

Item 3: Chairman's Notes

Robert Whittaker

GTDP Community Sub-Group Meeting, 16th January 2019

1 GTDP Board Meetings

Since the previous Sub-Group meeting on 21st November 2018, the GTDP Board has met once on 27th November. Members were given a presentation on health-care, re-elected Sam Chapman-Allen as Chair of the Board, and received updates on various local issues. The papers and draft minutes for this meeting can be found online at <https://bit.ly/2BpnDfe>. An administrative error meant that the Community Sub-Group report was missed off the meeting agenda, and this was not corrected despite me pointing it out before the meeting. However, I was able to raise various issues before the end of the meeting.

2 Answers and Updates to Public Questions and Concerns

Various issues have been raised by the public at previous Sub-Group meetings, and we have attempted to investigate and provide updates.

Railway Station Access Issues and Parking. Various issues with the station have been raised at different Community Sub-Group meetings, including the poor accessibility of the footbridge and the lack of car parking. The Board wrote to Greater Anglia back in March, but have yet to make any significant progress with them.

There is a possibility of moving some of the allotments to the north of the station to make way for extra parking. However, replacement land for the allotments would need to be found first, as it is a legal requirement to maintain allotments to meet local demand. Breckland council had been trying to find alternative land, but had not found anything acceptable to the Town Council (who own and manage the existing allotment) yet.

At the November 2018 Board meeting, an update on options was provided (<https://bit.ly/2VDbRGs>) and the Board agreed to continue working to expand car-parking provision at the station.

Cost of Purchasing Train Tickets on the Train. At the November 2017 Sub-Group meeting, an issue was raised about passengers being charged more when buying tickets on the train compared with buying them at the station. In almost all cases, this shouldn't happen. The main exception is those travelling with East Midlands Trains, who do not give railcard discounts on the train if ticketing facilities are available at the station.

The Board wrote to East Midlands Trains about this issue in April, and have got some initial positive engagement from the company, but as yet there is nothing definite to report. No further correspondence had been received at the November 2018 Board meeting, but it was promised that things would be chased up. I asked Breckland for confirmation that this had happened for this report, but at time of writing they had not responded.

Health-Care Provision Concern had been expressed at various Community Sub-Group meetings about the lack of planning for expanded health-care provision for the new SUE residents. Various key staff from local health-care bodies were present at the November 2018 Board meeting, and gave a presentation on future developments in the sector. They are aware of the SUE and are planning for the required increase in health-care provision. Unfortunately there was not much detail in the presentation on precisely how services for Thetford would be expanded to meet the new demand.

Bus Provision for Kingsfleet (SUE) A member of the public raised a query about Bus provision for the new houses in the SUE at Sub-Group's May 2018 meeting, and this came up again as a correction to the draft minutes at the September 2018 meeting. As result I looked into the planning policies and provisions currently being made. It appears that Breckland's own planning policy (TAAP TH26) requires bus services to operate from the first day of occupation of the SUE, but Breckland has not enforced this policy on the developer. There is also a question over whether the intended use of the Joe Blunt's Lane underpass for buses is consistent with another planning policy (TAAP TH11).

I asked Breckland's planning department to confirm and explain these apparent discrepancies (on 10th October and 5th November 2018), but received no response. I raised the issue at the GTDP Board Meeting on 27th November 2018, where Rob Walker (Breckland Executive Director of Place) promised to take up the matter. Despite requesting a response for this report, I have heard nothing back at time of writing.

Pedestrian Access to and from Kingsfleet At the November 2018 Sub-Group meeting, a member of the public raised the issue that there appeared to be no hard-surfaced footpaths being provided to link the first phase of new houses in the Kingsfleet development to the rest of the town. This will cause difficulties for those with mobility problems. I raised the matter at the November 2018 Board meeting, and was told that officers were already aware of the issue and were looking in to what could be done. I asked for an update from Rob Walker for this report, but none was forthcoming.

3 Community Sub-Group Cycling and Walking Report

The Sub Group's Cycling and Walking report got a positive response from the Board at its meeting in June 2018. The full report is available online at <http://www.gtdp.org.uk/cycling-walking>. The Board wanted to the relevant council officers to look at the recommendations in more detail before considering actions, and it was requested that I meet with the Officers to discuss things further.

I heard nothing about this meeting before the Board Meeting on 27th November 2018, so raised it there. The Board Chair, Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen said he would chase things up. I requested an update for this report, but none was forthcoming.

On a more positive note, another improvement proposed in the report may now be going ahead, at least in part. As discussed at both the Sub-Group and Board meetings in November 2018, Norfolk County Council is planning to use around £300k of funding left over from the TEP Roundabout project to upgrade a section of the pavement on the west side of Croxton Road (between the Academy and the Army Cadet Centre) to a shared-use cycleway.