

By: Mr K Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting independence
Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and

To: Cabinet – 1 December 2008

Subject: Select Committee: Domestic Rail Services

Summary: To receive and comment on the Select Committee Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee, at its meeting on 25 September noted the proposal to establish a Select Committee to look at the issue of Domestic Rail Services. This was agreed by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee and noted at its 23 May and 10 September meetings.

2. Select Committee Process

Membership

2.1 The Select Committee commenced its work on 2 September. The Chairman of the Select Committee was Miss S J Carey, other members being Mr T Birkett, Mr A Chell, Mr D Daley, Mr R Parker, Mr Richard Parry and Mrs Elizabeth Tweed. Mr K Bamber of Medway Council was also on the Committee. Medway Council is yet to consider the report and recommendations formally, although it is expected to do so at a meeting on 3 December 2008.

Terms of Reference

2.2 The aim of the Committee was to identify the best rail passenger services solution for Kent, 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.

Evidence

2.3 The Committee received both oral and written evidence from a wide range of witnesses. Witnesses included professionals dealing with rail and public transport issues and from the tourism and property industries. A full list of witnesses who

provided both oral and written contributions is contained in Appendix 1 to the attached summary of the report.

3. Conclusion

3.1 (1) We welcome the report and would like to thank the Select Committee on completing this piece of work and to thank all those witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee.

(2) Miss Carey, Chairman of the Select Committee, Mr Parker and Mr Daley will present the report. A summary of the report is attached. Please contact Mick Sutch on 01622 221612 or email (mick.sutch@kent.gov.uk) if you require a full copy of the report.

Recommendations

4. (1) The Select Committee be thanked for its work and for producing a comprehensive and timely document

(2) The witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the Select Committee be thanked.

(3) We recommend the report and its recommendations to Cabinet and welcome any observations Cabinet wish to make.

Mr K Lynes
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and
Supporting Independence

Mr K Ferrin
Cabinet Member for Environment,
Highways and Waste

Summary of Report

1. Committee Membership

The Committee consists of six Members of Kent County Council (KCC): three Members of the Conservative Party, two Members of the Labour Party and one Member of the Liberal Democrat Party.

Miss Susan J Carey, Chairman: Conservative Member, Elham Valley

Mr Terence Birkett: Labour Member, Deal

Mr Alan Chell: Conservative Member, Maidstone South

Mr Dan Daley: Liberal Democrat Member, Maidstone Central

Mr R Parker: Labour Member, Northfleet and Gravesend West

Mr Richard Parry: Conservative Member, Sevenoaks West

Mrs Elizabeth Tweed: Conservative Member, Ashford Central

In addition, Mr Ken Bamber of Medway Council was a Member of the Committee.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The aim of the Committee was to identify the best rail passenger services solution for Kent, 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.

2.2 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 will prove to be a deterrent to travel by rail;
- The effects the proposed services will 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. Scene Setting

3.1 In December 2009, domestic passenger rail services in Kent will be completely recast when new services are introduced using the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (High Speed 1). This will mean journey times between parts of east and north Kent and London will be significantly reduced and many existing services will be revised

3.2 The reduction of journey times from parts of Kent which need to be regenerated is welcomed, but there are concerns that the regenerative effect could be reduced for a number of reasons, including fare levels being set too high and the current economic climate. It will also be a number of years for people to adjust to the new opportunities the new services provide and for residents and people to relocate to take advantage of them.

3.3 The Committee received both oral and written evidence from a wide range of witnesses. Witnesses included professionals dealing with rail and public transport issues and from the tourism and property industries. A full list of witnesses who provided both oral and written contributions is contained in Appendix 1

4. Recommendations

The County Council should:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. use the publicity surrounding the launch of the new services to promote:
 - a. Tourism from London and north of London to Kent, building on the present campaigns by Visit Kent.
 - 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.
4. lobby for services lost in the new timetable to be reinstated at the earliest opportunity.
5. work with key partners to ensure a direct pedestrian link between Northfleet and Ebbsfleet stations is created as soon as practicable
6. 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.
7. 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.

8. 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.
9. lobby for low introductory fares to ensure early success for the High Speed services.
10. 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
11. recognise the timescales for influencing rail services and infrastructure provision and begin consideration of the following:
 - a. potential Thameslink services to Maidstone, the Medway Towns, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks
 - b. Network Rail's forthcoming Rail Utilisation Strategy
 - c. The renewal of the Southeastern franchise in Kent 2014
12. consider the feasibility of the following rail services/infrastructure projects:
 - a. direct services from Kent and Medway to Gatwick airport
 - b. rail links to the Kent International and Lydd Airports
13. 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.

Witnesses and Written Representations to the Select Committee

The following witnesses attended the Committee hearings to give evidence and answered questions:

Southeastern: Vince Lucas, Commercial Director.

Network Rail: Ben Craig, Senior Route Planner.

Passenger Focus: Tunde Olatunji, Passenger Link Manager.

Visit Kent: Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive and Fran Warrington KCC Head of Tourism.

Locate in Kent: Mandy Bearne, Director Marketing & Research.

Stagecoach: Jeremy Cooper, Commercial Director.

Mouchels: Peter Riley: Senior Estates Surveyor.

Kent County Council: Mick Sutch, Head of Planning & Transport Strategy and Stephen Gasche, Public Transport Team Leader

In addition, although declining to appear before the Committee, John MacQuarrie the Franchise Manager for the Southeastern franchise at the Department for Transport agreed to meet Mick Sutch to discuss the issues outlined in the terms of reference.

Written Representations received from:

Julian Brazier, MP for Canterbury & Whitstable

Roger Gale, MP for North Thanet

Dr Stephen Ladyman, MP for South Thanet

Jonathan Shaw, MP, Minister for the South East

Howard Stoate, MP for Dartford

Ashford Borough Council, Andrew Osborne,

Canterbury City Council, Cllr Mike Patterson

Dover District Council, Gordon Measey

Gravesham Borough Council, Tony Chadwick,

Maidstone Borough Council, Cllr Chris Garland,

Sevenoaks District Council Cllr Jill Davison,

Swale Borough Council, Ian Lewis,

Thanet District Council, Louise Bibby

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Steve Humphrey

Kent County Council, Dr Peter Welsh

Stanford Parish Council, Ken Bultitude

Kent Economic Board, Roger Gabriel

Ashford Borough Council Transport Forum, Cllr Bernard Heyes

Ashford's Future, Linda Doran

Dover Pride, Cllr Paul Watkins,

London & Continental Stations & Property Ltd: Stephen Jordan,

Hobbs Parker, Alex Davies,

Cluttons, D G Parry

Hirst Commercial, Siobhan Wood,

Pfizer Ltd, Kevin Charles

University of Kent, Prof Keith Mander
Lydd Airport, Zaher Deir
Kent International Airport, Matt Clarke
Highways Agency, Chris Shaw
Arriva, Malcolm Spalding,
Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association