

From: **Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member - Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste**

To: **Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 15 June 2017**

Decision No: N/A

Subject: **Cabinet Member – Written Updates**

Classification: **For Information**

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This paper provides an update to Members of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on KCC's responses to recent consultations on Lower Thames Crossing, Aviation Policy and Rail initiatives.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides an update on KCC's responses to recent consultations on the Lower Thames Crossing, Aviation and Rail policy.

2. Lower Thames Crossing

2.1 On 12 April, the Transport Secretary Chris Grayling announced the preferred route for a new Lower Thames Crossing that could create more than 6,000 jobs and boost the economy by more than £8 billion.

2.2 The new crossing will create a new link between the A2 and the M25 and reduce the burden on the busy Dartford Crossing. The Lower Thames Crossing is expected to carry 4.5 million heavy goods vehicles in its first year.

2.3 The planned route will run from the M25 near North Ockendon, cross the A13 at Orsett before crossing under the Thames east of Tilbury and Gravesend. A new link road, the Western Southern Link, will then take traffic to the A2. This was the route that KCC, in its response to the Highways England consultation in January 2016, supported as it provided more opportunity for environmental mitigation and avoided the village of Shorne and Shorne Woods Country Park.

- 2.4 This route was identified by the majority of nearly 47,000 respondents to the consultation as the best solution for reducing traffic and congestion at the Dartford Crossing and for boosting the economy by improving links to London and the Channel ports.
- 2.5 We are continuing to work to make the case to Highways England for more of the route to be in a tunnel to reduce visual and noise impact and to remove the proposed junction with the A226 as this will have an adverse effect on local roads. We also continue to engage Highways England through their route strategy development process to deliver the wider network improvements that are needed alongside the new Lower Thames Crossing to deliver a new strategic route from Dover to the Midlands and the North. This includes upgrading Brenley Corner, completing the dualling of the A2 around Lydden and improving the links between the M2/A2 and M20 via the A229 and A249 to enable the bifurcation or splitting of port traffic between the two motorway corridors and enhancing the resilience of the road network.
- 2.6 The Government also announced a further £10 million will be used to improve traffic flow at and around the existing crossing as well as studying ways to further tackle congestion. This will include a wide-ranging investigation into options to cut 'rat-running' through Dartford and Thurrock.
- 2.7 The new Lower Thames Crossing will now be taken through the Development Consent Order process with further consultations within the next year on the detail of the route following environmental and traffic modelling assessments. Subject to funding, the plan is that the new Crossing will be open in 2025 or 2026.

3. Aviation Consultations

- 3.1 The Department for Transport recently consulted on a new framework for balanced decisions on design and use of airspace to minimise the negative impacts of aviation. KCC responded to this consultation broadly welcoming the proposals that put the communities around airports and the significant issue of aviation noise at the heart of the assessment process for airspace changes.
- 3.2 In the past, such operational changes have caused distress amongst the communities surrounding Gatwick Airport, leaving a legacy of mistrust and requiring significant work to alleviate the resultant problems. For example, the change to the joining point of the Instrument Landing System final approach, altered the turning movements of aircraft and led to an increase in noise over West Kent. Communities were angered that this did not constitute an airspace change, meaning that no consultation was required, when the noise effects were so significant. Under the new proposals this would, and should, now fall under a 'Tier 2' airspace change and so be subject to review and consultation.
- 3.3 At the same time, the Department for Transport also consulted on a draft Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) to enable Heathrow expansion with a new third runway. KCC responded by reaffirming its opposition to the

alternative option of a second runway at Gatwick and any further consideration of a new airport in the Thames Estuary. The draft NPS, while permitting a third runway, rules out a fourth runway at Heathrow and KCC made the case that it should also rule out a second at Gatwick. The draft NPS also proposed that expansion at Heathrow is accompanied by a complete ban on night flights. KCC's response is that a night flight ban should also be applied at Gatwick, and all the other London airports, so that it prevents displacement of night flights from Heathrow to Gatwick and make the current intolerable situation even worse as Gatwick is permitted more than three times the number of night flights than Heathrow in the summer season."

4. Rail

4.1 The principal current rail issues affecting Kent are:

- (1) **New South Eastern rail franchise** – KCC responded to DfT on 19 May specifying the service enhancements it is seeking for High Speed, Mainline and Metro services in the new franchise. The new franchise will start in December 2018 and is expected to be awarded for up to eight years.
- (2) **Network Rail's Kent Area Route Study** – KCC will be responding to Network Rail's proposed list of infrastructure enhancements to the rail network in Kent, for example, track alterations at Ashford to permit through High Speed trains between London and Hastings via Ashford, which KCC supports as part of a wider increase in High Speed provision in Kent.
- (3) **Journey Time Improvement (JTI) scheme and Thanet Parkway station** – the JTI scheme will remove a further 3 minutes from the journey time between Ashford and Ramsgate via Canterbury West, and supports the business case for the new Thanet Parkway station which is planned to open in 2020.
- (4) **Ashford Spurs** – KCC and Ashford Borough Council have driven this project forward, in partnership with Network Rail, High Speed 1 and Eurostar, to upgrade the signalling at Ashford to permit the new generation of Eurostars; and potentially other operators' trains; to continue to serve Ashford. The project, which started in 2012, is due for completion in Spring 2018.
- (5) The **Metro services**, operating to Dartford, Gravesend and Sevenoaks in Kent, will now stay as part of the South Eastern franchise, and will not be devolved to the Mayor for London / TfL.
- (6) **Crossrail to Ebbsfleet** – KCC is represented on a multi-authority working group which is developing the strategic outline business case to support the extension of Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) from Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet. This is a longer term project, for which funding for a full business case will be sought from Government in a submission planned for Autumn 2017. The business case will focus on three elements; the strategic case, the transport case and the economic case.

5. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

6. Contact details

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