Present: Councillors G Chisholm, S Darwin, G Debman, S Gage, T Grant, E Harsant (Chair), O Holmes, J Macartney, J Riley, C Smart, H Whittall, E Xhaferaj and P Gardiner (Substitute)

Also present: For Item 5 – OS/16/07 Update on the Orwell Bridge Speed Restriction
Inspector Tim Lusher, Suffolk Policing Unit, Suffolk Constabulary
Bob Hall, Kemball Haulage
Andy Cook, Ipswich Buses
John Hunt, Ipswich Taxi Drivers Association
IBC Councillor Phil Smart, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Transport

20. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor M Goonan.

21. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2016

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2016, be signed as a true record.

22. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

23. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business

Resolved:

that the Order of Business be as printed on the agenda.
24. **OS/16/07 Update on the Orwell Bridge Speed Restriction**

24.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made.

24.2 Councillor Debman explained that, following the recommendation by the Committee on 29 January 2015, a Task & Finish Group was held on 10 October 2016 to discuss the matter. He explained that all wards and businesses were affected when the Orwell Bridge was closed for any reason as the traffic diverted through the town and brought the road network to a standstill.

24.3 Councillor Gage said the Task & Finish Group had recommended that an interim report be brought to the Committee on 2 March 2017, when comparable statistics (including weather condition information) may be available. Questions had been formulated by the Task & Finish Group for Highways England's response whom, although they had been prepared to attend this meeting had sent the following responses to the questions.

24.4 Inspector Lusher reported that 4,000 speed offences had been logged in the first 3 months of enforcement of the speed limit. Mr Cook and Mr Hall both said that the reduction in the speed limit had not had any effect on the services they provided. Mr Hunt said that while there had been no difference for taxi drivers, at the earlier meeting he had suggested that the length of the ramps off the A14 should be lengthened.

24.5 Mr Newsham, the Integrated Traffic Officer at IBC read out the responses from Highways England:

1. Had there been a difference in the number of accidents from July 2016 to date, compared to last year’s figures?

   A. *The monthly provision of data had now been agreed (from Suffolk County Council) but note the ‘lag’ needed to enable collation and corrections to data. For a March 2017 meeting, personal injury collision data to the end of November 2016 is likely therefore 7-8 months of post opening. This might give an early idea of a difference in collisions, but it would be a short timescale considering we identify collision savings using 5 year collision data (information on collision savings at that stage). Highways England operate a Safety Audit Process and also a Post Opening Project Evaluation Reporting process (POPE), these work on longer timescales. The first ‘POPE’ evaluation would be 1 year post-opening.*

24.6 The Integrated Transport Officer said that it was too soon for any statistics to be meaningful and Highways England had robust procedures in place for this. Inspector Lusher said that the Police do not keep any primary data as this would be the responsibility of SCC. In respect of a question from Councillor Macartney the Inspector agreed to provide the number of accidents from April to November from internal systems. Councillor P Smart said that the data may be the result of random events and it was agreed that although comparative
data was required a 5 year period would be too long. Councillor Debman said that he was alarmed that no information existed and although it would take time data needed to be requested.

24.7 Councillor Grant pointed out that breakdowns on the bridge caused the same chaos to the town, whether the vehicle was travelling at 60mph or 70mph, so just showing the accident figures would not show the correct data. Councillor P Smart also added that over a 5 year period increases could be as a result of more traffic being on the road, so any calculations needed to be assessed ‘per million’ for movement.

2. Had the reduction in the speed limit had any effect on the number of bridge closures?

A. Suffolk Constabulary routinely attended incidents on the bridge (and wider A14) and would probably have more reliable data on the number of closures than we (Highways England) do. The Police keep the records and assist with providing the information to us.

24.8 The definition of closure was discussed and it was agreed that total closure and lane closures had different impacts on whether diversion routes were being used. Inspector Lusher said that no specific information existed of total bridge closures as this seldom occurred. There was no internal way of searching for this information as each previous traffic incident would need to be investigated separately. The information on both single lane closures and complete closures could be collected going forward but no comparable data existed.

24.9 Inspector Lusher said that if a lane closure occurred for a short time no resources or diversions would be employed. It was suggested that if the closures were logged as east or west bound closures it could allow for a better level of assessment. Councillor Gardiner said that with modern technology, when closures were advertised vehicle owners would automatically try to find an alternative route.

3. What were the current ‘Operation Stack’ procedures?

A. Operation Stack for Felixstowe was owned and operated by Hutchinson Ports, although other bodies including Highways England have an input into it. The Plan is usually instigated by the Port in response to actual or expected weather conditions so that hauliers and other stakeholders could be informed. Because of its multi-agency nature, the plan was reviewed on an annual basis by Suffolk Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and had recently been through that process for 2016. There was a feedback loop to Highways England’s Regional Control Centre (RCC) at South Mimms so that we were able to make the port aware of significant incidents on the network that might affect their operations.

24.10 Councillor Debman asked whether the Police were involved with Operation Stack and Inspector Lusher said that the operation of the Port during high winds was managed by a contingency plan from the Police Control Room. 280
Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV’s) were able to be stacked in the ‘Levington’ area and the Police managed the ground operation. During the 2013/14 period this had frequently occurred but during the last couple of years the deployment of Operation Stack had been limited.

4. Had the reduction of speed reduced the amount of accidents for vehicles coming out of the petrol garage?

A. Although Highways England had an indication of any collisions at this location in the 7-month data, it would be early to draw any conclusions on this. It would be difficult to specifically identify those related to the access, as they had found it difficult to do so in the feasibility study stage. Looking at collisions close to the services it was not conclusive they were attributed to the access itself or whether they were a combination of the reduced forward visibility at this location (on a curve and prior to the incline approaching the bridge), or combined with close travelling and slow moving traffic peak times in winter months.

24.11 Councillor Gardiner said that given the land availability, a redesign of the petrol station would resolve this issue and Mr Hall said that the garage should be relocated to another position as lorries with limiters increased their speed as much as they could near the entrance to the garage in order to keep their speed up on the hill.

5. What effect has the reduction in speed limit made to traffic between the junctions of Wherstead Road to the Nacton Road interchange?

A. If this question relates to speeds, the appraisal of the speed limit reduction was based on a speed survey undertaken in November 2012 (a manual speed survey was also undertaken in April 2015). Normally improvement schemes were subject to a Post Opening Project Evaluation (POPE) appraisal report, which would likely look to identify available speed related data to appraise the success of such a scheme.

6. In the event of bad weather conditions, what actions were in place to ensure smooth traffic flow over the bridge?

A. The improvement scheme included the use of high reflective studs and markings (high performance and higher than normal reflectivity specification) in order to highlight the section and bring all signs and markings up to better than usual standard in terms of line/stud reflectivity which would have a benefit in poor weather conditions.

Following the severe gales of recent winters, Highways England Emergency Planning put in extensive work with the Local Resilience Forum, to sharpen up our warning and informing processes for weather-related closures of the bridge so that the public and emergency services (among others) had maximum warning. If a full closure was not deemed to be required because the weather conditions do not cross the risk thresholds then there was a strategy in place to warn A14 drivers to take extra care when crossing the
structure. There were currently no safe and practical methods of partial closures (e.g. removing HGV traffic).

24.12 Inspector Lusher reported that there were also high wind protocols for slow moving traffic.

7. Had the reduction in the speed limit meant that recovery times following a closure had been reduced?

A. The response to this question was that it was too soon to have meaningful data pertaining to incidents.

8. Had there been an increase in the amount of HGV’s using the A14 and crossing the bridge?

A. Again it was too early but the Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU) would make an interim assessment closer to the March meeting to see if there was any viable data.

24.13 Mr Hunt suggested that counters and cameras be put on the bridge to register how many HGV’s were crossing.

24.14 The Chair asked that an interim up to date report be made available for in depth discussion and Councillor P Smart suggested that Highways England be asked at what point there would be validated data. This might be after 1 year but should certainly be before the 5 year collision data was available.

24.15 Councillor Macartney asked what consequences had been given to the drivers of the 4,000 speeding incidents so far? The Inspector confirmed that some drivers had been prosecuted and some had agreed to attend National Speed Awareness diversionary courses. The number of speeding incidents had been reducing as people became aware of the speed reduction and it would be interesting to see if this downward trend continued. Councillor Macartney said that it had been reported at a recent Police and Crime Commissioner meeting that the average speed of the drivers exceeding the speed limit on the Orwell Bridge had been 100mph.

24.16 Mr Hunt said that as the growth in port traffic grew by an expected 10%, any increase in the volume of traffic would invalidate any figures and it was agreed that calculations should be per proportion of vehicles.

24.17 Councillor Whittall expressed concern that if the data sources were from different places and a general increase in traffic was expected then could there be confidence that the figures being drawn together would be meaningful. The Chair asked the Inspector to work with Highways England and use the Traffic Management Data system to capture the data required and that this information be fed back to the Task & Finish Group. Councillor Gage requested that expectations of timescales be included in any response to Highways England.
24.18 Councillor Darwin asked if data on speeding vehicles was available from any other areas that compared to the bridge and the Inspector reported that the distance and volume of traffic did not compare with anywhere else however, the offences had reduced from 1,700 in July to 900 in October and he agreed to set up a new process or system which would collect the required data on closures.

24.19 Councillor Debman highlighted the underuse of the overhead highway gantries on the approach roads into Suffolk and suggested that the slip roads at the garage be extended.

24.20 Councillor Gardiner pointed out that Highways England would need to analyse the data to prove that the 60mph speed limit on the Orwell Bridge was necessary.

24.21 The Chair then thanked the attendees from all the various organisations for their input at the meeting.

25. **OS/16/08 Work Programme 2016/17**

25.1 A proposal form was tabled at the meeting from Councillor Gage with the question being ‘How would Ipswich be affected by Suffolk County Council’s review of its Winter Maintenance’. At the Suffolk County Council Cabinet meeting on 12 July 2016, it had been agreed to review the gritting service as part of the changes included in the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP). As it was unknown whether the timescales of the review would affect the gritting arrangements for 2016/17, Suffolk County Council would be contacted for more information.

25.2 At the recent Area Committee Chairs meeting the Suffolk Community Foundation ‘Hidden Needs in Suffolk’ study by the University of Cambridge had been discussed and the Committee requested that the study be included as an item for discussion at a future meeting.

Resolved:

that the Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2016/17, with the amendment above at 25.2, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm

Chair