

By: Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste
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To: Environment, Highways & Waste – Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2011

Subject: Rail Action Plan for Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out the background to the development of the Rail Action Plan for Kent, and invites members to comment on the report before it is presented to Cabinet for approval on 4 April 2011 and to the 3rd Rail Summit on 19 April 2011.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent's Transport Strategy is encapsulated in two key documents: 'Growth without Gridlock' (December 2010); and 'Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-2016' (draft, September 2010). These policies summarise Kent County Council's (KCC) transport policy and inform the Rail Action Plan for Kent.
- 1.2 The Rail Action Plan for Kent sets out the principal objectives of KCC to ensure that the new Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) - which is due to commence in April 2014 - delivers a rail service for Kent that meets the needs of the county's residents and visitors. It is not concerned with changing the existing franchise operated by Southeastern Railway, although KCC will continue to press for improvements in its current operation.
- 1.3 The Plan lists in detail the rail routes which need addressing in today's network, and recommends improvements to be incorporated in the new franchise specification. It also recognises the need for the level of rail fares charged in Kent to offer better value for money, so as to encourage economic growth throughout the county.
- 1.4 Following extensive public engagement and consultation, the final version of this Rail Action Plan for Kent will be presented to Cabinet on 4 April 2011 for approval, and then to the 3rd KCC Rail summit on 19 April 2011. It will inform KCC's submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) for the awarding of the contract for the delivery of the IKF from 2014 onwards.

2. Development of the Rail Action Plan for Kent

- 2.1 KCC introduced a series of Rail Summits in 2010. The first, on 25 March, invited representatives from Rail User Groups (RUGs), interested individuals, rail operators and others to develop a common approach across Kent to the forthcoming renewal process for the Integrated Kent Franchise. The second summit, on 21 October, focused in greater detail on the service changes needed across the county, and led to the drafting of the attached Rail Action Plan for Kent.
- 2.2 This sets out in detail the recommended franchise specification for each of the rail routes in Kent, and also lists the particular issues raised by RUGs and others concerning individual rail services. The final draft report was sent to all interested stakeholders on 23 December 2010, with an invitation to comment by 28 February 2011. Members of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are also invited to comment on the final draft report which is presented today.
- 2.3 There will clearly be conflicting responses from stakeholders. KCC will want to make clear recommendations based on its knowledge on the availability of train paths, rolling stock, crews and DfT revenue support. For example, it would not be possible to improve the running time on the North Kent line to Victoria and Cannon Street if requests for additional stops at smaller stations on this route were granted.
- 2.4 KCC expects the DfT's consultation period for the new IKF to run for about two years, from Autumn 2011 to the announcement of the award for the new franchise in Autumn/Winter 2013. The expected commencement date of the new franchise is 1 April 2014, although this award may now be for an initial period of between three and six years in order to establish a common date for the renewal of the Southeastern, Southern and First Capital Connect (Thameslink) franchises.
- 2.5 KCC's Rail Action Plan for Kent is therefore the right plan at the right time. Its aim is to represent the needs of Kent's residents, businesses and visitors, by ensuring that the new IKF delivers a rail service that meets the demand for the future of rail travel in the county and facilitates economic growth in Kent.

3. Recommendations

- (i) **Members are invited to comment on the report.**
- (ii) **Members are also invited to submit any comments in response to the final draft Rail Action Plan for Kent to:**

railactionplan@kent.gov.uk

Appendix A

Rail Action Plan for Kent (with appendices 1, 2 & 3)

Background Documents: The following background documents have been used in the preparation of this report:

Rail Action Plan for Kent – Final Draft for Consultation (Kent County Council, Maidstone, 22 December 2010)

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