

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

**25 July 2017**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 TRANSPORTATION ISSUES**

**This report provides an update on a number of transportation issues that are relevant to the Borough and seeks endorsement of officer level comments made in respect of the recent South Eastern Rail Franchise consultation.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 This Board regularly receives updates on a number of transportation issues, the most recent examples being in relation to National Airport Policy, Kent County Council's Freight Action Plan and Local Transport Plan (version 4).

1.1.2 This report focuses on the South Eastern Rail Franchise consultation, an update on the proposals for a Lower Thames Crossing, planned improvements to Tonbridge Station forecourt and cycle links and highway improvements to the A20/Hermitage Lane.

**1.2 Updates**

South Eastern Rail Franchise consultation and response

1.2.1 The Department for Transport launched a public consultation in March this year in advance of renewing the contract for the train service on the South Eastern rail network in December 2018. The consultation was due to end on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, but was extended to 30<sup>th</sup> June due to the calling of the General Election on 8<sup>th</sup> June.

1.2.2 The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the new franchise and provide an opportunity to shape what the next operator will deliver. The Department for Transport's ambition is that the franchise will:

- Create more capacity by running longer trains and upgrading older rolling stock;

- Increase reliability, by ensuring that the new franchisee works closer with Network Rail;
- Introduce a simpler, automated compensation scheme;
- Introduce smart payment systems, including using mobile phones; and
- Improve customer service.

- 1.2.3 The options for improvements, which are set out in more detail in the consultation document, reflect by and large the priorities in the Tonbridge and Malling Rail Manifesto prepared in 2014. In particular, there is recognition for the Ashford-Tonbridge-Redhill-Reading line forming a potential fast and frequent London orbital service. It is recognised that this is currently slow and underused and operated under different franchises. This has been supported if it brings the Tonbridge Gatwick service back into the South Eastern franchise and frequent services restored.
- 1.2.4 Some of the other proposals to increase capacity and speed on peak services, for example removing first class seating and fewer stops at smaller stations, will depend on the views of users and therefore only qualified support has been suggested.
- 1.2.5 Transport for London will now consider the responses received before carrying out a tendering exercise between September and January. The new contract will be issued in August 2018 and the new franchise will start on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2018.
- 1.2.6 The officer level response to the consultation is attached at Annex 1 for endorsement. A copy of our manifesto was also sent with the response.

#### Lower Thames Crossing

- 1.2.7 Following a major public consultation exercise in 2016 that generated 47,000 responses, the Government announced on 12<sup>th</sup> April a preferred route (see Annex 2) and the project has now entered the development phase.
- 1.2.8 The next stages will involve further design work, environmental surveys, more detailed air quality and noise impact assessments and further traffic modelling, particularly at junctions. Land owners close to the route will be contacted to help them understand potential impacts, their options and rights and there will be further opportunities for the public to comment on the proposals.
- 1.2.9 Tonbridge Station improvements
- 1.2.10 Kent County Council (KCC) has secured £500,000 of Local Growth Funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to improve the area outside Tonbridge Station. The aim is to improve the space available for customers at the station, provide more room for pedestrian movements and to link the design to the

recently improved High Street. KCC carried out a public consultation exercise between 31<sup>st</sup> October and 11<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and this has been the subject of a report to the Joint Transportation Board in March. The proposed improvements received a strong expression of support from those responding, with almost 80% wishing to see more space directly outside the station by relocating the bus stop.

- 1.2.11 Concern was expressed through the consultation and by Members at the Joint Transportation Board in March about the location of bus stops and their use by 'idling' buses. This will be addressed during the design stage and through further consultation with the bus companies.
- 1.2.12 The project is now at the detailed design stage with implementation expected during the 2018/19 financial year.
- 1.2.13 In addition to the funding for improvements to the main entrance to the station, South Eastern has recently been successful in securing funding for improvements to the cycling facilities, which will be located at the Barden Road entrance. This along with secured funding for improvements to cycle paths in Tonbridge could encourage more people to access the station by bicycle and potentially reduce the number of cars travelling at peak times. It may also be a way to achieve some more general improvements to the Barden Road entrance to compliment the other works planned for next year and continue the sustained investment in the public realm within the town centre.

#### Programmed improvements for A20 Corridor/Hermitage Lane

- 1.2.14 Kent Highways are completing the design for an improvement scheme that will create extra lane capacity at the junction with the McDonalds drive through and Aldi at the northern end of Hermitage Lane to alleviate some of the congestion that has arisen as a result of the popularity of customers wishing to access the site.
- 1.2.15 There will be a targeted engagement process conducted by Kent Highways once the detailed designs are finalised and works are expected to begin by September.
- 1.2.16 The A 20 Corridor is currently the subject of a traffic model commissioned jointly by the Borough Council and KCC in order to enable more informed assessments to be made of potential development arising from the Local Plan work.
- 1.2.17 KCC are also advanced on the implementation of some traffic management improvements along the A20 and are also examining potential improvements at key junctions. These have been the subject of some initial discussion with local Members and Parish Councils.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

- 1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.4.1 External funding has been secured for the highway improvements to Hermitage Lane, the Tonbridge Station enhancements with no financial implications on the Council.

## **1.5 Risk Assessment**

- 1.5.1 The endorsement of the officer level comments appended to this report will confirm the views of the Council in respect of the recent consultation. If these comments are not endorsed there is a risk that they will carry less weight in expressing the views of the borough council.

## **1.6 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act.

## **1.7 Recommendations**

- 1.7.1 That the content of this report be NOTED and that the officer level comments in response to the South Eastern Franchise consultation at Annex 1 be agreed.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

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