

Maidstone Borough Council

External Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 11 August 2009

Maidstone Rail Services Review

Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 16 June, the External OSC agreed to carry out a review of rail services within the Maidstone Borough area. The relevant extract from the minutes is as follows:

'The Committee agreed to carry out a review of rail services to London, noting that these were being cut and residents were being forced to use alternative train stations to access services. Additionally, Maidstone was a Growth Point and appropriate public transport for the growing population was therefore vital. It was agreed that parish councils should be consulted as part of this review.'

- 1.2 At its previous meeting the Committee noted that the review would include all aspects of the rail services, such as the adequacy of station facilities and the provision of services within the rural areas.

- 1.3 At the last meeting of the Committee, Members discussed the Kent Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) Consultation, in particular proposals to:

- Cut services via London Bridge (due to the withdrawal of the off-peak one train per hour fast Cannon Street services, in the current off-peak timetable);
- Cut direct trains between Maidstone and Canterbury, from December 2009;
- Not provide adequate connection between Maidstone and Ebbsfleet International; and
- Not improve the Medway valley in order to improve the journey time between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells.

The Council has now submitted its response to the RUS (attached at [Appendix A](#)), and has identified that the proposals of Network Rail are insufficient for Maidstone. Kent County Council also responded to the RUS Consultation; the response is attached at [Appendix B](#). KCC's response outlines that Maidstone is the only major town within Kent that is to experience cuts to its rail service.

- 1.4 The Committee will be interviewing Brian Morgan, the Assistant Director of Development and Community Strategy; and Clive Cheeseman, the Public Transport Officer, who led on the Council's

response to Network Rail's RUS consultation. Mr Morgan and Mr Cheeseman are also the Council's key officers involved in rail services issues for Maidstone Borough.

2. Recommended:

- 2.1 The Committee should consider the work that has been carried out so far, and future work that has been planned by the Council, with regard to raising the standard of the rail services for the Borough. The Committee should identify where it will be able to add value to the work of the Council whilst carrying out its review of rail services.