

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

18 November 2009

**Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure
and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation**

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 FUTURE RAIL SERVICES

Summary

An update on recent activity aimed at promoting improved train services in the Borough

1.1 Context

1.1.1 Over the past year, the rail industry has been issuing a series of consultations and proposals that have potential implications for the future of rail services in the Borough. We have been consistently responding to these to ensure the views of the Borough Council are recorded and to seek positive influence on Network Rail and Southeastern Railway's plans and programmes. It is worth brief recap to outline the current position.

1.2 Kent Route Utilisation Strategy

1.2.1 Network Rail is producing a Kent Route Utilisation Strategy, a broad plan of investment and change over the next thirty or so years. We submitted a draft response to Network Rail and reported on this to the last meeting of the Board in July. Some extra comments came out of discussions at the Board and were duly forwarded to Network Rail.

1.2.2 A representative of Network Rail attended the Public Transport Panel earlier this year and provided some advanced information on the Strategy before it was formally launched. He also kindly came along to the Panel's meeting in September and provided an update on Network Rail's thinking about the responses it had received to the consultation. The Panel Members found this presentation helpful and informative.

1.2.3 We now await release of the final strategy document and this is anticipated early next year. When it is released we will study it to assess the degree to which Network Rail has been able to take on board the representations we submitted during the consultation and then we will report to this Board.

1.3 Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy

- 1.3.1 Network Rail is developing the Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) in parallel with the one for Kent. As reported to the last meeting, it has little implications for this Borough, save for an opportunity to advocate further for the protection of services on the Tonbridge – Redhill Line. The Board resolved that we should submit feedback on the Sussex RUS along these lines and this we duly did before the end of the consultation period at the end of August.

1.4 Southeastern Railway

- 1.4.1 The proposals with most impact for this Borough come from the train operating company, Southeastern Railway, and they centre on the new timetable for the period beyond December 2009. This is when the full High Speed 1 service on the Channel Tunnel lines is to be launched and the timetables across all rail services in Kent will be altered to accommodate this.
- 1.4.2 There are a number of issues on the West Kent lines into London but broadly the overall impact on services is neutral. Our major concern relates to the line from Maidstone East through West Malling to London. What is proposed is unacceptable – a complete removal of services to Cannon Street. The Borough Council has made its views very clearly known to Southeastern earlier in the summer when the draft timetable was initially issued. We have followed this up subsequently through further submissions coordinated by the local Members of Parliament in their lobbying with the Minister at the Department for Transport.
- 1.4.3 In the stakeholder briefing session staged by Southeastern Railway at the start of October, it indicated that an announcement on the West Malling line was expected by the end of October. At the time of drafting the report, no information had yet been released by the DfT although a new timetable has been published. We are pressing for news on whether some or all of the city services have been reinstated and we will share with Members what we manage to find out at the meeting.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None applicable.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 None applicable.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 The long term risks to the Borough have been laid out comprehensively in the responses sent to Southeastern Railway and the Minister. Copies can be made available through the Director.

1.8 Policy Considerations

- 1.8.1 Community – the quality of transport links within and beyond the Borough are critical for community development and the Borough Council is playing a vital leadership role in advocating to retain and improve railway services.

Background papers:

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Nil

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