

From: Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
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To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 12 January 2017

Subject: New South Eastern Franchise: key points for Kent County Council response to Department for Transport public consultation

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This report sets out the key points for Kent County Council's response to the Department for Transport's public consultation on the new South Eastern franchise. The new franchise title is referred to throughout as "South Eastern", to distinguish it from the current franchise operator "London and Southeastern Railway" (trading as Southeastern).

The public consultation is now expected to commence in February 2017 and will last for 60 days. The new schedule for the new franchise process is detailed in the report.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the key issues to be included in KCC's response to the Department for Transport's public consultation on the new South Eastern franchise.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The South Eastern franchise is the primary rail service in Kent. The franchise is to be re-tendered in 2017, and a consultation will be launched by the Department for Transport (DfT) in February 2017. Following the decision of the Secretary of State for Transport not to approve the proposed transfer of Metro services from the DfT franchise to Transport for London (TfL), the scope of the new franchise will now comprise the same High Speed, Mainline and Metro services as the existing franchise.
- 1.2 The Secretary of State has also extended a specific invitation to Kent County Council (KCC) and TfL to be involved in the determination of the new

franchise specification. KCC will take up this offer to ensure that the interests of Kent's rail passengers are represented in the decision-making process led by the DfT.

2. Financial Implications

2.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

3. Policy Framework

3.1 The Council approved the 'Rail Action Plan for Kent' in April 2011. This plan set out the Council's rail policy, and was designed to inform the new Southeastern and Thameslink franchises which were then due to be awarded, although the timetable for franchise renewal has since then been delayed. The new South Eastern franchise will reflect the infrastructure benefits arising from the Thameslink Programme, most notably the re-building of London Bridge Station.

3.2 The Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) is currently in preparation following a full public consultation process. The draft LTP4 sets out the Council's rail and transport policies, and acknowledges the significant opportunity presented by the new franchise consultation in which KCC will be fully engaged with the DfT.

3.3 The Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF) published by KCC sets out the projected growth to 2031 in housing and employment in the county. These projections indicate a substantial increase in demand for rail passenger services between Kent and London for access to employment, education and leisure purposes. The proposals in this report for enhancements to the rail service in Kent reflect this planned increase in population and demand for rail transport.

4. Schedule for New Franchise Consultation

4.1 The new franchise consultation is now expected to run in accordance with the schedule below:

DfT stakeholder consultation opens	Feb 2017
Issue of franchise EOI	Feb 2017
Draft KCC response prepared	Feb 2017
Draft KCC response to member briefing	Mar 2017
Draft KCC response to E&T Committee	Mar 2017
Approval by KCC Cabinet	Mar 2017
KCC response sent to DfT	Apr 2017
DfT consultation completed	Apr 2017
ITT notice published	Sep 2017
Award of new franchise	Aug 2018
Start of new franchise	Dec 2018

5. The New South Eastern Franchise: Determination of Key Issues

5.1 Principal requirements

KCC will propose that the principal requirements for the new rail franchise should include:

- The provision of sufficient capacity (on both the High Speed and Mainline services)
- A reduction in journey times
- Delivering higher quality and additional rolling stock (on both the High Speed and mainline services)
- Improving punctuality / reliability of service provision and response to disruption
- Improving connectivity to destinations within and beyond the county
- Improving the Stations
- Willingness to work in partnership with stakeholders Commitment to Smart Ticketing
- Roll out of unified communications to passengers
- Offering options relating to first-class accommodation
- A commitment to support and engage in Community Rail Partnerships

An explanation on each of these principal requirements is given below.

5.2 Sufficient capacity

5.2.1 There are several key locations on Kent's rail network where there is insufficient capacity provided by the existing service. Some of these locations will be identified in Network Rail's draft Kent Route Study, to be published in February 2017, the final version of which will determine the infrastructure enhancements required on the Kent Route. The GIF identifies several locations where significant increases in houses and employment are planned, and the rail network's capacity will need to meet this demand through both infrastructure and service level improvements. .

5.2.2 There will be significant drivers of passenger demand during the period of the new franchise, provision for which is included in the additional rolling-stock requirements. Significant passenger demand is expected at:

- Ebbsfleet Garden City (EGC) and Swanscombe Peninsula, including the proposed entertainment resort
- Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks (continual growth in demand)
- Dartford and Gravesend (continued demand)
- Maidstone (growth in town and environs)
- Ashford (growth in town and environs)
- Canterbury (continuous growth in City and environs)
- Folkestone (growth in town and identified potential at Otterpool Park)

- Dover (growth in town and Whitfield)
- Sittingbourne and Faversham (growth in towns)
- Thanet towns (growth around new business parks)

High Speed

5.2.3 The need for growth in High-Speed rail provision has been identified at these principal locations:

- Canterbury West
- Dover Priory
- Folkestone Central
- Folkestone West
- Ashford International
- Ebbsfleet International
- Maidstone West

5.2.4 There will be a specific proposal for the inclusion of enhancements to the Marshlink route between Ashford and Hastings in the funding allocation for Network Rail's Control Period 6 (CP6). With a working presumption that this upgrade will be delivered during CP6, the new South Eastern franchise will be expected to include the operation of High Speed services on this route using new hybrid-powered High Speed rolling stock.

5.2.5 The following stations in East Sussex should therefore also be included here, the first two of which are also included in Network Rail's Kent Route:

- Rye
- Hastings
- Bexhill

Mainline

5.2.6 The need for growth in Mainline rail provision has been identified at these principal locations:

- Faversham
- Sittingbourne
- Maidstone East*
- West Malling*
- Borough Green & Wrotham*
- Otford*
- Tunbridge Wells
- Tonbridge
- Sevenoaks

**There will be significant easement at these stations when the New Thameslink franchise service from Maidstone East to the Thameslink core stations commences in 2018*

The list of stations where capacity improvements are required excludes those located within the Medway Council area. The capacity needs of these stations will be addressed by Medway Council's submission to the DfT for the new franchise.

5.2.7 Any increase in the provision of Mainline services will be dependent on two key factors:

- The provision of sufficient paths to the London termini
- The provision of additional Mainline rolling-stock for peak period operation

5.2.8 At present, the peak paths to and from London termini are full (with the exception of some limited spare capacity on the route from Lewisham to Victoria via Nunhead). In practice, therefore, the greatest opportunity for any Mainline service enhancement in the new franchise will be in the strengthening of existing services in the off-peak and weekend periods.

5.2.9 There is significant overcrowding on “shoulder-peak” services on Mainline routes, and also on late evening departures from London. These issues will need to be addressed by the new franchise operator to ensure the delivery of a better Mainline service at these times for rail passengers.

5.3 Reduction in journey times

5.3.1 All opportunities to reduce journey times for travel within and beyond Kent should be included in bids to operate the new franchise. Journey Time Improvement (JTI) schemes deliver significant benefits in terms of passenger time saved and more efficient use of rolling-stock and crews, and act as an incentive to deliver economic growth.

5.3.2 Kent already has one JTI scheme in progress: Ashford via Canterbury West to Ramsgate. This is a joint project between KCC, Network Rail, London and Southeastern Railway and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). It is being delivered in part with grant from the Regional Growth Fund (RGF), and in part from within the funding allocation for Network Rail's Control Period 5 (CP5). It is planned to deliver up to 5 minutes journey time saving, including the saving already delivered at Ashford by the removal of joining and dividing of High Speed trains.

5.4 Higher quality and additional rolling stock

5.4.1 There is a critical need for both a higher quality and an additional quantity of rolling-stock in Kent. The existing Southeastern fleet operating in Kent comprises Class 395 High Speed stock, Class 375 Mainline stock, Class 377 ex-Thameslink stock (x6), and Class 465/466 'Networker' stock.

High Speed

5.4.2 There will be a requirement for Government to place an order for the following new Class 395 (or successor) High Speed units:

- 12 new 6-car sets for uplift to Ashford / Canterbury / Dover service
- 3 new 6-car sets for new Ashford / Rye / Hastings service
- 5 new 6-car sets for uplift to Ebbsfleet service*

** this requirement will also be included by Ebbsfleet Development Corporation in their response to the DfT, and will reflect the need for a dedicated service to provide the additional capacity required for the planned housing development at Ebbsfleet Garden City*

Total: 20 new 6-car sets (includes operational spares)

Mainline

5.4.3 There is a DfT plan to cascade stock from Thameslink from 2017 onwards, whereby the new Class 700 stock on that franchise will release 36 x 4-car Class 377 Electrostars to Southeastern. These should in turn release all the Class 465/466 stock, which would transfer to the Metro network to strengthen existing workings and thus deliver additional capacity there.

5.4.4 KCC supports this cascade plan, as it will at last enable the removal of most of the Networker trains from Kent where they are not fit for purpose. The Mainline Kent network requires Mainline trains with appropriate facilities for mid to long distance journeys, and the DfT cascade proposal should deliver this enhancement by the time the new franchise commences.

5.4.5 Beyond 2018, the following enhancements will be required in the new franchise:

- Class 375 stock refurbishment to be completed, with partial transfer of some First Class to Standard Class seating included
- Class 377 stock to be refurbished and re-liveried
- Class 465/466 stock to be mostly removed to Metro services, and replaced with transferred stock as above.

The Mainline Kent network should then be served as follows:

- Class 375: London - Chatham – Ramsgate / Dover
- Class 375: London – Tonbridge – Ashford – Ramsgate / Ramsgate
- Class 377: London – Maidstone East – Ashford – Canterbury West
- Class 375: London – Tonbridge – Tunbridge Wells - Hastings
- Class 377: London – Tonbridge – Tunbridge Wells

The two Community Rail Partnership (CRP) lines should be served as follows:

- Class 375/3: Strood – Maidstone West – Tonbridge
- Class 375/3: Sittingbourne – Sheerness-on-sea

5.5 Improved punctuality / reliability of service provision and response to disruption

5.5.1 During the previous year, there has been a general improvement in punctuality and reliability by the existing operator. This is partly due to the changes introduced in the January 2015 timetable, and partly due to a significant improvement in operating performance.

5.5.2 The one performance element still in need of improvement in this area is the ability to respond to, and recover from, disruption. Service disruption can be caused by a range of incidents, many of which are outside the control of the operator. However, the new franchise award must require the chosen operator to establish robust procedures to restore the service as quickly as possible with the support of accurate passenger information.

5.6 Improved connectivity to destinations within and beyond the county

5.6.1 The requirements for service enhancements in the new franchise have been set out above. There is also a need for improved connectivity, both within and beyond the county, at these specific stations:

- Strood, for passengers between Maidstone West and Medway Towns
- Tonbridge, for passengers between Maidstone West and Redhill / Gatwick
- Otford, for passengers between Sevenoaks and Maidstone East
- Dover Priory, for passengers between Sandwich / Deal and Canterbury East

5.7 Improvements to Stations I would suggest that the following bullets are better shown as 2 paras

5.7.1 In general stations and their environments should be recognised as gateways to the towns, villages and environments they serve. Stations should be clean, tidy and efficient, and as far as is practicable those close to major employment areas should reflect their business location.

5.7.2 Furthermore, rail travel should be integrated with other sustainable modes, such as bus, river, walking and cycling. There should be appropriate interchange infrastructure improvements and through ticketing initiatives with other service providers. The development of station travel plans with stakeholders should be encouraged for principal stations.

5.7.3 Additional aspirations for all stations would be to include, where not already in existence:

- **Cycle parking:** improved quantity and security of cycle parking at all stations, and where it exists already upgrades to covered provision.
- **Ticket machines:** ticket vending machines offering the full range of tickets available from that station.
- **Access for all:** while good progress has been made at many stations in Kent, there are many which still do not offer level access to all platforms. As funding permits, provision should be made to extend this facility to as many stations in Kent as practicable.

5.8 Partnership working

5.8.1 Good partnership working is one of the hallmarks of modern franchise operation. KCC regards such partnership working as key to delivering an excellent rail service for all its residents and visitors.

5.8.2 The principal elements of good partnership working for the new franchise will be:

- Commitment to attend and participate in KCC's annual Rail Summit at County Hall, Maidstone
- Clarify local channels of communication with identified personnel as contact officers and project managers

5.9 Smart Ticketing

5.9.1 The new franchise operator should be required to continue the development of the Smart Ticketing initiative developed by Southeastern, and to extend it to cover individual as well as season tickets.

5.9.2 This Smartcard scheme should also incorporate an option for flexible ticketing, whereby commuters can choose to travel on fewer days of the week, reflecting modern office / home working practices.

5.9.3 The new franchise operator should also adopt a collaborative approach with KCC to jointly deliver a 'Kent Smartcard' scheme which would incorporate travel by bus and rail in the county.

5.10 Passenger Information

5.10.1 The new franchise operator should be required to develop the existing joint working arrangements with Network Rail (South East route) to ensure unified communications to passengers. The provision of smart phones for station staff needs to be supported by a unified approach to the provision of on-screen train displays and PA announcements.

5.10.2 This approach is especially important in responding to disruption in service, when a unified approach with clear information becomes an even greater need for the travelling public.

5.11 First Class Accommodation

5.11.1 The public consultation for the new franchise should offer the option of either retention of existing First Class seating on the Mainline stock, or converting it to Standard Class so as to increase capacity. There is still a demand for First Class travel, although this is only significant in the peak periods on Mainline services and virtually disappears outside the peak periods.

5.12 Community Rail Partnerships

5.12.1 The new franchise operator should be required to commit to financial support for, and engagement with, the Kent Community Rail Partnership (CRP). This CRP has been successfully supported by the existing franchise operator, and this work should continue.

5.12.2 There are currently two routes in Kent supported by the Kent CRP:

- Medway Valley Line (Strood – Maidstone West - Tonbridge)
- Swale Rail (Sittingbourne – Sheerness-on-Sea)

5.12.3 The new franchise operator would be expected to continue the current high level of support for both routes associated with the Kent CRP, including the provision of an all-day extension of the Medway Valley service to and from Tonbridge to improve connectivity with the rest of the rail network.

6. Conclusions

6.1 This report sets out key points for KCC's response to the DfT's public consultation on the new South Eastern franchise. The public consultation is now expected to commence in February 2017 and will last for 60 days. The new schedule for the new franchise process is detailed above.

6.2 The new South Eastern franchise offers a unique opportunity to enhance the rail service in Kent. KCC will take up the offer of the DfT to engage fully in the determination of the new franchise, with regular meetings between KCC's principal rail planner and the DfT's new South Eastern franchise team.

7. Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the key issues to be included in KCC's response to the Department for Transport's public consultation on the new South Eastern franchise.

8. Contact Details

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