



**REPORTS FOR DECISION BY THE
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

Date Issued:

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A Record of Decision will be issued following the conclusion of 5 clear working days from the date of issue of the Report

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Agenda Item 1

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES

Report prepared by Clive Cheeseman

Date Issued: 20 August 2010

1. PARK AND RIDE AND PARK AND SAIL

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider not financially supporting the Park and Sail operation and use the balance of its budget to promote and deliver Park and Ride.

1.2 Recommendation of Assistant Director of Regeneration and Cultural Services

1.2.1 That the operation of Park and Sail at Christmas is no longer financially supported by the council and that the balance of the Park and Sail budget is used to promote and deliver Park and Ride.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.4 PARK AND SAIL

1.4.1 Park and Sail commenced operation over twenty years ago and was intended to provide additional car parking capacity on busy Saturdays prior to Christmas. It operates between Maidstone (Undercliff) and the Malta Inn. In recent years the service has only operated on six Saturdays as agreed with the Museum of Kent Life to avoid clashes with their events when the car park is not available.

1.4.2 The cost of the operation includes hire of the boat, mooring fees, publicity, and erection of traffic signs, publicity and payments to the Museum of Kent Life for use of their car park and toilets. A small payment is also made to Arriva for the provision of stand by buses in the late afternoon to cover the last two journeys from the town – to avoid passengers being stranded if the boat reaches capacity.

1.4.3 In the event of bad weather or high river levels the boat is not able to operate but all costs except the boat hire still have to be met. In 2009 the service could not operate on two weeks due to flooding and on another snowfall depressed demand;-

14 th November	- cancelled (flooding)
21 st November	- 109 passengers (Revenue £265.00)
28 th November	- 198 passengers (Revenue £480.00)
5 th December	- cancelled (flooding)
12 th December	- 306 passengers (Revenue £736.00)
19 th December	- 69 passengers (Revenue £173.00) (heavy snow)

Fares income only met the cost of the boat hire on the 12th December. The overall cost of Park and Sail for the 2009/10 financial year was £2,568.99. Although the amount of financial subsidy has varied it has operated at a loss each year it has been provided. It is estimated that the net cost will rise to £2,860 in this financial year, dependant on the days the boat service is able to operate.

1.4.4 If the council ceases to fund the operation of the overall service it would still be possible for the current boat operator, or another, to decide to provide some form of service between the town centre and the Malta Inn, on a commercial basis if they choose to do so, as they do in the summer period.

1.4.5 PARK AND RIDE

1.4.6 Even on the busier Saturdays that Park and Sail was in operation in 2009 the Park and Ride car parks all had spare capacity. A similar situation is likely to occur in 2010. Therefore should Park and Sail not be operated it is expected that the demand could be accommodated on the Park and Ride service.

1.4.7 As a result of the economic recession demand for Park and Ride has decreased over the last eighteen months. To try and stimulate growth a number of initiatives have been undertaken in recent months to promote the service, including the production of 10,000 leaflets for distribution to hotels, camping sites etc over a 6 month period. Additional road signs have also been erected directing customers to the Willington Street site.

1.4.8 The publicity budget for Park and Ride in 2010/11 is £6,500. A significant proportion of this has already been spent or committed on the above initiatives and also to support specific town centre and independent retailer promotions. The remainder would normally be directed at promoting Park and Ride during the busier Christmas period.

1.4.9 Local media is becoming increasingly resistant to provide free comment and reporting of Park and Ride events unless advertising is also taken out with them. This can cost between £250 and £1,000 per advert depending on the publication. There are other opportunities to

publicise and promote Park and Ride but these generally require funding. This includes further direct targeting of visitors to the town, advertising in the main shopping centres, approaches to local businesses and further improvements in road signing.

1.4.10 There is a need to support the provision of enhanced frequencies (additional bus or buses) on the Park and Ride bus service on the busiest shopping days around Christmas to cater for both the additional demand and help service reliability at times of heavy traffic congestion and delay. Normally the service is enhanced this way on the Saturdays immediately prior to Christmas (this is identified as an additional requirement and cost within the contract). In 2009 there was however also an unexpectedly high demand for travel on the mid week shopping days immediately after Christmas, and the service was subject to some disruption and delay at that time due to higher than usual traffic flows.

1.4.11 If funding at a level that reflects the net cost of the Park and Sail service is used to support Park and Ride, it would enable the additional promotion of the Park and Ride service (£1,500) and enhance the service in the busier shopping days immediately after Christmas (£1,360) in this financial year. In future years, this sum should be examined as a budget saving.

1.4.12 CONCLUSION

1.4.13 The Park and Sail service is not essential to the provision of car parking capacity on Saturdays prior to Christmas and has had to be financially subsidised since its inception.

1.4.14 Its withdrawal is likely to result in some transfer of business to Park and Ride, council or other off street car parks.

1.4.15 The Park and Sail budget could be more effectively used to promote Park and Ride and provide additional service on busy shopping days immediately after Christmas.

1.5 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.5.1 Whilst Park and Sail was originally introduced to provide additional alternative town centre parking during a busy period, its usage no longer justifies the council paying for the service. Continuing its operation would require an ongoing subsidy. The actual revenue and final costs are also subject to adverse river and weather conditions.

1.5.2 Using the budget to further promote and deliver Park and Ride should help to increase revenue and reduce the overall subsidy to the service.

1.6 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.6.1 Provision of a good Park and Ride service assists in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy objectives of developing an efficient, sustainable integrated transport strategy.

1.7 Risk Management

1.7.1 There is a risk that use of the funds on Park and Ride rather than Park and Sail may not result in any significant increase in revenue on that service. The sums are however already budgeted for.

1.8 Other Implications

1.8.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

X

1.8.2 Financial

1.8.3 The financial implications are dealt with in the body of the report.

1.9 Relevant Documents

1.9.1 Appendices

1.9.2 None

1.9.3 Background Documents

1.9.4 None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

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This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected: All.....

.....

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SPATIAL PLANNING

Report prepared by Clive Cheeseman

Date Issued: 27 August 2010

1. MAIDSTONE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the re-launch of the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership by Kent County Council.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Spatial Planning

1.2.1 That Maidstone Borough Council confirms commitment to the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership and to the inclusion of Park and Ride within it.

1.2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport agree in principle to sign the Partnership document once suitable aims and targets have been agreed.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 BACKGROUND

1.3.2 A Quality Bus Partnership is a voluntary agreement between the Highway (and Transport) Authority, the local District Council and local bus operator or operators. It forms an integral part of the Local Transport Plan of the Highway (and Transport Authority) through which it helps to access central capital funding and grants. It also assists the bus operator/s to access similar investment

1.3.3 Its aim is to support the delivery of integrated transport policies that will deliver modal shift from use of the car to public transport. This is achieved by agreed targeting of the investment of the partners in areas where it will deliver improved transport infrastructure and services that will deliver growth in passenger numbers.

The existence of a Quality Bus Partnership does not transfer control of the bus services in that area to the local authority/ies. They continue to be provided by the operators on a commercial basis unless

specifically operated under contract. It does however encourage ongoing discussion and engagement between the parties about service provision and reliability, promotion and publicity, fare initiatives and other matters of mutual concern or interest.

1.3.4 INITIAL PARTNERSHIP

1.3.5 An initial Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership was signed between Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Arriva Southern Counties in 2000. It included an indicative five year plan for investment and improvements which was then extended for the period up until 2011.

1.3.6 The plan for improvements was primarily intended to target the following key corridors;-

- Shepway Estate (service 85)
- Parkwood (service 82)
- London Road (services 70 – 72)
- Chatham Road (service 101)
- Tonbridge Road (services 6,7,85)

This involved Kent County Council providing new bus lanes, bus priorities and raised kerbing at bus stops. Maidstone Borough Council upgraded and improved the bus shelters and Arriva invested in new buses for these services. As a result of the investment in bus priorities on Sutton Road Arriva were able to operate more reliably and increase the frequency of daytime operation from every 15 to every 12 minutes. This resulted in a growth in patronage such that they then increased the frequency of service to operate every 10 minutes.

Between 2006 and 2009 patronage on services 82 and 85 grew by 14.4%. In 2009 Arriva were then able to introduce a further batch of new buses onto the town services in response to ongoing levels of passenger growth now being achieved. There have been similar improvements on the other corridors following the introduction of the partnership investments on them.

1.3.7 Whilst Park and Ride is not specifically mentioned in the original agreement it has benefitted from a number of the measures that have been introduced (bus lanes, real time information).

1.3.8 In addition the following other benefits and initiatives have been discussed or delivered through or in conjunction with the partnership;-

- Introduction of real time information to many town centre bus stops (and allied equipment on Arriva buses)

- Early introduction of automatic vehicle location system to improve bus priority at traffic lights
- Control of bus stop real time information transferred to new UTMC centre who are able to monitor service operation and check and override display if required
- Early removal of old style minibuses from other town services and replacement by "easy access" buses
- On basis of Quality Bus Partnership Arriva arranged early transfer and investment in low floor double deck buses for use on London Road and Chatham Road services
- Arriva upgraded and refurbished 25 single deck buses on use on local services including provision of improved internal visual displays
- Frequencies improved on service 7 (Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells), 155 (Chatham via Aylesford) and 333/4 (Sittingbourne/Sheerness/Faversham) and low floor buses introduced
- Withdrawal of proposals to stop serving Detling village with northbound Sittingbourne buses, and to reduce frequency to Grove Green
- Trial re-routing of bus services to serve Fremlin Walk (Pudding Lane). Unfortunately this was not successful.
- Provision of additional school journeys on London Road to meet additional demand
- Review of bus stop provision in town centre and on key corridors by Kent Highways and implementation of raised kerbs where possible at bus stops on "low floor" bus routes to assist with access.
- Review of traffic calming measures in Shepway estate.
- Support for improvements to Maidstone East Station and provision of a transport interchange
- Targeted local marketing in Maidstone by Arriva, including fares initiatives
- Improved dialogue between the parties on operational issues and problems, particularly responses to road works and local events

1.3.9 The actions and aims of the initial agreement have also been used in the formulation of the Maidstone Air Quality Action Plan.

1.3.10 PROPOSED UPDATED AGREEMENT

1.3.11 In recent years Kent County Council has introduced standard Quality Bus Partnerships in a number of districts across the county. They now wish to put in place a similar updated agreement for Maidstone to start later this year covering a period of up to ten years. They anticipate reporting progress on this to the Joint Transport Board at the end of July, requesting the nomination of a County and Borough member on the partnership.

1.3.12A copy of the initial draft of the proposed agreement is attached at appendix A. This will be subject to further discussion and agreement between the parties before it is finalised. Some actions and investment may be affected by the availability of future Government funding. It is however intended to be a working document and as such will be reviewed by the parties at least once a year to ensure that it remains effective).

1.3.13The key responsibilities and actions of each party are as follows;-

- Kent County Council –
 1. Plan and introduce where possible bus priority measures and improvements to bus stop infrastructure (e.g. raised kerbing).
 2. Improve the availability of customer information at bus stops.
 3. To monitor service reliability and customer satisfaction and take action where required to improve (in conjunction with Arriva).
 4. Marketing campaigns to encourage use and awareness (in conjunction with Arriva).
 5. To consider inclusion of Maidstone area services in plans for the extension of real time information in the county.

- Maidstone Borough Council –
 1. Provision of bus shelters at the busier key bus stops (as resources become available).
 2. To encourage s106 developer contributions for related public transport infrastructure, information and services.
 3. In conjunction with Kent County Council to ensure that facilities for Arriva buses to serve, and terminate in Maidstone Town Centre are maintained at all times, and that in the event of proposals for redevelopment of the High Street, which is an integral part of the public transport infrastructure of the Borough, Maidstone Borough Council will consult with Arriva and Kent County Council at all stages of the redevelopment process.
 4. Ensure that the requirements of public transport are considered in any proposals arising from the development of the Council's spatial planning documents including the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.
 5. Ensure that parking policy reflects the aim of the Council's transport policy to increase modal shift from car to bus by imposing appropriate parking charges in town centres.

- Arriva Southern Counties –
 1. To work with Kent and County Council and Maidstone Borough council over the design and implementation of a viable and sustainable network of local bus services.
 2. Introduce where commercially feasible improved bus services in response to the introduction of bus priority measures.
 3. Investment in provision of low floor buses.
 4. Improved driver training to NVQ level 2.
 5. Monitoring service reliability and customer satisfaction and take action where required to improve (in conjunction with Kent County Council).
 6. Marketing campaigns to encourage use and awareness (in conjunction with Kent County Council).

1.3.14 AIMS AND TARGETS

1.3.15 The proposed agreement has headline aims of:-

- (A1) increasing the number of passenger journeys since 2008 by 2% p.a.
- (A2) increase in passengers expressing overall satisfaction with service provided since 2008 by 2% p.a.

The headline aims will be reached by working to more detailed targets as follows:-

- (T1) Percentage of services operating on time – 1% increase relative to changes in the level of congestion
- (T2) Number of stops with raised borders and bus stop clearways – to complete infrastructure improvements on routes 6 and 7 (Maidstone to Tunbridge Wells), 71 (Maidstone to West Malling), 82 (Maidstone to Parkwood), 85 Maidstone Hospital to Shepway), 101 (Maidstone to Chatham) and 176 (Walderslade to Chatham)
- (T3) Number of bus stops with timetable information – a 5% annual increase until 90% achieved
- (T4) Bus stops with new or replacement shelters – Maidstone Borough Council will, as resources become available, especially through developer funding from new housing growth areas, increase the provision of bus shelters at the busiest pick-up stops in the Borough
- (T5) Conversion of local town routes to low floor easy access vehicles – target is for 98% of Arriva bus services (excluding school day only services) in Maidstone to be operated by low floor buses by the end of the five year partnership

- (T6) Percentage of drivers with NVQ level 2 in Road Passenger Transport – target is 40% in year 1, 50% in year 2, and 60% in year 3.
- (T7) Annual percentage increase in number of passenger journeys on the Maidstone Park and Ride services – an annual increase of 2% over the five years of the partnership
- (T8) Annual percentage increase in number of passenger journeys on individual routes targeted for investment – a 5% increase in passenger journeys over the first two years following a route improvement
- (T9) Increase in passengers expressing satisfaction with service provided on individual routes targeted for investment – a 5% increase in passenger satisfaction over the first two years following a route improvement.

1.3.16 The above aims are not exclusive. Existence of the partnership will also give opportunity to discuss other measures and concerns and develop actions on an ongoing basis.

1.3.17 PARK AND RIDE

1.3.18 The Park and Ride service provides an important alternative to use of the car for accessing the town centre, with up to 400,000 private vehicles using the three sites each year. For many people living close to the sites it also acts as their local bus service. It is recommended that Park and Ride is specifically added to the agreement as shown, with its own ongoing targets. It would also benefit from the support of the partners and wider inclusion in the publicity and promotion of the partnership.

1.3.19 Specific inclusion in the quality bus partnership will also help in seeking capital funding for Park and Ride through the Local Transport Plan process and embedding Park and Ride into an integrated and sustainable transport strategy approach.

1.3.20 MAIDSTONE AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

1.3.21 Measure 6 of the approved Air Quality Action Plan identifies improvement in public transport through involvement in the Quality Bus Partnership as a key measure to address air pollution and carbon emissions.

1.3.22 The target is to use the influence of the partnership to decrease the age of the local bus fleet and increase the percentage of vehicles operating to EU 4 and 5 requirements.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 Future development in Maidstone and the surrounding area and background growth in traffic levels will both lead to traffic growth and adverse congestion and pollution unless actions are taken. Actions will need to include actively promoting and encouraging modal shift to use of the bus (including Park and Ride). To be effective these actions need to be planned and coordinated where they will have the most effect to deliver the required outcomes.
- 1.4.2 Coordinated actions and investment through the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership have so far increased use of local bus services. Without an updated partnership in place it would be difficult for Kent County Council to obtain future investment for bus services and allied measures through the Local Transport Plan mechanism, and this may also affect the ability of Arriva to obtain local investment.
- 1.4.3 Failure to include Park and Ride in the Quality Bus Partnership may restrict its ability to attract capital funding.
- 1.4.4 Should an updated agreement not be concluded it is possible that the other parties may then decide to invest available capital and resources in other alternative locations.
- 1.4.5 Failure to have in place the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership would breach the measures contained in the Maidstone Air Quality Action plan.
- 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives
 - 1.5.1 Provision of good bus and Park and Ride services assists in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy objectives of developing an efficient, sustainable integrated transport strategy.
- 1.6 Risk Management
 - 1.6.1 There is a risk that future investment in public transport will be restricted due to reductions in Government and other funding. If there is not an updated proactive partnership agreement in place this is likely to reduce the ability of the partners to bid for whatever funding may be available.
 - 1.6.2 It is to be expected that the provision of better, more reliable, bus services will result in some persons deciding to use the bus instead of the car. Having made the choice they are however then more likely to visit the town. Alternatively once in a car they may decide to go elsewhere to another town or out of town location. This may have an effect on car parking income but as less than 50% of town centre car parks are under the control of the council this is likely to be marginal.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

X

1.7.2 LEGAL

1.7.3 The Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership operates as a voluntary partnership agreement. Standard wording is included at the end of section 5 which concludes that;-

“Therefore, nothing in this agreement is designed or should be concluded as being legally binding on any of the parties, or in any manner restrictive to the commercial or operational activities of Arriva Southern Counties or any other organisation”.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A – Draft of Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership (aims and targets subject to final agreement)

1.8.2 Background Documents

None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected: All.....

.....

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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DRAFT – 5th JULY 2010

MAIDSTONE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

AGREEMENT

_____ 2010

A Protocol between Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Arriva Southern Counties

The continued partnership to achieve quality local bus services in the Maidstone Borough

1. Statement of Principles

Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Arriva Southern Counties share the common objectives of:

- 1.1 Creating a public transport network acknowledged by local residents, visitors and the business community as an increasingly attractive alternative to private car use.
- 1.2 Seeking increased use of local bus services to assist in achieving a sustainable and self-sufficient transport system, capable of meeting the needs of the 21st century, enriching the quality of life in the Maidstone Borough, attracting investment, and enhancing work and leisure opportunities.

All three parties to this protocol acknowledge that these objectives require high quality reliable public transport that can only be delivered through working in partnership, with a commitment to co-ordinated investment and complementary initiatives.

MAIDSTONE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2010, expiring
on the 31st day of March 2015

Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste
Kent County Council

Ben Sherreard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Maidstone
Borough Council

Kevin Hawkins, Regional Commercial Director
Arriva Southern Counties

2. Framework for Action

- 2.1 A Quality Bus Partnership for Maidstone was signed between Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Arriva Southern Counties in 2000. Significant improvements to the local bus network in Maidstone have been achieved through this partnership and it is therefore recognised that committing to a further partnership can contribute to the delivery of an attractive public transport network capable of competing with the private car. It is envisaged that the partnership will entail a joint commitment to invest and to upgrade facilities and operations, together with improved and imaginative marketing, which can contribute to the growth of passenger journeys and increase modal shift from car to bus travel.
- 2.2 The projected business development and housing growth in Maidstone during the next decade will provide opportunities for the provision of high quality public transport services, enhancing the Maidstone Borough and encouraging sustainable transport options whenever possible.
- 2.3 The Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership will build on the long-standing excellent relationship which has existed between the three partners to this protocol during the past decade, which has itself resulted in substantial investment in new vehicles and bus route infrastructure and improvements to frequency.

3. Agreements of this Protocol

The three parties to this protocol agree to:

- 3.1 Work together to implement a substantial improvement to bus operating infrastructure, including stops, shelters, passenger information, accessibility
- 3.2 Work together to increase the proportion of the Maidstone depot bus fleet operated by low-floor, easy-access, environmentally friendly vehicles, to ensure that the aims, measures and targets of the protocol are delivered
- 3.3 Deliver, through market research and similar consultative measures, opportunities for the introduction of new or revised local bus services, which would increase the use of public transport
- 3.4 Identify through market surveys the means to increase the quality and availability of public transport services in the Maidstone Borough
- 3.5 Co-ordinate the development of the public transport network with land use planning to maximise the opportunities for local bus services, especially in locations where significant housing development is planned as part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy.
- 3.6 Co-ordinate the public transport network with other forms of transport to achieve maximum travel opportunities for the Maidstone Borough, subject to commercial viability, recognising the provision of rail services in the area.
- 3.7 Work together to publicise, improve and enhance the facilities and service offered by the Maidstone Park and Ride.

- 3.8 Include the Maidstone Borough within the emerging Punctuality Improvement Plan for Kent. This will include utilising the abilities of the Kent Urban Traffic Management Centre to minimise the journey times of buses through the urban areas, and ensuring the inclusion of bus routes in the winter gritting schedule. Utilise the Kent Urban Traffic Management Centre
- 3.9 Work with Parish Councils within the Borough of Maidstone, and with other representative organisations, to exchange information and assist in the improvement of infrastructure and local transport information
- 3.10 The KCC Sustainable Transport Team will undertake the responsibility of organising and administering the meetings of the Partnership
- 3.11 Develop Real Time Information (RTI) and SMS text messaging as methods of providing bus timetable information to the public.

4. Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council will:

- 4.1 Continue to plan and introduce, where possible, bus priority and other measures, to improve the timing, punctuality and reliability of local bus services
- 4.2 Support new or improved public transport infrastructure and/or services where appropriate through S106 funding from new developments, to provide an accessible local bus service for journeys to and from the nearest town centre, with the intention of integrating such new services within the local bus network
- 4.3 Seek funding through KCC's Integrated Transport Programme for public transport facilities in support of investment and other measures taken by Arriva Southern Counties to improve local bus services
- 4.4 Secure, implement and maintain suitable attractive and appropriate arrangements for the provision of information and roadside furniture (stops and shelters) to a standard agreed between the partners; Kent County Council to be responsible for damaged bus stop posts & raised boarders or hardstanding, and Maidstone Borough Council to be responsible for maintenance of its shelters
- 4.5 Assist in identifying new market opportunities for local bus services and support new initiatives to encourage greater use of public transport, including Green Travel Plans for employers and education establishments
- 4.6 Work together to ensure that the Maidstone Park and Ride is operating efficiently and offering as attractive service as possible, given budget constraints.
- 4.7 Give advance notice of roadworks affecting bus services and make every reasonable endeavour to safeguard bus access in cases of road closures, diversions and adverse winter weather conditions (Kent County Council)
- 4.8 Provide any other relevant infrastructure to improve bus access to stops (Kent County Council); and provide personnel resources for bus stop clearway site visits and parking enforcement of clearways (Maidstone Borough Council)

- 4.9 Ensure that parking policy reflects the aim of the Councils' transport policy to increase modal shift from car to bus by imposing realistic parking charges in town centres.

5. Arriva Southern Counties will:

- 5.1 Work and consult with both Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council over the design, planning and implementation of a viable and sustainable network of local bus services, establishing appropriate co-ordination with other public transport services
- 5.2 Work with both Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council to provide input into Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) and future transport strategies (such as Growth without Gridlock), so that the benefits of improvements introduced through this protocol can be measured in terms of performance indicators
- 5.3 Introduce where commercially feasible improved local bus services in response to the introduction of bus priority measures
- 5.4 Seek to maintain all services in the Maidstone Borough area with minimum lost mileage and to a professional standard. As a minimum standard Arriva Southern Counties will aim to achieve standards of operation set by the Traffic Commissioner in accordance with NI 178
- 5.5 Continue to invest where commercially feasible in new and fully accessible vehicles, as well as presenting existing vehicles in an attractive manner, using environmentally friendly fuels
- 5.6 Consult with Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council on any significant proposed fare changes
- 5.7 Continue to develop higher standards of training and education amongst staff, including an understanding of passenger transport operation and customer care
- 5.8 Provide adequate management and supervision of services to uphold standards as well as being able to deal with emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances quickly and efficiently
- 5.9 Be responsible for timetable displays for all Arriva bus services in Maidstone. KCC will be responsible for timetable display cases and bus stop flags and for timetables displays for KCC-tendered services operated by other operators.
- 5.10 When services are disrupted by road works, ensure that the public are adequately informed of alternative arrangements by means of information on stops and buses and via Traveline.

Important Note:

This is a Voluntary Partnership Agreement in accordance with the provisions of the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. As such it is an agreement in which each of the parties is a voluntary partner.

Section 46 of and Schedule 2 to the 2008 Act amend the Transport Act 2000 ("the 2000 Act") to introduce new provisions about "voluntary partnership agreements" (VPAs) and other "qualifying agreements". These provisions came into force in England on 9 February 2009.

These amendments to the 2000 Act made by the 2008 Act introduce a statutory definition of a "voluntary partnership agreement" (VPA). A VPA is a particular type of voluntary agreement, and is defined in the 2000 Act as any voluntary agreement under which:

- a local transport authority, or two or more local transport authorities, undertake to provide particular facilities, or to do anything else for the purpose of bringing benefits to persons using local services, within the whole or part of their area, or combined area, and
- one or more operators of local services undertake to provide services of a particular standard.

It is envisaged that most voluntary agreements that are entered into by local transport authorities and operators will fall within the definition of a VPA. It is important to note that an agreement must involve at least one local transport authority in order to satisfy the definition of a VPA.

(Source: Local Transport Act 2008, Improving local bus services: Guidance on voluntary partnership agreements – Department for Transport, February 2009)

Therefore, nothing in this agreement is designed or should be concluded as being legally binding on any of the parties, or in any manner being restrictive to the commercial or operational activities of Arriva Southern Counties or any other organisation.

6. Headline Aims of the Quality Bus Partnership

All three parties to the protocol agree to work together to achieve the following Headline Aims of the QBP:

(A1) Percentage increase in number of passenger journeys since 2008

A large increase in the number of passenger journeys across Maidstone since 2008 has been due to a number of factors, principal among them being the introduction of free travel on local bus services for the elderly and disabled in 2008 and the launch of the Kent Freedom Pass in Maidstone in June 2009. The target figures predict a modest growth in passenger journeys on the high baseline in 2008.

Target is 2% pa increase during the five year partnership

(A2) Increase in passengers expressing overall satisfaction with service provided since 2008

Bus passenger satisfaction rates would be expected to grow alongside the planned improvements that the QBP would seek to implement during the next three years.

Target is 2% pa increase during the five year partnership

7. Detailed Targets

The Headline Aims of the QBP will be tackled by working towards the more detailed targets set out below. All three parties to the protocol agree to work together towards achieving the following targets through the five year partnership:

(T1) Percentage of services operating on time

Poor punctuality is due to many factors, including the increasing number of vehicles on the road and inconsiderate parking and loading at bus stops. We need to focus on better enforcement of illegal parking at bus stops and more rigorous monitoring of why and when delays happen, so that problems causing late running can be resolved.

Target is 1% increase in punctuality relative to changes to levels of congestion (punctuality defined as by NI 178 of not less than 1 minute early and not more than 5 minutes late).

(T2) Number of stops with raised boarders and bus stop clearways

Raised boarders give better access at bus stops, especially for passengers with limited mobility and for parents with children in buggies. The provision of more bus stop clearways is paramount, and these will continue to be introduced at urban bus stops where appropriate as soon as resources permit.

As and when resources permit KCC is committed to providing this high level of bus stop improvement measures on the following Arriva services serving Maidstone:

- (i) Routes 6 and 7 (Maidstone to Tunbridge Wells)
- (ii) Routes 71, 101 and 176
- (iii) Routes 82 and 85

To complete the bus stop infrastructure improvements on the above routes during the life of the partnership.

(T3) Number of departure stops with timetable information

The provision of clear and accurate timetable information at the majority of bus stops is an essential part of public transport provision, and the operator invests a considerable amount of time and money in maintaining bus stop timetable displays. Further, KCC have recently commenced a programme to improve the provision of timetables at bus stops across the County. These complimentary ongoing initiatives should enhance the attractiveness of local bus services, and increase patronage.

Target is a 5% annual increase in the number of bus stops displaying up to date timetable information in Maidstone Borough until 90% has been achieved.

(T4) Bus stops with new or replacement shelters

The provision of shelters at all principal pick-up stops is an important facility for encouraging an increase in bus passengers. Combined with the elements of roadside infrastructure described above, a bus shelter provides essential protection from inclement weather, especially for the elderly, for those who are less mobile, and for parents with young children. There is a reasonable level of bus shelter provision in Maidstone Borough at present, and the Borough Council will continue to be responsible for the maintenance of bus shelters.

Maidstone Borough Council will, as resources become available, especially through developer funding from new housing growth areas, increase the provision of bus shelters at the busiest pick-up stops in the Borough.

(T5) Conversion of local town routes to low-floor easy-access vehicles

The parties to this agreement aspire to the delivery of low-floor easy-access buses across the Maidstone services which currently have step-floor vehicles, and Kent County Council will facilitate this improvement through various highway works as soon as resources permit.

Target is for 98% of Arriva bus services (excluding 'School Day Only' services) in Maidstone to be operated by low floor buses by the end of the five year partnership

(T6) Percentage of drivers with NVQ Level 2 in Road Passenger Transport

The investment provided by the operator in its workforce reflects their commitment to a reliable, customer oriented service, and is to be welcomed and encouraged

Target is 40% in year 1, 50% in year 2, and 60% in year 3

(T7) Annual Percentage increase in number of passenger journeys on the Maidstone Park and Ride services.

KCC, Maidstone and Arriva will work together to publicise, improve and enhance the facilities and service offered by the Maidstone Park and Ride.

Target is a 2% annual increase in passenger journeys over the five year partnership.

(T8) Annual Percentage increase in number of passenger journeys on individual routes targeted for investment

As resources allow, KCC will invest in improved roadside infrastructure as described in Target (T2). This will be accompanied by a marketing campaign to increase awareness of the service, and the increased marketing introduction of new/improved vehicles where resources allow.

Where such improvement projects are implemented, the number of passenger journeys will be monitored for two years after the service 'relaunch'.

Target is 5% increase in passenger journeys over the first two years following a route improvement.

(T9) Increase in passengers expressing satisfaction with service provided on individual routes targeted for investment

As resources allow, KCC will invest in improved roadside infrastructure as described in Target (T2). This will be accompanied by a marketing campaign to increase awareness of the service, and the increased marketing introduction of new/improved vehicles where resources allow.

Where such improvement projects are implemented, passenger satisfaction will be monitored for two years after the service 'relaunch'.

Target is 5% increase in passenger journeys over the first two years following a route improvement.

8. Additional Improvements to the Bus Network

All three parties to the agreement will work towards the following additional improvements to the bus network insofar as the provision of funding permits:

- 8.1 Arriva Southern Counties and Kent County Council to ensure that service quality and reliability is maintained
- 8.2 Kent County Council to ensure that service performance of financially supported services continues to be monitored
- 8.3 Maidstone Borough Council to encourage S106 developer contributions for public transport infrastructure, information and services
- 8.4 Kent County Council to carry out an audit of all remaining bus stops as part of the Roadside Infrastructure Unit contract

- 8.5 Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council to ensure that facilities for Arriva buses to serve, and terminate in, Maidstone Town Centre are maintained at all times, and that in the event of proposals for redevelopment of the High Street, which is an integral part of the public transport infrastructure of the Borough, Maidstone Borough Council will consult with Arriva and Kent County Council at all stages of the redevelopment process
- 8.6 Maidstone Borough Council will ensure that the requirements of public transport are considered in any proposals arising from the development of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy
- 8.7 Kent County Council to consider the inclusion of bus services in Maidstone in plans for any future extension of Real Time Information (RTI) in the county.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 This agreement sets out some benchmark aims, measures and targets which form the basis of a new Quality Bus Partnership for Maidstone. Provided there is commitment from all three parties to the protocol, the bus passenger network in the Borough of Maidstone should enjoy significant new initiatives, improvements and investment in the immediate future.
 - 9.2 This agreement will also establish the foundations necessary for further bus service improvements envisaged in association with regeneration and new housing growth sites, linking these areas with their nearest town centre and rail station.
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