

**KCC PARISH SEMINAR AUTUMN 2019**

**DITTON COMMUNITYCENTRE 28 NOVEMBER 2019**

**MEETING NOTE**

**Councillor George and I attended the above seminar, which was dedicated to Transport Infrastructure Issues.**

**I think it is fair to say that most of the presentations aimed to present a positive image regarding what is being planned and being carried out. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the new County Traffic Model currently being developed.**

**It was noted that Kent's strategic road network was the largest in the country. And the level of traffic in terms of vehicle/kilometres put the County at the top of the league. It was also noted that unlike other countries the method of funding infrastructure through S106 and CIL contributions meant that infrastructure is delivered after the development and not put in place before; this remains a major concern.**

**It was recognised that there was no overall structure plan for the South East and in Kent everything had been devolved to the 12 Districts' Local Plans. These Districts had been set very challenging objectively assessed housing needs (OANs). This had prompted a question from myself as to why Kent Highways hardly ever objected to planning applications even though local knowledge indicated that traffic problems and highways issues existed.**

**KCC explained that often there was very little it could do as its hands were tied. Congestion had to be severe and Inspectors often rejected KCC's interpretation as to what was severe. Everything has to be evidenced based, which is why the new traffic model will be very important. It was also pointed out that Local Councils can play an important role by supplying evidence on issues such as air pollution and traffic congestion; it was felt that the former could become increasingly important.**

**A presentation was given on what was taking in place in Maidstone. Reference was made to the Integrated Transport Plan, although this still relies heavily on walking, cycling and buses, which for a largely rural Borough cannot be the whole answer. A lot of emphasis was put on the "Fast Track" premium bus service connecting Blue Water with the Medway Towns, but, as matters currently stand, could hardly be of much use to**

**Maidstone. It was noted that 10 sites had been approved but interestingly they did not mention the possibility of a Leeds/Langley Relief Road; it took a question from the audience to raise the matter And the answer from KCC was not exactly enthusiastic even though there appeared to be a positive cost/benefit analysis; the excuse being that the benefits were not Borough wide enough.**

**Another matter raised was the introduction of 20 mph speed limits. There were issues regarding enforcement and some form of traffic calming might be needed but in general KCC seemed to support this idea. It was noted that if parishes had a Highways Improvement Plan they should use this to promote 20 mph speed limits.**

**Finally, a presentation was given on the work carried out by KCC to maintain and protect public footpaths. Interestingly the importance of Neighbourhood Plans in protecting and improving footpaths was highlighted.**

**In conclusion it was a very interesting session. KCC were keen to present an upbeat image, which was not totally convincing given the lack of any real fresh information. They also put a lot of emphasis on improving driving skills and standards to ensure road safety; they argued that the state of the roads played a very little part in road accidents.**

**John Perry  
28 November 2019**