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To: Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee

Date: 11 May 2012

Subject: Current progress with the actions in the draft Freight Action Plan for Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report sets out the progress with current actions from the draft Freight Action Plan for Kent, including the development of a Lorry Watch Scheme, the Government's recent Sat Nav summit, and the commissioning of a lorry journey planner to sit on the kent.gov.uk website.

Recommendation:

Members of the Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and endorse the progress with the actions in the draft Freight Action Plan for Kent.

1. Introduction

This report sets out to provide an update to Members on the current situation regarding the development of a Freight Action Plan for Kent. The Plan identifies the issues facing the County in relation to road freight, develops a series of objectives and outlines a number of key actions.

2. Financial Implications

The Kent Lorry Watch scheme identified in the plan is currently being developed (see section 4). This has implications for officer time and will form part of a business case for creating the role of a Freight Officer.

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

The action points in the draft Freight Action Plan for Kent contribute towards all three of the key priorities in Bold Steps for Kent.

1. To help the Kent economy grow

The plan recognises the importance of the economic growth of the county and seeks to:

- Work with the freight industry to seek ways of keeping goods for business moving efficiently whilst minimising the impact upon our communities
- Provide information to the haulage industry to help them plan their journeys

2. To put the citizen in control

The plan identifies the impact that the freight industry has on the community and seeks to involve and empower them by:

- Developing a community Lorry watch initiative
- Provide a method of recording problems as they occur
- Work with the community and freight industry in raising the awareness of decisions that individuals make when ordering goods

3. To tackle disadvantage

The plan identifies the problems faced by the community and sets out the objectives to:

- Improving air quality
- Reducing the instances of lorries becoming stuck
- Ensure lorries are kept away from residential areas

4. The Plan

The Freight Action Plan is a strategic plan that identifies the problems faced in Kent caused by the impact of road freight. The document focuses on road haulage because KCC, as the Highway Authority, has the greatest influence on this mode. Further, the majority of community concerns are around HGVs. The Plan identifies the following main issues:

- Operation Stack
- Overnight lorry parking
- Ensuring HGV traffic uses the strategic road network
- Addressing problems caused by lorry traffic in communities
- Using KCC's planning powers to reduce the impact of freight
- Encouraging sustainable freight distribution

Within each of the objectives a number of actions have been devised to contribute towards the mitigation of the impacts of road haulage in Kent. An update on some of these is given below.

Kent Lorry Watch

This is being developed as a community-led project whereby participants can record details of anti-social behaviour by lorry drivers, ranging from using unsuitable routes to contravening weight limits. The range of applications distinguishes the scheme from versions run elsewhere. Kent Police's Commercial Vehicle Unit has offered their assistance in tracing driver/operator details so that contact can be made to work with the operator to resolve any problems. The scheme has the potential to be a

successful means of gathering intelligence on the extent of lorry-related problems and generating solutions. It will be piloted in May/June.

Freight Gateway – lorry journey planner

This is an online routing tool that will sit on the kent.gov.uk website and take into account vehicle dimensions to produce accurate “last mile” routing, which is where many HGV problems occur. KCC’s data on Traffic Regulation Orders restricting lorries will be inputted and we will also be able to specify that roads with advisory “Unsuitable for HGVs” signage are weighted such that they are avoided in the routes generated. This accurate data will be passed on to Sat Nav companies, further improving HGV routing in Kent. A feedback module will allow online reporting of lorry-related issues, feeding into Kent Lorry Watch. Development work is now underway.

District refuse collection

As part of re-tendering for refuse collection contracts, KCC has agreed routes to be avoiding during peak hours in Canterbury, Ashford, Swale and Maidstone. Discussions are ongoing with other districts and it is intended to roll out this joint working to town and shopping centre management around their own delivery and servicing arrangements.

Sat Nav Summit

On 6 March 2012 KCC were represented at the Summit called by Norman Baker. We are committed to taking an active role in any developments as a result of the Summit and are currently awaiting feedback.

Commercial driver leaflets

Kent Police have offered KCC the opportunity to have some input into their regular Stammtisch meetings at Clacket Lane, Medway and Maidstone services. This is where the Police talk with lorry drivers, aiming to improve safety and tackle crime. One means of doing this is to update the leaflets currently produced by the Road Safety team, including information about the new pictorial “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign, responsible use of satnavs, and promoting the Freight Gateway.

Outcomes and Future actions

The Action Plan has assessed the current issues facing Kent and set out the strategic objectives. It has identified the current work being carried out and assessed the gaps where a more strategic approach can deliver real change and improvements for the community. A summary of the actions is listed below:

- Conduct a full review of the freight signing in the County
- Work to develop a routing database to assist haulage companies identify suitable routes in the County
- Develop a comprehensive lorry route guide using the new database
- Work with the FTA to promote the database with their members
- Work with the FTA to promote awareness of the impact of individuals choices when ordering goods

- Continue to use the existing tools available when tackling issues in the community
 - Use of the new pictorial “Unsuitable for HGV’s” sign
 - Assessing the need for restrictions and implementation where a safety critical issues exists
- Implement a Lorry Watch scheme
 - Use the data collected to work with the FTA to encourage route change with the businesses identified
 - Work with Kent Police when the issues continue
 - Assess what other measures may be necessary to resolve the issues
- Improve the link with businesses and the planning process with the Districts and Boroughs when commenting on planning applications

These actions are amongst the key challenges for the next year. Although this approach will result in real improvements in tackling the issues it will not resolve every issue that does occur. However, it does demonstrate how seriously KCC is taking the issue of road freight in the County.

5. Conclusions

The Freight Action Plan for Kent provides a framework for dealing with the problems generated by road freight in the county. It identifies the problems and sets out a series of objectives to tackle this important issue. Work is now underway on delivering the Plan.

6. Recommendations

Members are asked to consider and endorse the progress with the actions in the draft Freight Action Plan for Kent

7. Background Documents

A copy of the draft Freight Action Plan for Kent is attached along with a copy of the approved Equalities Impact Assessment.

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