

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

21 February 2012

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 BOROUGH TRANSPORTATION MATTERS

This report provides an update on a range of current transportation issues affecting the Borough.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 At its last meeting the Board considered extensive reports on transportation issues currently affecting the Borough. This report provides an update on matters previously discussed and provides some initial information relating to the Estuary Airport proposals.

1.2 Rail

1.2.1 Following the letters sent to the Minister of State for Rail and to the Managing Director of Southeastern Railway in respect of the then pending increase of 8% (RPI + 3%) I was pleased to be advised that the Department for Transport instructed that the increase would be revised to 6% (RPI + 1%). Southeastern's stakeholder letter dated 29 November can be found in **Annex 1**.

1.2.2 The enhancement works at Tonbridge Station are now underway. I understand their programme has slipped a little following some unexpected works, and they now anticipate finishing the project by the end of April.

1.3 A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme

1.3.1 At the last meeting of this Board Members requested that a further letter be sent to the Transport Minister supporting the KCC proposal regarding the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme. This was done (**Annex 2**) and the Minister's reply is reproduced in **Annex 3**. He advises that the Secretary of State for Transport will be considering further which transport schemes might best support regenerating the Bexhill and Hastings area and this includes examining the A21. A decision is expected this spring and I will update Members further as and when we know more.

1.4 West Malling Station

- 1.4.1 Members will recall that the officer level working group had agreed a brief for some design work for an improved station forecourt and approach road layout. KCC has engaged Jacobs to undertake this work and, at the time of writing this report, they are consulting with stakeholders including local members, the bus companies and the Parish Council.
- 1.4.2 The design will provide enhanced access for buses, taxis and those arriving by car. Securing funding for the scheme in the current period of financial constraint will be a major challenge however there is considerable potential funding from a range of developer obligations in this area that could contribute towards a budget sufficiently large enough to allow the scheme to be implemented. KCC will report on progress with this project to the Joint Transportation Board on 12 March.

1.5 Local Parking Studies

- 1.5.1 Local Steering Groups are currently engaged in a review of the local parking plan for West Malling and the formulation of proposals for Aylesford. The steering groups have involved local members, Parish Councils and most constructively in the case of West Malling, the local Chamber of Commerce. Both of these projects will now be the subject of public consultation prior to further consideration by the Steering Groups and presentation of proposals for this Board. Meanwhile, phase 6a of our parking works programme will be submitted to the JTB for approval in March and, subject to representations to be considered, will be implemented thereafter.

1.6 Access to Pembury Hospital

- 1.6.1 The situation regarding access to Pembury Hospital remains complex and has not yet been finalised. In essence, things have not changed significantly since the last report to this Board. One substantive development has been the commencement of the six month interim bus service, which provides four buses per hour between the Hospital and Tonbridge Station, six buses per hour to Tunbridge Wells Station, and two buses per hour to Maidstone via Paddock Wood. The NHS Trust is not proposing to provide all services required within the planning consent (notably, those to Hadlow, Borough Green and West Malling) but is likely to apply to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for permission to have the planning obligation altered so that it may continue to provide this revised network of bus services after the temporary arrangement ends in May this year.
- 1.6.2 The Trust seems to have reacted positively to suggestions from the West Kent Partnership and the Borough Council to investigate the feasibility of incorporating a plan of rural community transport services into the longer-term package in lieu of providing economically unsustainable services to rural areas. A sub-group of the West Kent Partnership has been set up to consider this issue and KCC has been participating in these discussions. However they are not party to the legal agreement between the NHS Trust and Tunbridge Wells Borough

Council and so the ultimate responsibility for providing transport services does not rest with them. KCC's first priority will inevitably be to support the existing commercial bus network.

- 1.6.3 The NHS Trust will ultimately need to reach an agreement with the various parties as to what the longer-term bus network serving the Hospital will look like after May as a matter of urgency, as time is running out to submit a formal application to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to alter the planning condition.

1.7 Thames Estuary Airport Proposals

- 1.7.1 Building a new airport on the Thames estuary is one of a number of options for tackling the capacity shortage in south east England. It is understood that the Government will be considering holding a formal consultation on this and two sites are currently 'on the radar'.
- 1.7.2 One of these is known as 'Boris Island'. This is an embryonic idea for an airport in the estuary to the north of the Isle of Sheppey that takes traffic away from London. If this went ahead this would be a major engineering feat.
- 1.7.3 The second is a Lord Foster designed solution which would be located on the Isle of Grain. This transport hub would be built partly on reclaimed land with aircraft approaching over the water.
- 1.7.4 This will inevitably run for some time and I have reproduced (**Annex 4**) the text from an open letter from Medway Council to Justine Greening, the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport, strongly urging her to follow government policy and continue looking at fully utilising the existing capacity of existing airports. Additionally, members may be aware of an approach to ministers by six Kent MPs opposed to the principle of an international airport in these locations.
- 1.7.5 The proposal at Grain in particular, raises again many of the issues considered previously when a site at Cliffe Marshes was put forward as a potential site for a major airport in 2002. At that time considerable reservations and objections were raised by many in Kent concerned with issues relating to environmental issues, habitat protection, infrastructure capacity, development pressures and economic unsustainability. No doubt these and other issues will need to be considered should formal consultation be launched.

1.8 Legal Implications

- 1.8.1 None.

1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.9.1 None directly for the Borough Council.

1.10 Risk Assessment

1.10.1 Not required

1.11 Equality Impact Assessment

1.11.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.12 Policy Considerations

1.12.1 Community

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	n/a	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.