

Maidstone Borough Council

Regeneration & Economic Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 25 October 2011

Traffic Congestion Review

Report of: Overview & Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2011 the Committee agreed to review Traffic Congestion, focussing on five objectives;
- To identify how to unlock the congestion and capacity of traffic in Maidstone town, by using best practice techniques investigating Chelmsford and other local neighbouring towns;
 - To investigate the consideration given to new developments by the planning authority in relation to traffic volume and road maintenance;
 - To look at the future as modern technology using electric cars will not solve the traffic congestion;
 - To establish ways to educate the residents to promote car sharing and public transport; and
 - To make recommendations as appropriate.
- 1.2 The Committee are requesting information regarding the break even calculations for individual park and ride sites. In particular the figures for spaces, charges and percentages that are used for cost analysis. Also, the Committee wish to see a copy of the business plan for the Council's existing and proposed sites, eg. Bluebell Hill.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to interview Steve Goulette, Assistant Director of Environment & Regulatory Services with regards to operational aspects, and Flo Churchill, Interim Head of Core Strategy and Jonathan Morris, Principle Transport Officer with regards to the policy aspects of Park & Ride services.
- 2.2 Members will need to consider suitable questions, based on the objectives of the review, in order to interview the witnesses.

3. Traffic Congestion – Park & Ride

- 3.1 Arriva operates the Park & Ride bus service on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council. The Council website states that 'The Council offers free parking, a quick ride into town, no parking problems and a cheap bus fare, at £2.50 per passenger'. The routes for the current three sites are attached at **Appendix A**.
- 3.2 The Committee investigated the Park & Ride services provided at Chelmsford Borough Council on 23 August 2011. An extract from the visit summary states

'Chelmsford currently has 2 Park & Ride sites, both of which are 5 miles out of the town centre. They are investigating having a third site depending on demand. The price is per passenger, not car and hope to increase the cost to £2.50 in 2012 which is Maidstone's current fare. Under 16's travel for free in Chelmsford, whereas in Maidstone only two under 17's may travel for free if accompanied by an adult. Another significant difference is the opening hours, as the 3 Maidstone sites have a last bus service at 6.30pm compared to Chelmsford who close at 7pm. Should a passenger miss the last Park & Ride bus in Chelmsford, they can use their pass on a regular bus to the site. Their Park & Ride sites are operated with a barrier, allowing a late passenger to exit the car park'.

4. Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 4.1 The Strategic Plan 2011-15 states the Corporate Priority for "Maidstone to have a growing economy" with the outcome of "A transport network that supports the local economy".