

Third meeting of the A127 Economic Growth Corridor Task Force

Date: 28 June, 2019

Minutes prepared by: Shaherah Jordan

Location: New Holland Factory Plant, Cranes Farm Rd, Basildon SS14 3AD

Participants

Cllr Mike Steptoe (MSte) – Leader of Rochford Council

Mark Robinson (MR) – Principal Transport and Infrastructure Planner, Essex County Council

Zhanine Smith (ZS) - Principal Planning Officer, Essex County Council

Andrew Cook (AC) Director of Highways and Transportation, Essex County Council

Christine Lyons (CL) – Head of Planning, Basildon Council

Cllr Andrew Sheldon (AS) – Councillor for St Mary's, Castle Point Council

Cllr Norman Smith (NS) – Councillor for Boyce, Castle Point Council

Neil Hoskins (NH) – Interim Group Manager, Major Projects and Strategic Transport Policy, Southend Council

Cllr Carole Mulrone (CM) – Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, Southend Council

Peter Geraghty (PG) – Director of Planning and Transport, Southend Borough Council

Geoff Loader (GL) – Director of Operations, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, Jacobs

Shaherah Jordan (SJ) – Stakeholder Engagement Consultant, Jacobs

Sean Perry (SP) – Divisional Director, Jacobs

Mark Stubbs (MStu) – Technical Director, Jacobs

Mansour Motlagh (MM) – Divisional Director, Jacobs

James Duddridge (JD) – MP, Rochford and Southend East

Mark Francois (MF) - MP, Rayleigh and Wickford

Adam Duff (AD) – Performance and Planning Manager (East London), TfL

Mat Kiely (MK) - Strategic Lead Transport Development – Thurrock Council

Shaun Scrutton – Managing Director – Rochford District

Rebecca Harris (RH) – MP, Castle Point

Introduction by Cllr Mike Steptoe, Chair.

MSte welcomed the attendees and covered health and safety points and noted good representation from MPs at this meeting. He also recapped objectives and next steps of the Task Force.

A127 Air Quality update (MR)

MR updated on plans to reduce speed to 50mph between the Fortune of War Junction and Pound Lane Junction.

Following a business case submitted to Defra outlining plans for a reduced speed limit, the Department would like to see modelling for a charging clean air zone near East Mayne and Noak Bridge.

MF queried why a lower speed was being mandated when speeds were low in certain places and emissions from traffic might be reduced if the road was straightened.

MR explained that the objective was to reduce AQ limits in the shortest time possible and highlighted that costs were also a constraint.

AC explained that he had received a letter from the Secretary of State for Defra which directed that a reduced speed limit was introduced based on Defra's modelling of AQ.

Action – AC to circulate directive to the group.

MF queried whether the Secretary of State had statutory power to make the directive.

CL noted that this question had risen at a recent emergency meeting at Basildon. There were also questions regarding what happens to the directive if there was a Cabinet reshuffle. Basildon were seeking legal advice on the matter.

JD acknowledged that speed limit could improve pollution and possibly traffic flow and speed and asked if the limit could be variable as opposed to binary. JD was also sceptical regarding the minister's authority and was not sure she could legally direct specific solutions.

Cllr Norman Smith queried the timeline to start work on road and asked that the Fortune of War to be added to overall project work. MR confirmed that the junction was within remit of overall work.

Mark Stubbs – Transport Appraisal Process

MStu covered the transport appraisal process and highlighted where the project is currently at in the process, which was the generating options stage. He explained that this phase included sifting and identifying potential options in order to make a business case to apply for funding and that options would range from motorway to smaller measures in order to meet the objectives. Range of modes needed to be reflected in option generation to make sure we met objectives. Once the strategic outline business case is established, we need to rank the emerging schemes which have good benefit to cost ratio (assessed over a 60 year period). He noted that it was a long process and that the current aim was strategic outline business case.

MStu then updated on the transport modelling undertaken to date, explaining that data regarding movements, capacity and speeds on the A127 was gathered from black box data installed in vehicles as part of insurance and/or business purposes.

He noted that the main delays were due to junctions and not road/link capacity.

AD queried the date range and explained that there was a single lane running on part of the A127 due to the Ardleigh Green Bridge replacement works which took three years to complete. These works would have impacted the traffic. MR replied that the data presented was an average of whole of 2018.

AD felt that journey times for that year might have been impacted by their works and offered to share TfL data from the project

Action – AD to share ANPR data from TfL

MF requested copies of the slide deck

Action – SJ to distribute

Post Meeting Note: Task Force Slides have been put on to the Essex County Council website at:

www.essexhighways.org/transport-and-roads/highway-schemes-and-developments/highway-schemes/a127-economic-growth-corridor.aspx

AS asked that for similar grids of A13 with a drawing of the A127 and A13 on the same page for comparison.

Action – MStu to follow up

MStu covered the fact that there are a number of very local journeys that were being taken and pointed out that as part of the project these journeys need to be reviewed in terms of how public transport might be able to impact those movements. If not public transport what other options might there be in future.

AS felt that slides didn't emphasise importance of connectivity to the M25 and would like data about those journeys so that they could feed into other plans.

MStu highlighted that public transport was very poor in the region. The only bus routes outside of Southend were school routes and that there were no direct routes between big populations. There were a series of slower routes serving particular sections of population but nothing serving the wider A127. The study would review this as an option to reduce car trips and ascertain what that would look like.

ZS felt that bus services to the stations were not adequate and wanted to know if modelling would look at the frequency of bus routes to local train stations. She also felt that reliability of the bus services was also very important.

MStu agreed that connections to and from rail stations, amongst others needed to be reviewed for viability as part of the corridor upgrade as a whole.

NS mentioned that he was keen to see a dissipation of traffic and the potential effect with options being introduced.

MStu noted that options would be discussed at the next Task Force.

MStu also gave some context for funding for a road scheme and where it can come from. RIS funding sources explained and types of roads/infrastructures that would be eligible for the different types of funding.

He explained that a motorway typically costs £30m - £50m per km to illustrate potential costs of road.

MF queried the estimated £30m – 50m per km cost to build a motorway and wanted to know how long the study would take.

RH felt that some problems are lack of junctions. It was felt that some congestion was due to some people being stuck on roadway for longer than was necessary.

MStu explained that while additional exits could help, where there was an exit there was also an entrance and also that there were limits as to how many junctions you could have on the road in order to prevent dangerous interactions. MS noted that additional junctions would be part of the options assessment.

MSte mentioned meeting with Brentwood that had elements that needed to be put into the mix.

Mark Francois – meeting with Michael Ellis

Mark Francis informed the Task Force that he had a meeting scheduled during the w/c 8 July with Michael Ellis, Minister of State (Department for Transport) regarding the A127 project.

MF felt strongly that we needed to get Task Force on the Road Minister's radar and suggested that those meeting should be relatively small, consisting of some of the local MPs along the A127 and a few key members of the Task Force team.

He encouraged the Task Force to be clear about what the objectives they wanted to present to the minister that would help to accelerate the project.

Communications and Engagement

SJ explained that the theme for the public engagement was 'The Future of Transport'. She explained that the theme would focus on the future users of the A127 that the engagement would be done via a combination of online and face-to-face activity.

SJ also updated on other planned engagement activity, including attendance at business breakfast events and the autumn stakeholder event with transport user groups.

Sean Perry – Programme Update

SP went over the timelines for the project:

- July - options generation work shop
- Summer – initial engagement with the public
- October – presentation of options at Task Force meeting
- Nov and Dec – assessment of options
- Jan 2020 – Task Force meeting 5
- Feb 2020 – present strategic outline business case

MF pointed out that due to the scale of project, funding was likely to come from central government. He then queried whether we would be able to submit these options in time for Roads Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) or if we would have to wait for RIS3.

He said that Essex MPs met with James Brokenshire a few months ago and established that unless there was massive infrastructure meeting their housing targets would be challenging.

SP reminded the Task Force that RIS2 was very competitive and there was a consensus that the window for RIS2 was effectively closed.

AC suggested a conversation about our aims and objectives and noted that from a County Council point of view the road was difficult to maintain to a high standard.

JD thinks strategic importance of Southend airport important for persuading ministers and thought we had missed deadline for RIS2.

MF wanted more clarity as to whether upgrades were wanted on the A12, A120 or A127 and AC explained that the A127 was not a trunk road but that the A12 and A20 were trunk roads.

NS (Castle Point) suggested that we should look at the work ASELA is doing.

MF feels that if the message and objectives are not clear we should cancel the meeting with the minister. MS confirmed that we had short, medium and long-term objectives.

Action – SJ to send previous slides to MF

Officers workshop scheduled for 11 July to iron out the details and narrative of the short, medium and long term ambitions. MR reiterated that we needed to be clear with regards to what we would present to the minister.

MStu flagged that we might not have the relevant detail ready in time for the meeting with Minister.

All agreed that the purpose of the 1st meeting with the minister should be to put A127 on his radar and highlight the benefits e.g. airport, employment and growth. The second meeting should cover the detail.

Close

MSte mentioned that Task Force meetings were scheduled for Fridays so that MPs could attend.

Next meeting may be 4th, 11th or 18th October.

MSte Thanked everyone for attending

Meeting closed at 12.00pm