

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

**11 November 2020**

**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 KENT RAIL STRATEGY 2021 CONSULTATION**

- 1.1.1 KCC has published a new draft Kent Rail Strategy for consultation, this can be [viewed online](#). The consultation closes on 17 November. The strategy aims to influence train services in the county for the next decade. It sets out the requirements that KCC considers are needed for rail infrastructure enhancements to keep pace with increased demand for services. This includes ensuring there is an expanded fleet of new High Speed trains, a replacement fleet for the Metro services and improvements to station facilities and communications.
- 1.1.2 The strategy also looks at transport priorities for the next decade including environmental issues, by encouraging more people out of their cars and on to trains and by persuading freight operators to move from road to rail.
- 1.1.3 The strategy identifies four ambitions for the next South Eastern agreement. These are supported, however officers are mindful notwithstanding the financial implications of the pandemic for the rail sector, that partners must be ambitious for the future of rail services, especially so if future contractual arrangements will be set over a longer term and we are to achieve targets for carbon neutrality.
- 1.1.4 In responding we therefore suggest adding a fifth ambition which directly links a recovery/revolution in rail travel and patronage, with achieving mode shift towards rail, this could explicitly reference the county council's carbon reduction ambitions as follows;
- To bring about a revolution in low carbon travel, through better integration of buses, walking and cycling facilities with stations, to provide passengers with viable, flexible and integrated transport choices.
- 1.1.5 The strategy also identifies actions for areas including fares, infrastructure enhancements, passenger services, rolling stock and rail freight. These actions are broadly supported and reflect known rail priorities for the borough, including the extension of Thameslink services from Maidstone East, which will provide a

direct connection to the City of London from West Malling and Borough Green and Wrotham.

- 1.1.6 The provision of a direct Gatwick service from Tonbridge is also included in the strategy. This aligns with the Transport Strategy for the South East which seeks to enhance orbital connectivity across the wider region. A direct Gatwick service is supported in the draft response [**Annex 1**], in addition to feedback promoting a greater role for the Medway Valley Line. It is considered that this line has further potential to support local growth, mode shift towards rail and sustainable inter-urban travel between towns and communities in Kent.
- 1.1.7 Support is also outlined for the provision of smart and flexible ticketing, and further station access improvements.

## **1.2 Conclusion**

- 1.2.1 The Kent Rail Strategy aims to influence train services in the county for the next decade. It sets out the requirements that KCC considers are needed for rail infrastructure enhancements to keep pace with increased demand for services. Support for the Strategy is expressed in the consultation response prepared, as it includes known rail priorities for the borough. A greater role for the Medway Valley Line is promoted in the draft response.

## **1.3 Legal Implications**

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

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

- 1.4.1 Whilst there are no direct financial or value for money considerations arising from this report, there will however be wider benefits for local residents and businesses as a result of the delivery of the service, route and infrastructure improvements identified in the draft strategy.

## **1.5 Recommendation**

- 1.5.1 That the content of this report be **NOTED**; and
- 1.5.2 That issues raised in response to the Kent Rail Strategy consultation be **AGREED** by the Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure and Planning, in consultation with the Leader and Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health, and submitted to Kent County Council by the deadline of 17 November.

Background papers:

contact: Bartholomew Wren

Annex 1 - Kent Rail Strategy – Draft Consultation  
Questionnaire

Eleanor Hoyle

Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health