

From: Anna Taylor, Scrutiny Research Officer
To: Scrutiny Committee – 4 February 2021
Subject: Call-in – Decision 21/00011: Kent Rail Strategy 2021

Classification: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

1.1 On 25 January 2021 Cabinet adopted the Kent Rail Strategy 2021 as the Council's rail policy. The draft Kent Rail Strategy 2021 was considered by Members of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 15 September 2020, prior to the commencement of the strategy's public consultation. Members of the Committee resolved the following:

1.2 RESOLVED to endorse the draft Kent Rail Strategy 2021, and the proposals set out in the strategy's summary of recommended actions for public consultation in Autumn 2020, subject to updating the section on Eurostar services to reflect the current situation at Kent stations; the inclusion of a reference to the need for charging points for electric cars at railway station car parks; and the addition of the words 'KCC supports the ongoing efforts of Dover District Council in securing a journey time between St Pancras and Dover Priory of under 60 minutes and their efforts with Network Rail to increase car parking capacity at Dover Priory'.

1.3 These amendments were incorporated in the final version of the Kent Rail Strategy 2021, which Cabinet Members endorsed on 25 January 2021.

2. Call-in

2.1 In accordance with the constitution Mr Bird, supported by Mr Farrell, exercised his right to call this decision in to Scrutiny for further discussion, a summary of the reasons is set out below:

2.2 Call-in under clause 17.72 (a) - The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework.

2.3 The Thameslink service was to provide frequent and fast train services which would take less than 60 minutes to travel from Maidstone East to London City.

2.4 When the Cabinet approved the Kent Rail Strategy 2021, it agreed to a slow service to London Blackfriars instead of the fast Thameslink services to London City, which is the priority set out in the Local Transport Plan. Accordingly, the Strategy does not deliver the policy aims of the County Council's Local Transport Plan.

2.5 It is understood that the trains to Blackfriars are being re-routed onto the slower Catford Loop line. This significant drawback was not made clear in the Rail Strategy and the associated documentation, nor during the 25 January 2021 Cabinet meeting.

2.6 The decision also warrants Scrutiny Call-in under clause 17.72 (c) as the decision process fails to satisfy clauses 8.5 (d) A presumption in favour of openness, 8.5 (e) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes, and 8.5 (f) Explanation of the options considered and giving reasons for decisions.”

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Scrutiny Committee may:

- (a) make no comments,
- (b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision;
- (c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in light of the Committee’s comments; or
- (d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

4. Background Documents

[Report to Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 15 September 2020](#)

[Report to Cabinet – 25 January 2021](#)

[Record of Decision](#)

[Kent Rail Strategy 2021](#)

[Kent Rail Strategy EqIA](#)

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