

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies.

Apologies:

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP,
Mr James Cleverly MP,
Mr Will Quince MP,
Mr Andrew Jones MP, Cllr Roger Hirst and Cllr James Finch.

Cllr Bass welcomed the group to the first meeting of the A120 Members Forum. Cllr Bass thanked the Haven Gateway for promoting the profile of the A120 project and being a long-term supporter.

Cllr Bass set out that a recommendation for a preferred route was needed by 2017, to feed into Highways England 2020-2025 RIS programme.

Cllr Bass set out the history of the A120 scheme, that Essex County Council (ECC) had decided to kick start the project with £5million investment for the feasibility study and that the Department for Transport (DfT) had committed to match fund the next stage, should a viable preferred option be found.

Cllr Bass continued that the work will take account of local road issues, but that the scope of the project is firmly Braintree to the A12. This project does have a history, and lessons learnt should be implemented in our on-going work.

Cllr Bass reiterated the need for a close relationship with Highways England (HE) and ECC and the crucial role constituency MPs will play in the project.

Cllr Bass set out the imperative that the group act together in support of the project and to ensure that public statements clearly set out that more than one route is being actively considered - so as not to prejudice options put forward as part of any future consultation.

2**A120 Project and Engagement Framework**

The group received a presentation by Lisa Levy, Jacobs' Executive Director of Operations(Engagement and Consultation), which outlined timeline for the project, the outline approach to engagement and associated timeline.

Cllr Bentley put forward that the Essex Federation of Small Business and Institute of Directors should be engaged in the project.

Mr Bernard Jenkin MP and members of the group queried the time provided following consultation and before the preferred route announcement.

Lisa Levy and Cllr Bass put forward that adequate time was needed 1) To allow for robust analysis of the highest number of consultation responses which could be up to 10,000, 2) For detailed design work (in response to consultation) and 3) For further engagement with key stakeholders to ensure that any changes or route selection (following consultation) were appropriate. These points were accepted by the group.

Mr Bernard Jenkin MP proposed that alongside the engagement forums, early engagement (pre-consultation) should take place to ask key stakeholders 1) What other concerns do you have? 2) Where do you think new roads should go? 3) Re-establish the principle for improvements.

Cllr Bass responded in support of early engagement, but cautioned opening up questions wider than the project's remit. Cllr Bass suggested that it may make consultation responses harder to analyse and raise expectation about issues that are not in scope. It was agreed that members will provide contact details for any interested parties who should be informally engaged prior to the establishment of public forums, or consultation.

Cllr Bentley added that if the communications strategy is right then we should be proactively addressing local concerns.

The group welcomed the use of TrackRecord. (Jacobs bespoke engagement management program) Mr Bernard Jenkin MP put forward that the system would help to reinforce with interested parties that their concerns are being listened to. It was also discussed whether a 'record' or 'acknowledgment' similar to that inputted in TrackRecord could be sent to respondents by email.

Cllr Bass put forward that the A120 is important to areas outside of Essex and that engagement should also include groups from Stanstead, Chelmsford, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. This was agreed by members.

Peter Grimm put forward that Suffolk MPs and interested parties would be interested in this project and that the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce should be involved. This was agreed by members.

Cllr Lady Newton and Cllr Frame put forward that it would be useful for the timetable to join up with the submission date for local plans. The group discussed this matter and Cllr Bass responded that the A120 process would be iterative, but due to there being different deadlines from multiple organisations this would be difficult and that the priority must be achieving the 2017 preferred route recommendation project date.

There was a group discussion about the importance of 'joined up' working with other improvement projects, such as those on the A12.

Cllr Bass proposed that it was important to have a joint communications approach and speak with 'one voice'. He put forward that the ECC would lead press releases, with support from Jacobs. This was agreed by members.

3 **Terms of Reference (ToR)**

Cllr Bass introduced the draft terms of reference and asked for priority comments. The ToR was agreed pending minor amends.

4 **A120 Communications strategy**

It was put forward by Cllr Bass that the discussion generated by item 2 had covered this agenda item in some detail.

This was agreed and no further comments were put forward by the group.

5 **AOB**

None.

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Date of next meeting

Cllr Bass proposed that the next meeting should be in-line with the next project milestone. This would make the next meeting date in March 2016.

The group agreed this approach and date. Meeting details would be confirmed at a later date.

Actions

- 1) **GROUP:** To provide contact details for any interested parties who should be informally engaged prior to the establishment of the public forums, or consultation, by December 9th 2015.

Supporting information

- 1) **Lisa Levy's presentation**
- 2) **Updated TOR.**