

Medway Council
Meeting of Rural Liaison Committee
Wednesday, 17 November 2021
6.00pm to 8.36pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

PRESENT

Medway Council Representatives

Councillor Roger Barrett
Councillor Simon Curry
Councillor Gary Etheridge
Councillor Matt Fearn
Councillor Stephen Hubbard
Councillor Clive Johnson
Councillor Mick Pendergast
Councillor Ron Sands
Councillor Richard Thorne
Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Turpin
Councillor John Williams

Parish Council Representatives

Parish Councillor Ray Collins, High Halstow Parish Council
(Parish Council Representative)
Parish Councillor Veronica Cordier, Isle of Grain (Parish Council Representative)
Parish Councillor Karen Draper, Allhallows Parish Council
(Parish Council Representative)
Parish Councillor Roy Freshwater, Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council
(Parish Council Representative)
Parish Councillor Kay Hutchfield, Cuxton Parish Council (Parish Council Representative)
Parish Councillor Andrew Millsom, Frindsbury Extra Parish Council
(Parish Council Representative)
Parish Councillor Julie Wallace, Stoke Parish Council (Parish Council Representative)

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In Attendance: Linda Atkinson, KALC
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Bull, Strategic Infrastructure Planner
Martin Hall, SEMS and Partnership Manager
Catherine Smith, Planning Manager, Policy

Damien Heylan – Grain LNG
Simon Caulkin – Grain LNG

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hackwell and Parish Councillors Diabella (Cooling), Kelly (St Mary Hoo) and Wenham (Halling).

2 RECORD OF THE MEETING

The record of the meeting held on 29 September 2021 was approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Referring to minute 6 (Public Conveniences in Medway), the Democratic Services Officer informed the Committee that the additional information requested on 29 September 2021 had been requested and was awaited.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Decision:

Parish Councillor Millsom (Frindsbury Extra) was appointed Vice Chairman for the remainder of 2021/22.

4 URGENT MATTERS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

There were none.

5 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman agreed to consider the Committee's future work programme at the end of the agenda. It was noted that this was not an urgent item but had just been omitted from the agenda.

The Chairman also requested that a reminder be sent to the relevant officer to chase the information requested on 29 September 2021 concerning public conveniences.

6 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

The Chairman, Councillor Sands referred to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) update and informed the Committee that as Chairman of Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council he had signed a legal letter to Medway Council and Homes England. However, provided that the discussion on HIF at this meeting did not cover the Grant Determination Agreement (GDA) between Medway Council and Homes England and/or deed of variants he would stay in the meeting and take part in the discussion.

7 PRESENTATION ON PROPOSED FUTURE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE ISLE OF GRAIN

Discussion:

Damien Heylen – Property Manager at Grain LNG and Simon Culkin – Terminal Manager at Grain LNG attended the meeting and undertook a presentation on the work of Grain LNG.

They explained that Grain LNG was located on the Peninsula and that the LNG terminal bought in liquid gas at the various jetties which was then transported through pipelines and stored in tanks above ground. The gas from the site could provide up to 25% of gas used in the UK.

They outlined future plans for developments for the site and in particular Project Cavendish.

Project Cavendish aimed to kickstart a hydrogen economy in South East England by delivering low-carbon hydrogen with the capture and storage of CO₂ by 2026. This would be the only project of its kind in the region, providing the opportunity to bring low-carbon hydrogen to the large demand centre of London and the South East and hoped to support the Government's hydrogen and carbon capture and storage targets.

The area at Grain was already established as an industrial location and the existing energy infrastructure offered both efficiency and cost benefits. By 2026, the aim was to have a facility in place producing low-carbon (blue) hydrogen by reforming natural gas and then capturing and storing CO₂ offshore. The hydrogen production facility would be in close proximity to gas and electricity

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networks, power stations and an LNG (liquid natural gas) facility and was expected to help meet London and the South East's large demand for energy for power, heating and transport.

Further information was available via the following website:

www.projectcavendish.com

Both Damien and Simon then answered questions on Project Cavendish and the operation of the site generally.

Decision:

The Committee thanked both Damien and Simon for attending the meeting and outlining Project Cavendish and answering questions.

8 LOWER THAMES CROSSING

Discussion:

Andrew Bull, Strategic Infrastructure Planner outlined the latest position concerning the Lower Thames Crossing and agreed to circulate the slides used as part of his presentation to the Committee and Parish Councils.

The Strategic Infrastructure Planner outlined the background to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing and explained that the project would involve the provision of a new road and tunnel connecting the A13 with the A2/M2 to double the road capacity east of London and ease congestion on the existing Dartford Crossing.

He explained that the original application had been withdrawn in 2020 following which there had been further public consultation in early 2021 to address concerns outline by the Planning Inspector.

A summary of the Council's response to the public consultation was summarised on the presentation slides and it was confirmed that engagement was ongoing with National Highways, Kent County Council and other local authorities.

Funding had been obtained from National Highways to prepare for the Local Impact Report examination and to secure measures for mitigation and compensation.

National Highways were due to resubmit the scheme in 2022 following a revised design to take account of Thames Freeport.

In response to a question, the Strategic Infrastructure Planner advised that the routes for the construction traffic had yet to be clarified as this had not been included in the consultation document.

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He further advised that traffic modelling had been based on housing growth up to 2030 and to 2050 based on the Department for Transport database and although National Highways had requested a list of all developments and for information on the Local Plan, the information being used for traffic modelling was limited to that on the Department for Transport Database. Therefore the modelling did not include the proposed development of 10,000 homes on the Peninsula or future projected housing growth in Medway. However, the Strategic Infrastructure Planner informed the Committee that whilst the growth on the Peninsula did not yet have planning status as it did not have the benefit of planning permission, upfront funding was available via the Housing Infrastructure Fund and therefore National Highways had been requested to run an alternative scenario to include this in their modelling.

Whether housing developments proposed by neighbouring local authorities e.g. Gravesham would be taken into consideration would depend upon the planning status of those particular developments.

Concern was expressed as to the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing on surrounding areas and the Strategic Infrastructure Planner advised that as part of the proposed development, National Highways had demarcated an area for mitigation, and this was shown by a red line on the development plans. At this stage, there was no commitment to mitigate beyond those boundaries. He advised that the work commissioned by Medway Council would help to develop the case for mitigation in Medway.

On the issue of timescales, whilst originally planned for 2027, the Lower Thames Crossing project was now likely to be programmed for 2028 but this timescale could change again due to design changes north of the river which would involve a further period of public consultation.

The Strategic Infrastructure Planner also advised that KCC were in the process of implementing a road scheme for Bluebell Hill and this was currently at the two options stage. Further information on this scheme was available on KCC's website. Work on this transport scheme would be required before the development of the Lower Thames Crossing project.

During discussion on the HIF item later on this agenda, it was also suggested that the increased traffic generated on the Peninsula as a result of the location of Allhallows Holiday Park and that which would result from the use of open spaces created by the HIF scheme should also be drawn to the attention of National Highways in their traffic modelling.

The Strategic Infrastructure Planner suggested that it might be beneficial for a representative of National Highways to attend a future meeting to undertake a presentation to the Committee on the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Decision:

The Committee thanked the Strategic Infrastructure Planner for attending the meeting and agreed that an invitation be extended to National Highways to

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attend a future meeting of the Committee to answer questions on the Lower Thames Crossing project.

9 HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND UPDATE

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out an update on the New Routes to Good Growth Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and outlining programme status along with updates on road, rail and strategic environmental management scheme proposals.

The report also set out a detailed summary of the first round of HIF consultation and an update on the second round of consultation.

The Committee was informed that Janet Davies had recently been appointed as Head of HIF and Regeneration and would be attending meetings of the Committee going forward.

The Committee noted that the HIF scheme was now working to a new deadline agreed with Homes England of 31 March 2025 which involved a 12 month extension over that previously reported. This extension would allow more time to acquire land for highways and a reduction of risk by doing so through agreement rather than via Compulsory Purchase Order. Land acquisition plans had been the subject of a report to Cabinet in September 2021.

Martin Hall, SEMS and Partnership Manager outlined key updates including:

- Cockham Community Parkland had secured planning permission in July 2021
- Officers were now focusing attention on additional SEMS areas to the east of Vicarage Lane (Hoo Flats) and to land north of the Lodge Hill Training Camp
- An initial high-level landscape design had been completed for Deangate Ridge
- A full assessment had been undertaken on the comments received via the first round of consultation concerning roads and the next phase of consultation would commence on 29 November 2021.
- The GRIP 3 report was soon due to be submitted to Network Rail and the completion of each GRIP stage provided greater certainty and clarity of the rail options and capital and operating costs.

Full details of the outcome of the consultation carried out between January – April 2021 was outlined in the report.

For the second round of consultation, information would be available digitally and therefore easily accessible and the style of questions had been revised. In addition, following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, face to face consultations would now be permitted and two consultation events were planned for early December with two more planned for January 2022. In addition, meetings

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would be held with Parish Councils, Ward Councillors and Gravesham Borough Council.

The SEMS and Partnership Manager then answered questions from the Committee.

In response to a question as to where the original consultation documents had been sent, the SEMS and Partnership Manager advised that a list of postcodes to which the documents were sent was available.

He confirmed that of the 10,000 homes to be facilitated as part of the project, these were to be provided in phases as and when the infrastructure for transport and education progressed.

The SEMS and Partnership Manager confirmed that all HIF capital expenditure was required to be completed by 31 March 2025 but pointed out that the HIF was not funding operations. A small amount of funding would be set aside for any minor snagging issues such as tree planting.

The SEMS and Partnership Manager also confirmed that the curve had been removed from the rail scheme and therefore removed from the first round of consultation as Rail stakeholders considered this not to be viable. However, there was nothing to prevent this coming forward at a future date if funding became available.

The Planning Manager Policy informed the Committee that an Area Wide Travel Plan was about to be commissioned to prepare a sustainable transport strategy for the Peninsula and would support work on the Local Plan. Whilst it was recognised that the bulk of the growth would be in Hoo or High Halstow, consideration would be given to the whole of the Peninsula as this was key to the ambitions for sustainable growth in Medway.

Concern was expressed as to the lack of bus services on the outer areas of the Peninsula and in particular, in Allhallows where it can take up to an hour to travel into Chatham. It was reported that the Allhallows Holiday Park frequently had problems recruiting staff as they could not get to and from the holiday park from the urban areas of Medway. Likewise, people living in Allhallows and Grain could not get work in Chatham if they were reliant on public transport.

The SEMS and Partnership Manager advised that the additional rail capacity would create new employment opportunities in Gravesham and attract people coming into Medway to work at companies like National Grid. He stated that the HIF would improve the quality of life for people not having to sit in traffic jams and would also provide a second opportunity to access the Peninsula in the event of a major traffic accident. In addition, high quality open spaces would be provided which would benefit health, recreation and tourism opportunities.

In response to a request for phase 6 to be undertaken earlier (Sans Pareil roundabout), the SEMS and Partnership Manager advised that the phasing of work was being undertaken in an order which would minimise disruption.

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In response to a question, the SEMS and Partnership Manager advised that the open space areas would not operate along the lines of those provided at Riverside or Capstone Country Park in that whilst there may be toilet facilities on site, there would not be refreshments. Therefore the operation and maintenance of the sites would go through a procurement process and this could be with a management company or the Parish Council.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and thanked the SEMS and Partnership Manager for the answers to questions.

10 WORK PROGRAMME

Discussion:

The Committee considered its work programme in the light of the items discussed at this meeting.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted that its next meeting would be held on 2 March 2022
- b) requested that consideration be given to including the following items on the work programme in addition to those already programmed:
 - Lower Thames Crossing – Attendance by National Highways
 - Medway Local Plan - update
 - Outcome of second round of HIF consultation
 - Presentation on Ranscombe Farm

Chairman

Date:

Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

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