

From: David Brazier - Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

John Burr - Director of Highways and Transportation

David Hall - Deputy Director of Highways and Transportation

To: Environment Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee – 3 October 2013

Decision No: 12/01924

Subject: A20 Corridor Statutory Quality Bus Partnership Scheme

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: The Scheme falls within Malling Rural North East, Malling Central and Malling North

Summary:

This report seeks approval for the establishment of the proposed Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme along A20 London Road. The Scheme will ensure travelling by bus is an attractive alternative to the private car, thus helping to limit congestion and air pollution in the local area. The Scheme sets out minimum service levels to be provided by bus operators and facilities and maintenance levels to be provided by KCC and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.

Recommendation(s):

The EHW Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Consultation Report and the EqlA for the Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme, as attached at Appendix B.

The EHW Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposed decision to establish the Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme along A20 London Road, as attached at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report details the proposed Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme (SQPS) to be established along the A20 London Road, near Maidstone. The report gives an overview of what the Scheme involves and the respective commitments that KCC, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and local bus operators will sign up to.

1.2 This report seeks Cabinet Committee approval to establish the SQPS, which will become a legally binding document. The Scheme would then be sent to

the Traffic Commissioner for the local area and bus operators serving the route. An official Notice would also be published in the local press, at which point the Scheme would run for a period of 10 years.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no financial implications. S106 funds are being used to provide infrastructure improvements (£373,000 available from Holborough Lakes) and more funding will become available in the future from developments at Kings Hill and Leybourne Chase. KCC maintenance requirements are in line with existing procedures so will not necessitate any extra spending.

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

The SQPS accords with the following policies:

To help the Kent economy grow:

- 3.1 A20 London Road is heavily congested. By improving bus travel along the corridor and attracting more people to use the bus, more people will be able to reach employment and education services without increasing congestion.

To put the citizen in control:

- 3.2 By making bus travel a more attractive offer, people will have a real choice as to how they travel in the area.
- 3.3 Real Time Information displays will inform passengers when the next bus will arrive, putting these people more in control of their journey.
- 3.4 Accessible buses and bus stops make it easier for passengers to travel by bus, particularly those with physical disabilities or pushchairs. Research has shown this leads to increased patronage.
- 3.5 Multi-operator smart ticketing will give passengers choice in how they pay for their fare, freedom to travel across operators with one ticket, and remove the hassle of carrying cash.
- 3.6 The Customer Charter will ensure passengers are recompensed by the operator should they experience significant delays.

To tackle disadvantage:

- 3.7 By setting maximum fares, good value for money and affordability can be guaranteed for all passengers.
- 3.8 The proposed multi-operator ticket will allow travel across multiple operators on one ticket.
- 3.10 The SQPS supports the aim of improving bus services which is highlighted in the Local Transport Plan 2011-16.

4. Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme (SQPS)

Background

- 4.1 The desire for the SQPS grew out of the Medway Valley Sustainable Transport Strategy (MVSTS). It was recognised as an important tool to lock in the benefits of investments that have been made by KCC through developer contributions and by bus operators in this area. It was also seen as an opportunity to reduce air pollution in the local Air Quality Management Areas.
- 4.2 KCC is striving to ensure the level of bus provision is able to accommodate the on-going housing and employment growth in the Medway Valley area. KCC is investing in a wealth of modern facilities for passengers, to make bus travel along this corridor a truly attractive offer. Arriva and KCC successfully bid for the Government's Green Bus Fund for grant funding to support the purchase of 11 new hybrid diesel/electric buses for Route 71 (Maidstone to Holborough and Snodland via Leybourne Lakes), which KCC also contributed to. By setting out both KCC's commitment to providing and maintaining these improved facilities and what KCC expect from the bus services which use them, we can lock in the benefits of investment (both KCC's and operators') and ensure maximum return on investment.

What the Scheme involves

- 4.3 Whilst KCC is not responsible for bus services, the SQPS provides the opportunity to mandate high quality service levels and safeguard investments in bus facilities.
- 4.4 This is a legally binding partnership between Kent County Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to improve bus travel along the A20 London Road corridor. KCC will provide improvements to the bus facilities (bus stops, bus priority signals, Real Time Information) and in return bus operators will provide a specified high quality of service.
- 4.5 Any bus operator wishing to run local bus services along this route and use the facilities provided must comply with the service requirements set out in the Scheme. These requirements include how frequently buses run, the maximum amount paid for a fare and the emissions ratings of the buses.
- 4.6 The Scheme will provide all passengers will a high quality bus service. As well as benefiting current bus travellers, it is hoped these improvements will encourage more people to travel by bus and thus limit the increasing congestion on this corridor. In turn this will also help limit air pollution and contribute to the four Air Quality Management Areas nearby.
- 4.7 The Scheme area is 3 miles in length running along London Road (A20) from the Junction with Coldharbour Lane (Coldharbour Roundabout) in a Westerly Direction, to the junction with Ashton Way (A228) and Castle Way (See 13.3 map of Scheme Area)

4.8 Service Standards to be met by operators

Upon signing the SQPS bus operators will meet the following standards:

- Minimum frequency
- A maximum fares cap
- Punctuality and reliability targets
- Network Stability- no short notice registrations
- Accessibility- step free access and wheelchair ramp on buses

- Emissions (Euro IV standard)
- Communication- means of communicating with the bus operator's control centre
- Passenger Information- up to date and well communicated
- Heating and Ventilation- in working order
- Route and Destination Displays- fitted and working as described in the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) 2000.
- Lighting and Ancillary Equipment- fully functioning and always lit in hours of darkness
- Presentation- Clean and tidy, removal of graffiti
- Driver Training, Conduct and Appearance
- Customer Behaviour Code
- Customer Care Policy- Customer Charter Scheme to recompense passengers for delays
- Customer Satisfaction- Monitor with regular surveys
- Logo- to be displayed by all participating operators
- Ticketing Equipment and Smart Ticketing Products- ticket machines which are compliant with National ITSO standards and participation in a multi-operator ticket

4.9 Facilities provided by KCC

Upon establishing the SQPS, KCC will commit to continue to provide the facilities below. These are developer funded and have been recently installed or will be completed imminently:

- Real Time Information at bus stops (with audible announcements for the visually impaired)
- Footway- raised kerbs, hard standing at bus stops
- Carriageway- bus stop clearways and cage markings
- Service Information- timetables displayed at bus stops
- Traffic Signal Priorities and CCTV
- Bus Stop Poles, Flags, Timetable Cases

4.10 Infrastructure/ Services provided by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

Upon establishing the Scheme, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council will commit to provide the following:

- Bus shelters
- Footway sweeping
- Enforcement of parking and traffic regulations

4.11 Maintenance standards provided by KCC

These are in line with existing maintenance standards; street lighting, drainage, footways, overhanging trees, verge cutting, winter maintenance and traffic signal faults.

5. Options considered and dismissed – including maintaining the status quo

Maintaining the status quo:

Without the SQPS, any operator is able to make use of the improved facilities provided by KCC (instead of only operators who meet the service standards and participate in the Scheme). There is therefore no incentive for operators to invest and commit to improved services.

6. Any legal implications of the suggested action

- 6.1 Establishing the SQPS will be legally binding, and require that KCC meets its obligations as laid out in the Scheme for the entire length of the Scheme (10 years).
- 6.2 After establishing the Scheme, should any changes wish to be made a Full Consultation will be necessary.
- 6.3 If a Participating Operator is concerned KCC are not meeting their obligations as laid out in the Scheme, they must formally register their concerns with KCC and seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable way forward. If one cannot be found, the operator may withdraw from the SPQS or instigate legal proceedings to force KCC to honour its responsibilities or recover any damages.

7. Any equalities implications of the suggested action

The EqIA shows only positive impacts of the SQPS, consequent with the improvements in service.

8. Any implications for the council's property portfolio of the suggested action

Maintenance of facilities provided will be required (Real Time Information screens, traffic signals). All property will be recorded in an asset register and where appropriate S106 funding will be sought for on-going maintenance costs.

9. Who is likely to inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation – e.g. does a contract need signing who is likely to do it?

KCC will be responsible for the SQPS with Tunbridge and Malling Borough Council. For the purposes of administering the scheme and providing a single contact point for operators, KCC will be the Lead Authority. The SQPS will be owned within H&T.

10. Any other information required in order that the Board / Committee / Cabinet Member / Cabinet is well-informed and has all the information necessary to consider / take the decision

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council are a partner authority to KCC and their respective responsibilities are laid out in the Scheme. These are the provision of shelters, street and footway sweeping and enforcement of parking and traffic regulations.

This SQPS is the first of its kind in Kent, and there is the possibility to establish a similar scheme for FastTrack in Dartford or in other locations across the county.

11. Conclusions

Establishing the SQPS will guarantee local bus operators provide a high quality bus service: one fit for a heavily trafficked, densely populated corridor in which bus travel provides a viable alternative to the private car. This will limit congestion and help to reduce air pollution. The Scheme will ensure maximum return on investments made by KCC and Arriva in improving bus travel in the area.

12. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The EHW Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Consultation Report and the EqIA for the Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme, as attached at Appendix B.

The EHW Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposed decision to establish the Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme along A20 London Road, as attached at Appendix A.

13. Background Documents

13.1 Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme Document:

Paper version will be available at the Cabinet Committee meeting.

13.2 The Local Transport Act 2008; Quality Partnership Schemes:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-transport-act-2008/quality-partnership-guidance.pdf>

13.3 Map of Scheme Area



14. Contact details

Report Author

- Charlotte Owen - Smartcard Project Manager
- 01622 221022
- Charlotte.owen@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

- John Burr - Director of Highways and Transportation
- 01622 694192
- John.burr@kent.gov.uk

- David Hall - Deputy Director of Highways and Transportation
- 01622 221081
- David.hall@kent.gov.uk