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To: **Select Committee: Future Passenger Rail Services in Kent – 22 June 2010**

Subject: **RESPONSE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To provide Members with an update on the actions taken to date as a result of the recommendations made in the Future Passenger Rail Services in Kent Select Committee report considered by the County Council in April 2009.

Introduction

1. The Select Committee, which included participation from Medway Council, commenced work on 2 September 2008 and produced a report the following month. This was considered by Cabinet on 1 December, who welcomed the report, but wanted to look in more detail at some issues including the premium fares to be charged on the high speed trains. The report was considered by the County Council on 30 April 2009.

2. The Select Committee's report was also considered by Medway Council's Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 3 December 2008 and subsequently by their Cabinet on 6 January 2009. Medway Council welcomed the report and agreed that it should be used to assist in putting together the Council's response to the draft Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).

3. The Terms of Reference of the Committee was to identify the best rail passenger service solution for Kent (including Medway), both in terms of:

- The immediate benefits of the solution in terms of journey times and improved services to London and around Kent ; and
- The long term benefits of the solution in terms of the regeneration of Kent and the impacts on the wider rail network and transport in the County.

This involved investigating the following:

- Current proposals of the franchise holders, Southeastern, for services from December 2009 and proposed fare levels;
- Forecasted effects of these proposals and whether they are robust - including whether rising general fare levels and additional premium fares on CTRL DS would prove to be a deterrent to travel by rail;
- The effects the proposed services would have on the regeneration of Growth Areas and the coastal towns;

- The case for new parkway stations at Minster and Westenhanger;
 - The likelihood of rail heading to certain stations with significantly improved services and likely effects;
 - Access to stations forecast to attract significant rises in passenger volumes;
3. The Select Committee Report made a total of 13 recommendations for further action. Please see Appendix 1 for the details of these recommendations with a response.
 4. The Committee received evidence from a wide range of stakeholders, including Southeastern, Network Rail, Passenger Focus, Visit Kent, Locate in Kent, Stagecoach and County Council officers. A full list of witnesses, who attended Select Committee hearings and written evidence received is given in the Select Committee report.
 5. Since the County Council considered the Select Committee's report, high speed domestic services started on 13 December 2009 and the rail timetables across Kent have been significantly restructured.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and comment on the response to the recommendations.

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Background Documents:

KCC
Select Committee Report on Passenger Rail Services in Kent, October 2008
Cabinet Report on Select Committee: Domestic Rail Services, 1 December 2008
County Council Report on Select Committee: Domestic Rail Services, 30 April 2009

MC
Medway Council Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report 3 December 2008 - Kent County Council Select Committee - High Speed 1 (Ctrl) Domestic Rail Services
Medway Council Cabinet Report 6 January 2009 - Kent County Council Select Committee - High Speed 1 (Ctrl) Domestic Rail Services

Summary of progress towards each Select Committee Recommendation

	Progress to Date	Status
<p>Recommendation 1:</p>		
<p>The County Council should with the evidence available at this time, welcome the new high speed rail services starting in December 2009 serving stations in Kent with new trains.</p>	<p>Response to the County Council in April 2009 given below – see later responses on experience since services started in December 2009</p> <p>Agreed. The County Council has consistently supported the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). One of its benefits is to offer faster domestic services from east and north Kent to London and over the years the County Council has worked with partners to lobby for the CTRL scheme to be completed and for domestic services to serve as many stations as possible.</p> <p>The new high speed rail services will help regenerate parts of east and north Kent by making access to London more attractive. This will encourage people to move to cheaper housing, further away from London but within acceptable commuting range. With the new services running to St. Pancras and Stratford, people currently living to the north and east of London will in future be attracted to relocate in Kent. The new services will also attract businesses to locate in areas close in London in terms of time, but at rates significantly below those in central London. They will also encourage tourism to Kent by making attractions in the County more accessible by rail from central and north London as well as areas beyond the capital.</p> <p>Medway Council held similar views before the services started</p>	<p>Complete/advanced progress</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 2:		
<p>The County Council should welcome the link to St. Pancras in opening access to a growth area in London and offering excellent connections to the Midlands and the North.</p>	<p>Response to the County Council in April 2009 given below – see later responses on experience since December 2009</p> <p>Agreed. Not only do the high speed services help to regenerate parts of East and North Kent, but they significantly improve opportunities for Kent residents and businesses to access the growth areas around Kings Cross/St. Pancras and Stratford/Docklands as well as providing excellent connections with the East Coast, Midland and West Coast Main Lines</p>	Complete/advanced progress
Recommendation 3:		
<p>The County Council should use the publicity surrounding the launch of the new services to promote:</p> <p>a. Tourism from London and north of London to Kent, building on the present campaigns by Visit Kent (and other partners).</p> <p>b. Inward investment by businesses especially knowledge based (i.e. non industrial) businesses to take advantage of Kent's good connectivity building on the work by Locate in Kent.</p>	<p>Visit Kent, in partnership with Southeastern and other Councils (including Medway Council), ran a joint marketing campaign between May 2009 and March 2010 to cover the period of the preview and full launch of the new high speed services. This campaign was successful with over 50,000 website hits recorded and an estimated £800,000 brought to the local economy. Visit Kent considers it too early to assess the impact on tourism this year but there is some anecdotal evidence that hotels in Medway, Canterbury and Ashford have seen a positive impact on their businesses</p> <p>Locate in Kent prominently stresses the fast journey times achieved by high speed rail on its website, but at present does not consider that it has been a significant factor in attracting businesses to Kent. The ongoing recession has delayed development throughout the County and this is particularly evident at Ebbsfleet. Additionally, the significant development around Stratford Station has been delayed and is not yet completed.</p>	Some good progress although more to do

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 4:		
<p>The County Council should lobby for services lost in the new timetable to be reinstated at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>The most significant services lost due to the new timetable are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of the Maidstone – Cannon Street (Charing Cross) service • Reduction in numbers of trains from the North Kent Line to Victoria and Charing Cross and longer journey times • Reduction in number of off-peak trains and slower journey times between Ashford and Charing Cross <p>The County Council has held a Rail Summit on 25 March with Southeastern, Network Rail, Passenger Focus and Rail User Groups to discuss these and other issues and it is intended to continue to hold another in the Autumn and bi-annually in future.</p> <p>The County Council and other partners have continued to lobby for the restoration of these services – particularly for the Maidstone to City services involving the three local MPs, Maidstone BC and Tonbridge & Malling BC as well as KCC and local rail user groups. To date this pressure has not been successful and Southeastern considers that the likelihood of any significant changes being made during the current franchise period is remote. The current franchise runs until 2012, with a possible extension to 2014 if certain performance targets are met by the train operator.</p> <p>Southeastern explained that they could not afford to introduce new services involving additional rolling stock as the subsidy they are receiving from Government continues to decline significantly and they are expected to pay a small premium to the Government in 2014. Southeastern’s revenues have not increased as forecast in the franchise agreement due to the recession and the delays in housing and employment development - particularly at Ebbsfleet and Stratford. Indeed, Government has had to grant Southeastern additional subsidy recently to compensate for this loss in revenue.</p> <p>The opportunity will be taken by the County Council and partners to press the new Government to restore these services.</p>	<p>Little/no significant progress yet/high risk (therefore high priority next steps)</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>The County Council should work with key partners to ensure a direct pedestrian link between Northfleet and Ebbsfleet stations is created as soon as practicable</p>	<p>Ideally there should be a high quality pedestrian direct link between Ebbsfleet and Northfleet to enable ready access to high speed and Eurostar services from rail passengers from Dartford and stations in south London. The current walking distance between the two stations is around one kilometre and a direct link with an underpass crossing under a number of railway lines would reduce the distance to some 300m.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the cost of providing a direct pedestrian link between Northfleet Station and the Ebbsfleet car park is relatively high, requiring an underpass estimated to cost some £9m. There appeared to be funding available from the HCA and Network Rail to cover this cost, but a reappraisal of the allocation of Community Infrastructure Funding (CIF) by the HCA took away £5m of the funding</p> <p>Additionally, there has been no development in the Ebbsfleet area so that the prospect of developer contributions towards this scheme is limited. It seems extremely unlikely that a good quality direct pedestrian link will be provided between the two stations in the near future.</p> <p>However, the introduction of the high speed services does mean that there is a regular train link between Gravesend and Ebbsfleet and Fastrack bus services do connect Ebbsfleet with Dartford and Greenhithe stations to the west.</p>	<p>Little/no significant progress yet/high risk (therefore high priority next steps)</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 6:		
<p>The County Council should produce a review of the stations that will be served by High-Speed rail to identify and prioritise work needed to stations and station access to be ready for or soon after the December 2009 launch</p>	<p>A regular forum is to be set up between KCC and Network Rail to discuss station issues. Meanwhile progress on upgrading High Speed Stations has been mixed and there is considerable uncertainty over available funding from Network Rail, Southeastern, KCC and Medway Council in the future</p> <p>KCC Stations</p> <p>Dover Priory – works are currently underway to radically improve the access for pedestrians to the station and improved facilities for bus passengers</p> <p>Folkestone Central – there are plans by Southeastern to improve facilities for cycle parking and for waiting passengers</p> <p>Folkestone West – access has been improved by KCC with new traffic signals and a controlled parking zone has been introduced by Shepway DC. Negotiations to extend the station car park have proved difficult in the past, but Network Rail is continuing to pursue this.</p> <p>Ashford – the domestic ticket hall has been rebuilt and enlarged by Southeastern and the forecourt has been improved for pedestrians, cyclists and buses by Ashford Futures. Longer term improvements are planned to the international station entrance in conjunction with the Smartlink scheme</p> <p>Margate – Network Rail and KCC plan to provide better pedestrian access, including new crossing to nearby bus stops, improved bus service information and cycle parking, together with a walking route to the town centre and Turner Contemporary Arts Centre.</p> <p>Ramsgate – KCC plans to improve cycling and public transport access to the station providing pedestrian crossings, enhanced bus bays, cycle routes, bus journey information, pedestrian signage, cycle parking and improvements to the adjacent junction of Wilfred Road/Grange Road.</p>	<p>Some good progress although more to do</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 6 (continued)		
	<p>Canterbury West – Network Rail is currently providing step-free access at the station, including a new footbridge with lifts. Network Rail and KCC plan to improve cycle access</p> <p>Faversham – no plans at present</p> <p>Sittingbourne – Network Rail has plans to provide an additional footbridge at the station with lifts, coupled with ramps and disabled toilets to make the station fully DDA compliant</p> <p>Gravesend – Network Rail is planning to improve circulation space in the station building and provide a mobility impaired toilet later this year. Longer term improvements to the station access and lengthening platforms for 12 car trains are tied in with the Transport Quarter scheme</p> <p>Medway Council Stations</p> <p>Strood – Network Rail are developing plans for platform extensions to 12 car, and also to provide a new footbridge to make the station DDA complaint. Medway Renaissance are examining the potential for a new station building</p> <p>Rochester – Network Rail and Medway Council are actively exploring plans to relocate Rochester station further to the west to improve access to Rochester Town Centre. This will also allow 12 car operation, an improved station environment and access to the Rochester Riverside development all of which are difficult at the current location.</p> <p>Chatham – works are being carried to improve some passenger facilities in the near future while the longer terms strategy for this station is being developed</p> <p>Gillingham – Improvements to the station building, forecourt and platforms including the provision of a second entrance on Railway Street will be provided during 2011</p> <p>Rainham – Medway Council and Southeastern are developing plans for improvements to the station forecourt area</p>	Some good progress although more to do

	Progress to Date	Status
<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>The County Council should encourage the bus and rail companies to introduce more promotional off-peak fares, joint passes, through tickets (such as the BusPlus pass) and Open Jaw tickets.</p>	<p>Stagecoach in East Kent offers a range of multi-journey tickets on their bus services.</p> <p>The Megarider Gold ticket is just £19 for seven days unlimited travel across East Kent & East Sussex on local Stagecoach buses. Passengers buy their ticket from the driver on the first day they wish to travel and then use their ticket as often as they like for a week.</p> <p>The Dayrider ticket is valid on the day of purchase, and may be used on any bus service operated by Stagecoach or Arriva in Kent or East Sussex. This is a good example of joint-ticketing, but both operators would have to agree to extend this principle to tickets valid for a longer period.</p> <p>Arriva Southern Counties also offer a range of multi-journey tickets on their bus services.</p> <p>The Arriva Day Saver is valid in a specified zone, and can be bought from the driver on the day. There are also weekly savers and 4-weekly savers which are valid in a specified zone for their respective periods, and can be bought from local Paypoint outlets.</p> <p>The Dayrider ticket is similarly valid on all Arriva and Stagecoach bus services in Kent and East Sussex, and can be bought from the driver on the day.</p> <p>Plusbus is now well established in Kent, and is probably the best example of through ticketing between rail and bus, now available at 24 stations in the county. The Plusbus ticket is bought with the train ticket at the railway station, and offers a discount price bus pass that offers unlimited bus travel around the town to which it applies.</p>	<p>Some good progress although more to do</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 7 (continued)	<p>Plusbus prices start at £1.60 per day, with most between £2 and £3 per day. Further discounts are also available with railcards, which offer one-third off the rail ticket and Plusbus ticket (subject to railcard conditions). Plusbus season tickets are also available, matching the length of the rail season ticket for 7 days, 1 month, 3 months or 1 year. While Openjaw tickets are well established on airline routes, the bus and rail operators appear more wary of the benefits. There are some rail tickets which are partially Openjaw, in that they permit the holder to travel between two stations “by any appropriate route”, but not usually to return from a different station. Local bus operators already offer the multi-journey tickets described above, which effectively offer more flexibility than would be available with an Openjaw ticket.</p> <p>KCC will continue to encourage bus and rail operators to work together in promoting a variety of multi-journey tickets, both within and between each mode of travel.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8:</p> <p>The County Council should work with the bus companies to develop more frequent services serving rail stations, particularly more late services serving returning rail commuters and to assist with the Traveline project for accurate journey planning.</p>	<p>KCC currently works in co-operation with the principal bus operators through its Quality Bus Partnerships (QBP) in seven of the twelve districts. There are plans for further QBPs in two more districts, and eventually it is hoped to have similar agreements throughout the county. Together with the district council, the three parties to each QBP agreement work together to improve local bus services, and included within this remit is the improvement of bus/rail interchange arrangements.</p> <p>KCC encourages bus operators to provide extended peak period services to and from railway stations, but in locations where this is not commercially viable the county may provide revenue support for bus services which provide access to and from employment.</p> <p>Both principal bus operators, and KCC on behalf of the supported bus network, work very closely with Traveline to ensure that the information used by Traveline accurately reflects bus stop locations and bus timetables to allow accurate journey planning.</p>	Some good progress although more to do

	Progress to Date	Status
<p>Recommendation 9:</p> <p>The County Council should lobby for low introductory fares to ensure early success for the High Speed services.</p>	<p>Lobbying for lower introductory fares before the services started was unsuccessful</p> <p>Southeastern has been reticent about passenger numbers on the high speed trains, saying only that the total numbers of am peak passengers on the high speed services is around 4,000 with around half each travelling on the North Kent Line via Ebbsfleet and half via Ashford. Whereas the services via Ashford are well loaded and are deemed successful, those on the North Kent Line are relatively empty as there is a more regular service on that line. Numbers using Ebbsfleet are particularly disappointing due to the lack of any development in the immediate area and the feared rat-running to Ebbsfleet being overestimated. The survey by Southeastern in the spring also shows that there has been an increase of around 1,000 passengers in the morning peak on the classic network compared to pre-December 2009 figures.</p> <p>The contrasting success of these services is not thought to be mainly due to fare levels but rather to journey time savings. The journey time savings on the high speed services on the North Kent Line (between the Medway Towns and Thanet) to St. Pancras are relatively small compared to the classic services to Victoria, London Bridge etc. so the incentive to switch to high speed is small, when most passengers want to access the classic stations.</p> <p>On the other hand, the journey time savings via Ashford are very significant and therefore have caused switching to High Speed and created new journey opportunities which did not exist before. The premium fares do not appear to have been a deterrent</p>	<p>Some good progress although more to do</p>




	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 10:		
The County Council should decide how best to consider public transport issues in future either through an existing or new board; a formal S101 Joint Committee between Kent County Council and Medway Council; or by establishing a separate or joint Strategic Public Transport Forum	<p>Good liaison between officers of Kent County and Medway Councils on public transport continues on a day-to day basis and KCC and Medway Council are partners in the North Kent Multi Area Agreement (MAA).</p> <p>It is considered that there is not a current need to establish another forum between the two Councils.</p>	Complete/advanced progress
Recommendation 11:		
<p>The County Council should recognise the timescales for influencing rail services and infrastructure provision and begin consideration of the following:</p> <p>a. Potential Thameslink services to Maidstone, the Medway Towns, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks</p>	<p>a) There is a real possibility of this scheme slipping but currently the Thameslink scheme is scheduled for completion in 2016 and offers significantly increased capacity between London Bridge and St Pancras, via Blackfriars, City Thameslink and Farringdon and great potential for direct rail links from parts of Kent to the City.</p> <p>Service patterns for the Thameslink services are not likely to be finalised until 2014/5 even if the scheme does not slip beyond 2016. Current indications in the Kent Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) are to extend Thameslink services in Kent to:</p> <p>Maidstone East – all day Sevenoaks, via Swanley – all day Paddock Wood, via Tonbridge – peak hours only Tunbridge Wells, via Tonbridge – peak hours only</p> <p>Whilst the all day services are welcomed, particularly the Maidstone service which will offer a much wider range of direct services to London destinations, including the City, there is much concern that the introduction of peak services to Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks would mean the loss of direct services in the peak to Cannon Street.</p>	Some good progress although more to do

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 11 (continued)		
<p data-bbox="232 395 663 459">b. Network Rail's forthcoming Rail Utilisation Strategy</p> <p data-bbox="232 699 719 799">c. The renewal of the Southeastern franchise in Kent 2014</p>	<p data-bbox="741 280 1890 344">The County Council and its partners need to retain close attention to the development of this scheme and to protect the best interests of Kent residents and businesses</p> <p data-bbox="741 379 1872 512">b) The Kent Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) was published in January 2010. Apart from the indications that Maidstone should be linked to the Thameslink network from 2016 and that there is a good business case for extending the High Speed Ebbsfleet starters to Ashford or Maidstone West, there are few significant new proposals</p> <p data-bbox="741 552 1845 616">We will continue to work with Network Rail to improve the rail infrastructure in Kent to provide better rail services and improved journey times (see response to 12b)</p> <p data-bbox="741 687 1861 847">c) The current Southeastern franchise runs from April 2006 to the end of March 2012, with an automatic two year extension if targets are met. The Councils will have to respond robustly to the consultation on the proposed train specification in the new franchise and to consider carefully what the bidders to run the franchise from 2014 are offering.</p>	<p data-bbox="1921 499 2119 632">Some good progress although more to do</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 12:		
<p>The County Council should consider the feasibility of the following rail services/infrastructure projects:</p> <p>a. direct services from Kent and Medway to Gatwick airport</p> <p>b. rail links to the Kent International and Lydd Airports</p>	<p>a) Discussions are currently underway between KCC, Southern and Gatwick Airport to consider the re-introduction of a through rail service between Kent and Gatwick Airport. The discussions are at an early stage, but all parties recognise the need for a through service, at least to and from Tonbridge and ideally extended to and from Ashford. Such a change would require agreement from the Department for Transport, as it would involve amending the existing franchise agreement by which Southern operates. A new through rail service would also require co-operation with Network Rail for pathing of trains, and would need to utilise some of the additional platform capacity planned at Redhill to facilitate the necessary reversing of trains.</p> <p>However, there is considerable good will on all sides, and officers are optimistic that, provided the business case can demonstrate its viability, a successful outcome of these discussions will deliver a direct rail service between Kent and Gatwick Airport.</p> <p>b) The County Council commissioned consultants to look at how the journey times by rail to Kent International Airport at Manston could be improved. This looked at many options for sections of new high speed line connection with the existing CTRL (HS1), but concluded that the cost benefit ratio was insufficient for the schemes to be built in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>KCC and Network Rail have also commissioned a study to investigate how much the existing Ashford – Thanet line can be improved to reduce journey times. Network Rail has identified potential scope to improve times by about 10 minutes over the length of line and will be finalising the detail by the end of the year.</p> <p>The County Council is currently working with partners to press the case for a Parkway Station to be built near the airport to give better access to Manston Business park, Sandwich and Pfizer, Deal and Westwood Cross as well as KIA. If these journey time savings can be achieved in full, it would mean that the journey time between St. Pancras and a Thanet Parkway Station would be under an hour.</p>	<p>Some good progress although more to do</p>

	Progress to Date	Status
Recommendation 12 (continued)		
	The planning application for the proposed extension of the runway at Lydd and the expansion of the terminal facilities may be called in by Government. The railway line from the junction with the Ashford – Hastings Line and Lydd is in poor condition and would likely require significant investment to enable its use by passenger trains travelling at a respectable speed.	
Recommendation 13:		
The County Council should engage with Southeastern and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to plan for joint ticketing arrangements to maximise use of public transport to the Games and to minimise disruption to Kent's residents and businesses during the 16 day period of the main Games.	<p>The planning of rail services during the 16-day period of the main Olympic Games is at an early stage. Whereas the initial intention was to use all the High Speed domestic trains to run a shuttle service between Ebbsfleet, Stratford and St. Pancras for Olympic-related passengers only, this view has now moderated and the intention is to allow some high-speed services to continue at least to Ashford, although this may not happen during the whole period of the day</p> <p>The Olympic Delivery Agency currently envisages free rail travel within London for event ticket holders but that spectators from Kent would have to purchase rail tickets in advance. The ODA has recently stated that a combined rail/event ticket from Ebbsfleet Station will be available but this situation needs to be monitored over the next two years.</p>	Some good progress although more to do

STATUS

- Key:
-  = Complete/advanced progress
 -  = Some good progress although more to do
 -  = Little/no significant progress yet/high risk (therefore high priority next steps)