

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATORY SERVICES

Report prepared by: Jason Taylor

Date Issued: 4 November 2010

1. RIVER MEDWAY CYCLE PATH BETWEEN MAIDSTONE AND TONBRIDGE FEASIBILITY STUDY

1.1 Issue for Decision

- 1.1.1 To consider the allocation of funds towards a feasibility study into the introduction of a cycle path along the River Medway between Maidstone and Tonbridge.

1.2 Recommendation of the Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services

- 1.2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees to the allocation of up to £2,500 from the Growth Point revenue towards a feasibility study into the introduction of a cycle path along the River Medway between Maidstone and Tonbridge.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) is leading on a long-term project which aims to improve cycle access along the River Medway from Tonbridge to Maidstone (and onto the Medway Towns through the Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership Scheme). A working group comprising officers from the relevant District Councils, Environment Agency, Sustrans, Public Rights of Way and Kent Highways has been established to guide this project.
- 1.3.2 As a starting point, a feasibility study is required to test the possibility of connecting both towns along the River Medway. The study will identify the funding sources required for such a route, the landowner consultation required, potential strategic and leisure connections along the route, and any issues that may need to be overcome in order to keep the route as close to the River Medway as possible.
- 1.3.3 It is hoped the route will consist of a shared-use cycle and pedestrian path, of a similar standard to the Tonbridge to Penshurst shared-use route (National Cycle Network, Regional Route 12) which is proving an extremely popular leisure route since it was completed in 2005.

- 1.3.4 From a Maidstone perspective, Officers believe this project represents an excellent opportunity to improve the riverside path heading west towards our boundary with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council near Watlingtonbury.
- 1.3.5 The Council is currently working in partnership with Kent Highways Services and the recently established Maidstone Cycle Forum to develop a cycle strategy for the borough. The strategy, which is currently in draft form, identifies a number of potential strategic and leisure routes which are aimed at encouraging active travel.
- 1.3.6 One of the priorities in the draft cycling strategy is the upgrade of the riverside towpath between the town centre and Allington Lock to a shared-use cycle/pedestrian path. This route is currently the subject of a KCC Local Transport Plan bid for funding for 2011/2012. Therefore, a future extension to the riverside route to the south west, as identified in the cycle strategy, presents a fantastic opportunity towards increasing the level of cycling in the borough.
- 1.3.7 A feasibility study is currently underway (funded by Valley of Visions) to assess the potential of developing a shared-use riverside route between Allington Lock and Aylesford village. This route would provide both a strategic and recreational function, and would connect to ongoing cycle route developments in the Medway Towns, thus allowing for the overall long-term vision of a riverside connection between Rochester and Tonbridge via Maidstone.
- 1.3.8 For the Maidstone to Tonbridge riverside route, the feasibility study is expected to cost around £15k and will be tendered by MVCP. It is expected that a contribution of around £2000 will be given by each partner on the working group. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council have already given their support to the study by allocating £2500 from their Planning and Development Section. It is hoped Maidstone will put forward a similar amount for such an exciting long-term project.
- 1.3.9 The long-term vision is that the route will be developed in sections, which will be determined through the feasibility study. If funding could not be found for the complete route then sections would be completed as funding did become available.
- 1.4 Alternative Actions and why not Recommended
- 1.4.1 The Cabinet Member could decide not to support this feasibility study which would mean that the project may not go ahead or that Maidstone could miss out on the opportunity to be involved in the development of this strategically important cycle path running through the borough.
- 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives
- 1.5.1 This project full fills a number of the councils strategic objectives, including:

- 1.5.2 Improving the Health of People living in the borough and reduce health inequalities.
- 1.5.3 Encourage more adults and children to participate in sport.
- 1.5.4 Enhance the council's parks, green spaces and natural habitats.
- 1.5.5 Maintain a clean and pleasant environment for people who live in and visit the borough.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 The feasibility study could find that the project is not feasible, however it is not anticipated that this will be the result.
- 1.6.2 There is a risk that if we do not fund the feasibility study that the project will not progress.
- 1.6.3 If other partners are not able to provide their proportion of the cost of the feasibility study then MBC funding will be returned.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

Financial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staffing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considerations for Disabled Persons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental/Sustainable Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights Act	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procurement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asset Management	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 1.7.2 Financial – Up to £2500 towards the cost of the feasibility study.

- 1.7.3 Considerations for the disabled – This path would be dual usage which would enable wheel chairs and buggies to gain access to additional areas of the river path.

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes ☐ ☒ No

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

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes ☐ No ☒

Reason for Urgency

n/a

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.

Cllr Malcolm Greer

Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Telephone: 01634 862876

E-mail: malcolmgreer@maidstone.gov.uk

Jason Taylor

Parks and Leisure Manager

Telephone: 01622 602753

E-mail: jason.taylor@maidstone.gov.uk