

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**27 February 2006**

**Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation  
and the Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 CYCLING STRATEGY FOR TONBRIDGE AND MALLING**

**Summary**

**Kent County Council is currently developing a new cycling strategy for the Borough. The reasons for doing so and how the local community might be engaged in that process are considered in this report. As an important initial part of the project, the County Council is proposing to hold a workshop (provisionally arranged for early May) for both borough and county council Members.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 The Borough Council adopted a cycling strategy in 1998 entitled "Putting the Wheels in Motion". In the period since then, the document has served as a framework for investment through Local Transport Plan and also, as supplementary planning guidance, helping to justify developer contributions for sustainable transport improvements.

1.1.2 Over time, many elements of the strategy have been achieved, albeit with varying degrees of success and public support. Many lessons have been learned about what works and what does not. The most vital one is how important it is to fully engage the local community in proposed schemes and ensure that designs properly accommodate and balance the mix of local transportation needs. Any future strategy for the Borough must recognise this and set out a framework that ensures that the implementation stages of projects takes these matters fully into account.

**1.2 A New Cycling Strategy**

1.2.1 In the eight years since the current plan was adopted, circumstances have changed. The most fundamental one is that the Borough Council no longer has any direct locus in traffic and highway improvement activities following the ending of the Kent Highways Partnership on 31 March 2005. A further impetus for a new strategy comes from the need to have an up-to-date document capable of reflecting the aims

and objectives of the second Local Transport Plan for Kent and containing a sufficiently detailed action plan for scheme bid purposes during the years 2006 through to 2011.

- 1.2.2 Given the recent changes in highway management, any new cycling strategy for the borough will have to be promoted directly by Kent County Council, as highway authority. The county council is already preparing a county-level cycling strategy and this will be underpinned by separate district-based strategies tailored to meet local needs and circumstances. In order to reflect national experience and good practice in designing, promoting and building cycle facilities, the county council engaged the cycling charity Sustrans to draft the document. Its brief was to examine and audit existing facilities, suggest improvements, identify gaps in the existing network and propose new opportunities for enhancing cycling provision in Tonbridge and Malling.

### **1.3 Process**

- 1.3.1 Sustrans has completed its audit and survey work and drafted proposals for future improvement actions. The county council is considering how best to take the draft strategy forward to ensure the local community is fully consulted and has ample opportunity to comment on the proposals. With this in mind, it wishes to start that process off by inviting Member-level views through a workshop, provisionally time-tabled for 11 May.
- 1.3.2 This will give county and borough Members an opportunity to examine, discuss, constructively criticise and debate the contents of the draft strategy in far more detail than would be possible within the time and other constraints of a formal meeting of the Joint Transportation Board. Based on the results of that exercise, a refined draft can then go forward to the Joint Transportation Board for endorsement as a basis of public consultation. Following public consultation, the amended draft would then be reported back to the JTB and, subsequently, this Board with a view to lending the strategy some weight by adopting it as a material consideration for the purposes of development control.
- 1.3.3 We suggest that it is important that this document does come back to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board so that Members have an opportunity to influence and shape its contents, bring a local perspective to local priorities, build in safeguards against a recurrence of less successful approaches adopted in earlier phases of work and, critically, to emphasise how important it is that the county council commits itself to properly maintaining the cycle-ways it builds.

### **1.4 Legal and Financial Implications and Risk Assessment**

- 1.4.1 The work is being led by the highway authority with the borough council acting in a role of prime consultee and offering its help based on local knowledge. Consequently legal and financial implications do not arise and there is little risk for the borough council resulting from developing this cycling strategy. The greater risk in terms of the impact on the Borough would be the repetition of some of the poorer

experiences with cycle-way provision in the past and it is therefore important that the Council will be able to influence the approach in the new strategy.

Background papers:

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Nil

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