to prepare a Charging Schedule, which would set out what developers would need to pay in £ per sq m of new buildings and any variations by area or type of development. Following consultation between June and August 2012, responses to the consultation had been reviewed and additional work on the evidence base had been undertaken.

A Draft Charging Schedule had been prepared and it was recommended that the proposed residential charges remain at £75/m<sup>2</sup> and £125/m<sup>2</sup>, based on the same charge areas previously consulted on. Proposed charges for supermarkets and retail warehouses continue to be at £125/m<sup>2</sup> but on the basis of additional viability evidence it was proposed that other retail uses were not charged CIL. If agreed, the Draft Charging Schedule would be published for interested parties to comment on and would then be submitted for independent examination. If found sound, it was likely that the Council would be in a position to adopt the Charging Schedule in late 2013 / early 2014.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that there were no adverse equality impacts arising from this report.

Resolved: That the following recommendations to Council be endorsed subject to a request that the Environment Select Committee have the opportunity to review the implementation plan before it is adopted:

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- a) That the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule be agreed for publication and submission for independent examination; and
- b) That the Portfolio Holder is authorised to agree minor presentational changes and detailed amendments to the Charging Schedule to assist the clarity of the document.

The Principal Planning Officer was thanked for all his hard work.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.25 PM

CHAIRMAN