

**TO:** SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

**DATE:** 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006

**SUBJECT:** Faversham Town Centre Traffic Flows

**BY:** Head of Technical Services

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** Report to inform Members of the responses received from the Traders and Residents within Faversham town centre in relation to the proposal to introduce an experimental traffic order that would close the town centre to traffic on market Days (Tuesdays and Fridays) between 10:00 and 16:00.

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**Implications:** Human Resources Implications – None at this stage

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Finance Implications – Funding will need to be sought to introduce and support proposed measures

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Legal Implications – Experimental traffic order to be published by Kent County Council

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Crime & Disorder Implications – none

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Sustainability Implications – the opposing arguments of a pedestrianised town centre makes it more attractive verses lack of access could put people off visiting the centre

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Risk Implications – Traders have raised their view that total closure of the town centre to traffic would cause problems with deliveries and affect the viability of businesses within the centre

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**Decision Required:** **Members consider the responses to this consultation and recommend that**

**i. the experimental order be introduced that prohibits traffic except deliveries and permit holders on Market days, and;**

**ii. funding is sought to introduce the manned barrier option on Market days.**

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### Introduction/Background

1. A consultation exercise was undertaken in December 2004, which asked the residents of Faversham their views relating to a proposal to close the town centre to vehicular traffic between 10:00am and 4:00pm on Weekdays. This would be in addition to the current Saturday closure. The response to the consultation showed that 70% of the responses supported closure of the town centre to traffic. However, the businesses within the town centre indicated that this closure would cause real problems in terms of deliveries and collections to their premises. The businesses also

considered that the restricted access would have an adverse affect on the overall level of trade within the town centre.

2. At the meeting of the Faversham Area Forum on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2006, members recommended that the experimental closure of the town centre area to traffic on market days be introduced. This closure will stop traffic entering the town centre from the Court Street/Crescent Road junction, which will effectively close Market Street, Preston Street and East Street to vehicular access on Tuesdays and Fridays. This will be in addition to the existing Saturday closure. It is proposed to close the town centre between 10:00 and 16:00 on these days.

### Discussion

3. Ahead of the publication of the experimental traffic order, the Borough Council sought the views of the traders and residents that would be affected by this proposal. Copies of the responses made can be found in the Members Room.

4. 19 responses were received up until Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December. They indicated that:

- 7 objected to the closure
- 6 objected to the closure as proposed, but gave alternative suggestions for managing traffic within the town centre
- 5 supported the experimental closure proposal
- 1 Objected, but said that something should be done

(An update of the overall responses received will be given at the meeting)

5. A number of the alternative suggestions have been made which have been presented to the Faversham Area Forum previously. The alternative suggestions raised in direct response to the recent proposed experimental closure letter distributed to premises in the town centre included:

- Introduce a manned barrier to control access to the town centre (3)
- Alternative flow directions Reverse traffic flows within Preston Street to reduce through traffic in the Court Street/Market Place area (4)
- Restrict disabled parking within the town centre (1)
- Reduce the times of the closure (1)

(some respondents put forward more than one alternative suggestion)

6. A manned barrier to control access would allow vehicles that have a genuine need to get to premises in the town centre, and exclude those that do not. In addition to the initial establishment costs, there will be an ongoing revenue cost for the staffing of the barrier.

7. At this time, there is no identified source of funding to ensure the sustainability of this option. However, if this option were to be pursued an experimental traffic order to close the town centre would still be needed but with exemptions for loading access and permits.

8. The closure option would also prohibit access for disabled drivers. However, if closure is progressed we would propose further disabled parking spaces within Central Car Park as well as introducing new disabled spaces within the existing parking at the Court Street/Crescent Road junction.

9. Suggestions to alter the traffic flow directions to reduce flows in parts of the town centre have previously been raised in reports to the Faversham Area Forum and also through the Faversham Streetscape Strategy. This option could reduce the amount of traffic within the market place by removing through traffic, but would not restrict the type or volume of traffic accessing the town centre. Again, there is no identified funding source to implement the changes that would be required to signage and potentially the traffic signals at East Street to facilitate this option.

#### Recommendation

10. Members consider the responses to this consultation and recommend that
- i. the experimental order be introduced that prohibits traffic except deliveries and permit holders on Market days, and;
  - ii. funding is sought to introduce the manned barrier option on Market days.

#### Reason for Recommendation

11. The manned barrier option does appear to provide the best overall solution as it would only allow traffic into the town centre that has a genuine need to be there and would stop through traffic and inappropriate access.

12. Introducing the scheme on an experimental basis on market days only will still allow vehicular access on other days of the week.

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