

**Maidstone Borough Council**

**Planning, Transport and Development Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**Draft Report**

**A Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough  
alternatives to using a car**

**November 2014**

**Opening statement from Chair (of PTD committee or working group?)**

**Executive Summary**

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## 1 Background

- 1.1 In March 2014 Maidstone Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny team, with the help of the Communications team, implemented a communications plan to help gather suggestions for topics for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Future Work Programme and reviews for the Municipal year 2014-15.
- 1.2 More than 50 suggestions were received from staff, members of the public, community representatives, key stakeholders/partners including parish councils and local press. 18 of the suggestions received related to the terms of reference for the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC).
- 1.3 On 9 June 2014 the Overview and Scrutiny Team held a workshop with PTD OSC where the committee considered all the suggestions and agreed a review topic to take forward for 2014-15.
- 1.4 Many of the suggestions raised concerns about transport in the Borough, including:
- Increased congestion in Maidstone town centre;
  - Bus services;
  - Parking;
  - Public transport;
  - Promoting walking and cycling, and;
  - Introducing a mechanism where local people could report transport infrastructure issues to both Kent County Council (KCC) and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC).
- 1.5 The committee agreed to look at ways of reducing congestion in Maidstone town and would touch on all the concerns above. To do this the committee decided they needed to review different modes of transport that could be alternatives to using a car. The main groups decided upon were:
- Cycling and walking;
  - Bus, and;
  - Rail.
- 1.6 The committee recognised if these modes of transport were to be alternatives to the car they had to be convenient, reliable and attractive enough to encourage people to leave their cars at home. This in turn would reduce the need for parking in the town.
- 1.7 A working group was set up and met on 17 June 2014 to scope the review and presented a scoping document at the PTD OSC meeting of 24 June 2014 outlining the Terms of Reference for the review.
- 1.8 This review prompted interest from local media with it being reported on BBC South East on 7 October 2014 and BBC Radio Kent. BBC Radio Kent also interviewed Councillor David Burton, Cabinet member for Planning, Transport and Development

on 27 July 2014 and Councillor Val Springett, Chair of PTD OSC on 7 October 2014 about the review. Kent Messenger also reported, on 1 August 2014, the recommendations of the committee meeting on 22 July 2014.

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## 2 Terms of Reference

2.1 The committee agreed by conducting this review it would aim to meet the following objectives:

To carry out a review of Transport in Maidstone Borough – alternatives to using a car to ease congestion in the town.

### 2.2 Cycling and walking

- Identify cycling and walking groups in the Borough;
- Establish what work is already being done regarding the promotion of walking and cycling;
- Identify and make recommendations on how MBC can work to increase the use of cycling and walking in the Borough.

### 2.3 Bus services

- Identify existing bus service providers operating in the Rural Service Centres<sup>1</sup>;
- Identify bus user groups in the Borough to avoid duplication of effort;
- Improve communication with the Quality Bus Partnership to enable Councillors to influence debate where they can;
- Identify the barriers to making the bus a viable alternative to using the car to travel into Maidstone town;
- Identify and make recommendations for improvements to bus service provision to and from the Rural Service Centres (RSC).

### 2.4 Rail services

- Identify rail user groups in the Borough to avoid duplication of effort;
- Gain an insight into KCC and rail providers' strategic plans for rail services in the Borough;
- Establish MBC member links with KCC and rail service providers;
- Identify and make recommendations for improvements to rail service provision in the Maidstone Borough.

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<sup>1</sup> Rural service centres (RSC) – outside of the town centre and urban area, rural service centres are considered the most sustainable settlements in Maidstone's settlement hierarchy. The planned development and maintenance of sustainable communities underpins the council's approach to rural areas where the primary aim is to direct development towards rural settlements that can best act as service centres for their local population and surrounding rural communities. Rural service centres play a key part in the economic and social fabric of the Borough and contribute towards its character and built form. They act as a focal point for trade and services by providing a concentration of public transport networks, employment opportunities and community facilities that minimise car journeys - (Maidstone Borough Council, 2014)

### 3 Introduction

- 3.1 Congestion on our roads is a growing concern across the UK. According to the Department for Transport (DoT,) Road Congestion and Reliability Statistics<sup>2</sup>, the average speeds on local 'A' roads in England during the weekday morning peak between April and June 2014 were 24.4mph. Compared to figures for the year end March 2014 this was a decrease of 0.9%. Across all nine regions in England London experienced the greatest reduction in speeds of 3.3%, followed by the South East with a 2.3% reduction.
- 3.2 Our reliance on car travel, even if it results in sitting in traffic with longer or unpredictable journey times, appears to be showing no let up.
- 3.3 Another report from the DoT, Public attitudes towards transport survey<sup>3</sup>, states, travelling by car as a driver was by far the most commonly and regularly used mode of transport with 44% of respondents reporting travelling by car as a driver every day or nearly every day. The research also stated, that on average, respondents reported making five journeys of less than two miles (3.22kilometres) by car in a typical week. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of respondents reported they could use alternative forms of travel. In 2012, 41% of people agreed they could just as easily walk many of the journeys of less than two miles they now travel by car; 39% said they could just as easily cycle (if they had a bike) and nearly a third said they could just as easily catch the bus. The challenge is encouraging people to make the change.
- 3.4 As can be seen by the map in **Appendix A** (Maidstone Walking and Cycling Isochrones )the vast majority of the Maidstone urban area is within the 5 kilometre threshold for trips by bike and a significant proportion of the Maidstone urban area is within the 2 kilometre threshold for trips on-foot. This serves to indicate the huge latent potential for increasing the proportion of trips by walking and cycling.
- 3.5 According to the Parliamentary publication, Out of the Jam: reducing congestion on our roads, the definition of congestion is "unreliable journeys in terms of the length of time that journey will take, taking 20 minutes one day, 40 minutes the next and so on; it can mean that journeys are just too slow; or it can mean that in times of exceptional disruption, road works or special events and things like that, journeys are very different from the way they normally are."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Transport Road Congestion and Reliability Statistics, Congestion on local 'A' roads, England: Apr to Jun 2014 report  
([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Department for Transport British Social Attitudes Survey 2012: public attitudes towards transport (July 2013)

<sup>4</sup> [www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk) - Transport Committee – Ninth Report, Out of the Jam: reducing congestion on our roads published 6 September 2011.

## 4 Congestion in Maidstone

- 4.1 According to the BBCs Domesday Reloaded website<sup>5</sup> congestion in Maidstone is not new (see fig 1).

### **Waiting for information from KCC on congestion hot spots in Maidstone**

## 4.2 Impact on Air Quality and Health<sup>6</sup>

- 4.2.1 Local air pollutants are those that have a direct impact on public health, especially that of the young and old. The main air pollutants of concern in Maidstone are nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulates (PM). These have been linked to lung diseases (asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema), heart conditions and cancer. Based on national estimates, approximately 5.6% of premature deaths in Maidstone are due to air pollution.
- 4.2.2 Where health based air quality objectives are not being met Air Quality Management Areas must be declared. Maidstone declared an Urban AQMA due to exceeding the annual average nitrogen dioxide objective (objective level = 40ug/m<sup>3</sup>). This is a long term objective aimed at protecting the most vulnerable members of the population from the chronic (debilitating) effects of air pollution.
- 4.2.3 The Council undertook monitoring at 57 sites in 2013 (using diffusion tubes attached to street furniture) to monitor airborne NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations. The annual mean objective was exceeded at twelve sites, all within the Maidstone AQMA.
- 4.2.4 The very high results recoded at four of those sites (Upper Stone Street, and the A274/A229 junction), indicate a potential exceedence of the 1-hour mean NO<sub>2</sub> objective (200ug/m<sup>3</sup> hourly mean not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a year).
- 4.2.5 The short term hourly objective is aimed at protecting the most vulnerable members of the population from the acute (immediate) effects of air pollution, which may involve irritation of the eyes, nose and throat and an increase in the symptoms of existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis or emphysema. Breaches of the hourly objective are more infrequently observed in urban environments than breaches of the annual average objective, indicating that day to day peak levels of nitrogen dioxide pollutant concentrations are increasing.
- 4.2.6 A recent report from World Health Organisation (WHO) 'Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollutants'<sup>7</sup> has produced new evidence of long-term effects of

Extract from BBCs Domesday Reloaded web site referring to a report in 1986:

*"Maidstone's recent rapid residential growth has greatly increased pressure on the town centre's road system and only Medway crossing. Single incidents cause lengthy tailbacks, especially - where the A20 and A249 converge east of the town centre-i.e. top of Square Hill and bottom of Sittingbourne Road, Loose Road. At the morning peak a third of this traffic is making for west of the bridge and a third for destinations north of Maidstone."*

Fig.1

<sup>5</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-576000-153000/page/3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-576000-153000/page/3)

<sup>6</sup> Mid Kent Share Services – Environmental Health

nitrogen dioxide for people suffering from existing respiratory and heart problems and indicates that these effects can occur below the current air quality objective levels.

### 4.3 Central Government Growth Fund

4.3.1 On 7 July 2014 Kent County Council<sup>8</sup> published a press release reporting that the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership<sup>9</sup> had won £104 million from the Government's 'Growth Deal'. The benefits to Maidstone from this cash injection were reported to be:

- A Gyratory Bypass - £4.56 million to go towards a relief scheme to help overcome congestion and delays in the town centre;
- Maidstone Integrated Transport - £8.89 million;
- Sustainable access to Maidstone employment areas (River Medway cycle path, East Farleigh to Aylesford) £2 million.

#### Recommendation

- A. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to lobby Kent County Council on the reconfiguration of the Maidstone Gyratory system to ensure safe cycle passages. The design of the gyratory system should incorporate surface cycle passages (not subways) for cyclist heading in and out of the town from west Maidstone using the A20 and A26.*

### 4.4 Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy

4.4.1 On 27 January 2014 Maidstone Borough Council's Cabinet approved the vision and objectives for the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and work programmed for developing the ITS to a full draft document to go out to public consultation in the Summer of 2014.

4.4.2 Because of peak period congestion and poor air quality across the urban area of Maidstone the ITS would focus primarily on demand management measures for one of the core principles of the National Planning Policy Framework, to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. The principle being this would enable people to make informed choices about how and when they travel to and from the town centre and other destinations in the Borough.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-and-press-releases/jobs-news/jobs-and-transport-boost-from-104m-growth-deal-funding>.

<sup>9</sup> Kent and Medway Economic Partnership is the local arm of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) which brings together key leaders from business, local government, and further and higher education to boost economic growth across Kent, Medway, East Sussex, Essex, Thurrock and Southend.

4.4.3 A report to Cabinet<sup>10</sup> on 27 January 2014, paragraph 1.3.16 stated the essential elements of the new ITS would include:

- A more targeted park and ride service, with new and/or improved sites in the vicinity of M20 Junction 7 and at Linton Crossroads on the A299 corridor to the south of the town, aimed at long-stay commuters into the town centre;
- Bus priority measures in tandem with the enhanced park and ride service;
- Highway capacity improvements at the bridges gyratory and at other key junctions in and around the strategic development areas of north west Maidstone, south east Maidstone and M20 Junction 7, to improve journey time reliability and air quality;
- Increased bus service frequencies (to at least every 7 minutes) on radial routes serving Maidstone town centre;
- Walking and cycling infrastructure, focusing on improved wayfinding, safer crossing points at the town centre gyratory, and improvements to the River Medway towpath;
- A car sharing initiative in partnership with local employers, and;
- A refreshed town centre parking strategy, which will look to increase long-stay car parking charges and reduce car parking supply to promote the use of park and ride, and a reduction in short-stay car parking to prioritise shoppers and visitors.

#### **4.5 Maidstone Draft Local Plan 2014-2031**

4.5.1 The Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan<sup>11</sup> (paragraph 3.9) transport vision states that Maidstone will have a transport network that will have sufficient people and goods-moving capacity to support the growth projected by the local plan to 2031.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2059/Public%20reports%20pack%2027th-Jan-2014%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>

<sup>11</sup> <http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>

## 5 Methodology

5.1 The committee sought evidence from a variety of sources. For example select Committee-style interviews with a number of witnesses for each section of the review were undertaken.

### 5.3 Cycling and Walking

5.3.1 On 22 July 2014<sup>12</sup> interviews were conducted with witnesses who had an interest in or whose work involved the promotion of walking and cycling.

5.3.2 The witnesses invited to attend were:

- Bartholomew Wren – Economic Development Officer Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
- Colin Finch – Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council;
- Tay Arnold – Cycling Transport Planner, Kent Highways, Kent County Council;
- Sarah Shearsmith, Community development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council;
- Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy Team, Maidstone Borough Council;
- James Gower – local cycling enthusiast who sent a suggestion via Twitter for the committee to review congestion in the town;

5.3.3 The specific questions asked of these witnesses to help prepare for the meeting can be found as **Appendix B**.

5.3.4 Other witnesses included:

- Councillor Paul Harper;
- Mr Elliott Dean, resident and cycling enthusiast.

### 5.4 Bus Services

5.4.1 On 16 September 2014 interviews were conducted with:

- Dan Bruce, Local Transport Planner (Mid Kent), KCC;
- Shane Hymers, Public Transport Policy and Strategy Manager, KCC;
- Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd;

5.4.2 On 30 September 2014 interviews were conducted with:

- Matthew Arnold, Commercial Manager, Arriva;
- Mike Fitzgerald, Chairman of East of Maidstone Bus Group;
- Parish Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst PC;
- Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd was also in attendance;

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<sup>12</sup> <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MIId=2184&Ver=4>

- Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst Parish Council.

5.4.3 Specific questions asked of these witnesses can be found in **Appendix C**.

5.4.4 The committee also consulted with all 35 Parish Councils and 55 MBC Councillors, asking them for details of the following:

- Any bus service issues you may have in your constituency;
- Any bus user groups you are aware of in your constituency.

5.4.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Officer attended a meeting between the Director of Regeneration and Communities (MBC), Officers from MBCs Community Development Team and a representative from Arriva. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways of making bus services more accessible to those residents on low incomes.

## 5.5 Rail Services

5.5.1 Interviews with:

- Mike Gibson, Public Affairs Manager, South Eastern Rail
- Mike Fitzgerald, Chair Kent Community Rail Partnership and Medway Valley Line Group
- Keith Harrison, Chief Executive, Action with Rural Communities
- Written response from Stephen Gasche, Principal Transport Planner – Rail, Kent County Council

5.5.2 Specific questions ask of these witnesses were:

- What are your perceptions of the where the weaknesses are in rail services in the Maidstone borough?
- What could Network Rail do to relieve some of the congestion pressure in Maidstone?
- What do you do to integrate your services with other public transport services?
- How can scheduled changes be better communicated to users?

5.6 Desk research was carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to seek further evidence for the review.

## 6 Walking and Cycling

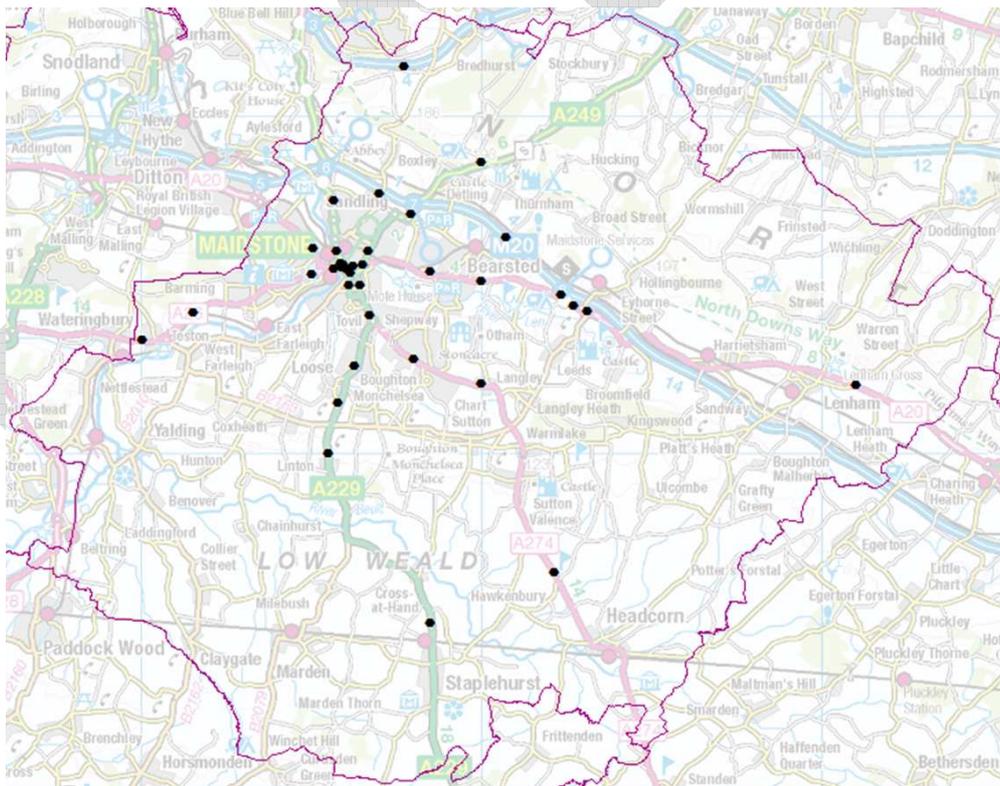
6.1 According to research carried out by the University of East Anglia and the Centre for Diet and Activity Research (CEDAR)<sup>13</sup> walking or cycling to work is better for people's mental health than driving to work.

6.2 The Department for Transport (DfT) carry out annual traffic counts on a selection of A roads throughout the UK. This data is split into vehicle type. It should be noted that as this data is for A roads only it may not reflect the levels of cycling as it does not include the country roads which are popular with cyclists<sup>14</sup>.

The Department for Transport British Social Attitudes Survey<sup>3</sup> defines a cyclist as someone who has access to a bicycle and has ridden a bicycle in the last 12 months.

In 2012, 43% of respondents to this survey had access to a bicycle: 40% owned a bicycle and 3% had regular use of a bicycle owned by someone else. Sixty-one per cent of respondents said that they had not ridden a bicycle in the previous 12 months.

**Map 1 Location of DfT count points in Maidstone**



<sup>13</sup> Report published 15 September 2014 – [www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/](http://www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/)

<sup>14</sup> Maidstone Borough Pedestrian and Pedal Cycle Data, Road Safety Team, KCC

**Table 1 Pedal cycle flow 2000 to 2013 at DfT count points in Maidstone as a proportion of all traffic**

Year	Pedal Cycle Flow	All traffic	%Pedal Cycle
2000	1634	641738	0.3%
2001	1535	650495	0.2%
2002	1424	652861	0.2%
2003	1569	649251	0.2%
2004	1407	657381	0.2%
2005	1183	641219	0.2%
2006	1589	646603	0.2%
2007	1192	638341	0.2%
2008	1380	607332	0.2%
2009	1539	603059	0.3%
2010	1499	617823	0.2%
2011	1659	611695	0.3%
2012	1419	588721	0.2%
2013	1657	584032	0.3%

- 6.3 The proportion of pedal cyclists to all traffic is normally between 0.2 and 0.3% on the A roads in Maidstone.
- 6.4 The 2011 Census journey to work data<sup>15</sup> indicated that journeys to work in Maidstone by bike have increased since 2001. However the change has been very small and the proportion of journeys to work by bike still only account for 1% of total trips.
- 6.5 The Institute of Highways and Transportation suggests that journeys of up to two kilometres were achievable on foot and journeys of up to five kilometres were achievable by bike. In particular the research suggested that journeys within these thresholds had the most realistic chance of replacing car journeys by trips on foot and by bike. The vast majority of the Maidstone urban area is within five kilometres of the town.<sup>16</sup>
- 6.6 Data on journeys to work on foot from the 2011 Census is not yet formally available. However early indications suggest they account for approximately 10% of journeys to work in Maidstone.
- 6.7 For comparison the committee sought evidence from a similar authority to establish how they approached the promotion of walking and cycling and how successful they

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-295663>

<sup>16</sup> Report of Head of Planning and Development to PTD OSC 22 July 2014 -

<http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s37180/agenda%20item%2011%20Question%20Sheet%20-%20for%20front%20of%20Committee%20reports.pdf> page 21 paragraph 3.5

had been. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was chosen because of its comparative size and location.

## **6.6 Cycling in Tunbridge Wells**

- 6.6.1 It was reported that cycling in Tunbridge Wells had increased in recent years, but still only accounted for 2% of road users. Tunbridge Wells was developing a strong cycling culture with a specialist café providing a shop and meeting point for cyclists.
- 6.6.2 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's (TWBC) draft transport strategy had gone out to consultation in 2013 and provided a high level introduction to cycling. A stand-alone cycling strategy was planned to re-engage with the established local cycling forum and was due to go out to consultation late 2014.
- 6.6.3 Mr Greg Clark MP had supported a public meeting in November 2013 on cycling in Tunbridge Wells. A series of recommendations from the meeting had been suggested to feed into the new cycling strategy. The suggestions included proposed new cycling routes; increased cycle parking; installation of advance stop lines, 20mph speed limits; overcoming deficiencies in existing cycle routes; cycle education and awareness for young people and adults.
- 6.6.4 In January 2014 the Tunbridge Wells Cycling Forum was launched with its own terms of reference but no decision making powers. The meetings of the Forum were chaired by TWBC's portfolio holder for Planning and Transport and were reported to be well attended. Officers provided administrative and technical input but no support. Sub groups of the Forum focussed on areas such as education, events and infrastructure.
- 6.6.5 Cycling events supported and promoted by TWBC included safety campaigns with the AA; Bikeability training<sup>17</sup> part funded by the Department for Transport; Tunbridge Wells Great Bike Ride, and; Cycle Friday (launched 6 June 2014)<sup>18</sup>.
- 6.6.6 Final thoughts from Tunbridge Wells included; to be successful resources needed to be made available, and partnership working was important and should include agencies such as Sustrans, KCC, developers, landowners and local businesses; Department for Transport and the Highways Agency.

## **6.7 Existing work to promote walking and cycling in the Maidstone Borough**

- 6.7.1 KCC reported that Maidstone has 11.3% of the 4,200 miles of Public Rights of Way (PROW) in Kent providing a good historical asset of walking and cycling routes.

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<sup>17</sup> Bikeability.dft.gov.uk

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.cyclefriday.co.uk/>

- 6.7.2 The Mote Park regeneration project provided traffic free routes which were being very well used by pedestrians and cyclist.
- 6.7.3 Inter parish 'behind the hedge (Public Rights of Way) schemes' had been developed – for example East Farleigh, Forge Lane route linking the village to the school and a similar scheme at Hunton linking the village to the church and village hall – providing safe pedestrian routes.
- 6.7.4 The Millennium River Project along the River Medway corridor provided a safe route for pedestrians and cyclist.
- 6.7.5 Work is being carried out to improve footpaths to Len Valley, Medway Valley and the Loose Valley Conservation area. It was considered the following footpath networks could be developed to form an orbital cycle and footpath route around Maidstone linking to Maidstone town centre via radial routes:
- Len Valley to the north of Maidstone;
  - Medway Valley to the west of Maidstone;
  - Tovil Nature Park;
  - The Loose Valley Conservation area;
  - Boughton Monchesea; and,
  - Langley to the east of Maidstone;

#### **Recommendation**

*B. That the Head of Planning and Development be asked to report back to Committee before the end of the municipal year 2014-2015 on:*

- *The identity of potential routes for the provision of cycle ways from rural locations (villages and hamlets) with poor bus services, to bus stops on major routes with a more frequent bus service;*
  - *The costs of firstly providing cycle parking at the end of these routes;*
  - *The cost of the longer term aim of developing the cycle route to the sites of the cycle parking.*
- 6.7.6 KCC reported that although MBCs planning policy ENV26 was considered a very effective policy stating no development would be allowed where there were Public Rights of Way unless developers agreed to maintain or divert the routes. This had discouraged developers from developing in these areas. This in turn resulted in what has become known as 'back garden allies' where PROW were overgrown, unsafe and unused.
- 6.7.7 Bikeability cycle training was being offered to children and adults in the Borough using funding subsidised from the Department for Transport and Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF).

- 6.7.8 Work was being carried out with Kent Highways through a working group comprising of Kent Public Health and Kent Sport to promote the health benefits of cycling pitched at getting people on bikes who were not already using one.
- 6.7.9 Maidstone Health Walks<sup>19</sup> scheme had lead three walks; Maidstone Town Centre Walk; Mote Park Health Walk; Cherry Orchard Health Walk. Data as of 7 July 2014 showed 662 walk hours had taken place since January 2014 with 57 registered walkers.
- 6.7.10 British Cycling and Sky TV<sup>20</sup>, part funded by Kent Public Health, encourage people of all levels to get involved in cycling through running events, guided rides, support and tips through the Sky Rider Local scheme. Four events took place in the Maidstone Borough between 20 July and 9 November 2014.
- 6.7.11 KM (Kent Messenger) Charity Team<sup>21</sup> work to encourage parents and children to walk to school. 'Walking Buses' operate along set routes, picking up children at pre-arranged points on the way to school. Parents take turns to escort the group of children to school, with everyone wearing a high visibility tabard for safety.
- 6.7.12 At the time of reporting (22 July 2014) 200 primary schools were using the KM Walk to School resources to promote green travel every week. During the last academic year (2012-2013) 218,000 school run car journeys were removed by local schools. For the academic year (2013-14 to July 2014) 22,517 school run car journeys were reported to have been removed from the roads in Maidstone.
- 6.7.13 Cycleplus<sup>22</sup> is a government approved scheme allowing employees to hire purchase a bike and safety equipment from their employers for commuting to work and for use outside of work. Bikes can be provided at up to 32% less than the usual cost and repayments can be spread across 12 to 18 months. Maidstone Borough Council offers this scheme to all its employees.

## 6.8 Walking and Cycling groups

- 6.8.1 Much of the work in the promotion of walking and cycling is focussed on the health and social benefits they provide as a leisure activities. There was very little evidence of explicitly encouraging either walking or cycling as a means making other journeys such as getting to work. However, 39% of frequent riders had said that Sky Ride Local had influenced them to use their bike to commute to work.

Walking and cycling groups found by carrying out a search of the internet included:

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<sup>19</sup> [www.walkinforhealth.org.uk](http://www.walkinforhealth.org.uk)

<sup>20</sup> [www.goskyride.com](http://www.goskyride.com)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.kmcharityteam.co.uk/schools/schoolswalk/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/employers/employer-faqs>

- Maidstone Ramblers<sup>23</sup> – runs regular walks and social events around Kent.
- Maidstone Invicta U3A<sup>24</sup> - has a membership of 250 of older people no longer in full time work and has, amongst others, a short walk group (less than 5 miles).
- Mid Kent Outdoor Pursuits and Social Group<sup>25</sup> – has a membership of around 50 and organises activities, including walking around the Maidstone and Medway countryside.
- West Kent Walking and Outdoor Group<sup>26</sup> - is a walking group for those aged 30 to 50 and provide a mixed programme of walks most weekends.
- San Fairy Ann Cycling Club<sup>27</sup> - The largest cycling club in Kent with over 500 members from across the county. San Fairy Ann organise all types of cycling activities catering for riders of all abilities.

## 6.9 The draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy

- 6.9.1 The Draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy was produced in June 2012 by MBC officers and local interest groups and cyclist. The strategy was produced by understanding the current issues and the existing network, carrying out route audits and identifying opportunities for infrastructure improvements and developing an action plan. A copy of this document is attached as **Appendix D**.
- 6.9.2 Some parts of the draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy have been implemented, in particular the provision of cycle parking in the town centre and at train stations and improved route provision along a number of key corridors.
- 6.9.3 Walking and cycling forms an integral part of the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and is covered by a number of objectives set out in the framework ITS agreed by MBC Cabinet on 27 January 2014. The strategy includes improving infrastructure and wayfinding, through securing Travel Plans for new developments as well as schools and existing businesses, introducing behaviour change projects to help influence how people travel.
- 6.9.4 The draft Maidstone Cycling Strategy is still to go out to public consultation before being adopted.

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<sup>23</sup> [Maidstoneramblers.org.uk](http://Maidstoneramblers.org.uk)

<sup>24</sup> [u3asites.org.uk](http://u3asites.org.uk)

<sup>25</sup> [www.midkentgroup.co.uk](http://www.midkentgroup.co.uk)

<sup>26</sup> [www.wkwo.org.uk](http://www.wkwo.org.uk)

<sup>27</sup> [www.sanfairyancc.co.uk](http://www.sanfairyancc.co.uk)

## Recommendation

- C. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to urgently refresh and update the draft Maidstone Borough Council Draft Cycling Strategy, dated June 2012, for further scrutiny by the Committee before the end of the 2014-2015 municipal year and before taking it for public consultation.*
- D. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development use the principal proposals from the refreshed Cycling Strategy to inform the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy.*
- E. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to:*
- *Reintroduce the Maidstone Cycling Forum and ensure it is supported by an officer with responsibility for cycling in their job description;*
  - *Identify a lead member to act as a cycling champion within the authority.*

### 6.10 Safety

6.10.1 The Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) Surveillance report dated 27 March 2014<sup>28</sup> is a compendium of data covering a number of public health areas. One of the key areas of concern for the CMO was:

*"Walking and cycling – Safety for pedestrians and cyclists must be improved if we are to encourage people to walk and cycle more and reap the associated health benefits. The risk of serious injury for each kilometre travelled on a bike is 21 times higher than by car. The CMO says that the relative risks of walking and cycling are unacceptably high and must be reduced and that an integrated approach to improving safety for all road users must be taken."*

6.10.2 However, in a Cycling Safety Special Report by NHS Choices<sup>29</sup> researchers concluded that the benefits of cycling far outweigh the potential risks.

Researchers estimated that,

*"on average, the benefits associated with regular cycling equated to up to 14 months extra life expectancy. The risks equated to a decreased life expectancy of up to 40 days; however, this was the upper limit and the figure may be closer to the 20-day mark. This represents an impressive benefit to risk ratio, despite only looking at the physical benefits of exercise. However, there are also documented psychological benefits of exercise, such as an*

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-medical-officer-publishes-annual-report-on-state-of-the-publics-health>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2014/02february/pages/cycling-safety-a-special-report.aspx>

improvement in mood, increased self-confidence and reduced risk of depression.”

### 6.10.3 Safety in Maidstone

6.10.3.1 In Maidstone Borough, pedal cycle casualties are increasing from 21 in 2009 to 41 in 2013. Killed or seriously injured (KSI) pedal cycle casualties are low and numbers vary with a peak in 2012 of 10.<sup>30</sup>

6.10.3.2 Pedestrian casualties injured in the Borough, after a peak in 2011 have recorded decreases in 2012 and 2013.

**Table 2 Pedestrian and pedal cycle casualties in Maidstone District by year and severity**

Year	Severity	Pedestrians	Pedal Cyclists	Total
2009	KSI	8	2	10
	Slight	60	19	79
	Total	68	21	89
2010	KSI	7	5	12
	Slight	54	22	76
	Total	61	27	88
2011	KSI	16	2	18
	Slight	64	26	90
	Total	80	28	108
2012	KSI	16	10	26
	Slight	52	28	80
	Total	68	38	106
2013	KSI	10	5	15
	Slight	52	36	88
	Total	62	41	103

6.10.3.3 Whilst the A229 recorded the highest number of pedestrian and pedal cycle collisions in the last 5 years, the route with the highest rate of collisions was the B2012 (Well Street in Maidstone town centre).

<sup>30</sup> Maidstone Borough Pedestrian and Pedal Cycle Data, Road Safety Team, KCC

**Table 3 Collisions involving pedestrians or pedal cyclists in Maidstone by route, 2009 to 2013**

	Approx route length in km	Pedestrians				Pedal Cycles			
		KSI collisions involving pedestrians	All collisions involving pedestrians	KSI collisions involving pedestrians/km	All collisions involving pedestrians/km	KSI collisions involving pedal cycles	All collisions involving pedal cycles	KSI collisions involving pedal cycles/km	All collisions involving pedal cycles/km
A20	25.2	3	28	0.12	1.11	5	20	0.20	0.79
A2045	1.6	0	0	0.00	0.00	1	1	0.63	0.63
A229	31.4	6	53	0.19	1.69	6	28	0.19	0.89
A249	25	2	13	0.08	0.52	1	3	0.04	0.12
A26	6.5	2	26	0.31	4.00	1	13	0.15	2.00
A274	16.3	4	16	0.25	0.98	0	7	0.00	0.43
B2010	9.6	2	6	0.21	0.63	1	2	0.10	0.21
B2012	1.4	2	6	1.43	4.29	1	3	0.71	2.14
B2079	8.1	0	2	0.00	0.25	0	0	0.00	0.00
B2162	9.4	0	1	0.00	0.11	2	4	0.21	0.43
B2163	15.7	3	11	0.19	0.70	0	4	0.00	0.25
B2246	1.4	0	1	0.00	0.71	0	1	0.00	0.71

6.10.3.4 The casualty profile for pedal cyclists in Maidstone shows peaks in the 10 to 14 and 45 to 49 age brackets with 19 each. KSI casualties recorded a peak in the 25 to 29 year old age bracket.

6.10.3.5 34% of KSI pedal cycle collisions occurred on weekends (5 on Sunday, 3 on Saturday). All but two of the KSI collisions involved another road user. Of the 19 10 to 14 year old pedal cycle casualties, 90% of the collisions occur on weekdays with a peak at 0800-0859 (3) and between 1500 and 1659 (8).

#### 6.10.4 20mph Limits and Zones

6.10.4.1 Although not a major part of this review, 20mph limits and zones were part of the committee's discussions.

6.10.4.2 For clarity 20mph speed restrictions are *limits* and rely solely on signage, and 20mph *zones* have traffic calming measures in place (build outs, speed humps, etc.) to reduce speed. Highways Authorities such as Kent Highways have powers to introduce 20mph speed limits that apply only at certain times of day.

6.10.4.3 From October 2013 for up to a period of 18 months, KCC carried out a trial of 20mph schemes near six local schools in the Borough to gather evidence to establish whether such schemes could provide cost effective road safety benefits.

6.10.4.4 At the meeting of the Environment, Highways and Waste Cabinet Committee on 3 October 2013<sup>31</sup> Decision No: 13/00063 paragraph 12.7, it was decided:

“Taking in to account all the evidence gained from current local and national experiences there is insufficient evidence to recommend KCC adopts a blanket policy for the implementation of 20mph schemes. It is proposed that KCC continues with its policy of implementing 20mph schemes where there is clear justification in terms of achieving casualty reduction as part of the on-going programme of Casualty Reduction Schemes. However, in addition it is now proposed to identify where 20mph schemes can be implemented that would encourage more walking and cycling notwithstanding the casualty record. This will assist with delivering targets set out in Kent’s Joint Health and Well Being Strategy”.

6.10.5 The committee heard a lack of street lighting after midnight created safety issues for some pedestrians and cyclist. It was also stated segregation of pedestrians and cyclists from cars was very expensive and required a large element of public land to accommodate it.

6.10.6 It was suggested dropped and tactile curbs supported walking, as did pedestrian priority at junctions and traffic lights.

6.10.7 Witnesses reported the main roads in Maidstone were unpleasant for non-motorised users, there was little cycling infrastructure and crossings were designed to prevent inconvenience to cars rather than being convenient for cyclists or pedestrians. Witnesses also reported that the infrastructure in existence was often of poor quality and was mostly a pedestrian infrastructure with cyclists allowed. It was felt cycling was not considered a proper mode of transport and when it was it was as an afterthought or “squeezed in at the sides” and cycling specific schemes were rarely considered.

“Don’t be anti-car – be pro cycling”

**James Gower, Cycling enthusiast, Maidstone**

<sup>31</sup><https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43305/B1%20Updated%20Policy%20for%2020mph%20limits%20and%20zones%20on%20KCC%20roads%2003102013%20Environment%20Highways%20and%20Wast.pdf>

## 7 Bus Services

7.1 Approximately 80% of the Local bus network in Kent runs on a commercial basis and is operated in Maidstone predominately by Arriva. KCC builds on this network by providing £6.8 million in discretionary subsidy towards over 200 local bus services which are not commercially viable for local bus operators but are considered to be socially necessary as they provide the only access to key services. Additional services, such as the Maidstone Borough Council funded Park and Ride facilities, are also provided on top of this core network.

### ***Bit about the number of service provided – waiting for information***

## 7.2 Quality Bus Partnership

7.2.1 The Quality Bus Partnership (QBP)<sup>32</sup> is a voluntary partnership between MBC, KCC and the primary commercial bus company, Arriva. NuVenture is represented by KCC

*“Much of the negative feedback on bus services focuses on two rural routes. This represents just four out of the 62 bus services Arriva and NuVenture operate in Maidstone. It should be noted that issues affecting these four rural buses are not representative of the good work that has gone on under the auspices of the Quality Bus Partnership which has delivered significant investment and improvements throughout the Borough.”*

Arriva Buses

at the QBP as their services are mainly funded by KCC. The Partnership

*“is committed to encouraging the use of public transport in and around Maidstone to help residents get around more easily, to reduce the effects of traffic congestion, to help Maidstone's economy and reduce emissions.”*

7.2.2 The Partnership discusses operational issues of the principal commercial public transport companies operating in and around Maidstone.

7.2.3 Some of the achievements of the QBP outlined on their web page include:

- Spending £3.3 million on 11 new hybrid buses for Route 71, serving the A20 and A26 - this was funded by the Green Bus fund, KCC and Arriva;
- Adding six new buses on Route 82, serving Park Wood;
- Spending £100,000 to fully-refurbish seven mid-life buses;
- Building 12 new bus shelters;
- Spending £50,000 to refresh Maidstone's Chequers Bus Station;
- Improved the quality of bus stops;
- Increased the number of clearways at bus stops, reducing obstructions to buses and delays to services;

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnership>

- Starting a forum for discussing route changes, bus issues, performance and customer feedback;
- Helped set up trials for contactless payments;
- Helped increase the number of satisfied passengers using the buses in Maidstone;
- Helped improve the punctuality of the bus services in Maidstone and
- Introducing the A20 Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme - the scheme sets the minimum standards for buses and bus stops along the A20, and;
- All of Arriva's Maidstone fleet now have low-floors and are 100% wheelchair accessible.

7.2.4 At a meeting with representatives of the QBP on 16 September 2014 it was agreed a proposal would go to the Partnership to recommend a Councillor from MBC be invited to join the QBP.

### **Recommendation**

*F. That at the next Quality Bus Partnership meeting Dan Bruce, Transport Planner, Kent County Council, request that a member of Maidstone Borough Council's Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC) be invited to join the Partnership.*

## **7.3 Service issues in the Rural Service Centres and Parishes**

7.3.1 In preparation for the review of bus services in the Maidstone Borough the working group consulted with all Borough Councillors and parish councils asking for the following information:

- Any bus service issues you may have in your constituency, and;
- Any bus user groups you are aware of in your constituency.

7.3.1 The responses received were used as the basis for the questions put to the witnesses, who kindly agreed to attend meetings with the working group and the committee for this review.

7.3.2 The responses demonstrated the parishes who did respond were either not aware of any bus user groups in their parish or omitted to respond to the question.

7.3.3 Responses were received from 12 parish councils. The issues raised focussed mainly around:

- Reliability – buses arriving early, late or not at all;
- Availability/Frequency – some parishes had a bus service but it was too infrequent;
- Cost of fares;
- Bus stops and shelters.

## 7.4 Reliability

### 7.4.1 Road closures

- 7.4.1.1 The reliability issues raised focussed mainly on certain buses arriving late or not arriving at all due to road works or road closures.
- 7.4.1.2 It was reported that KCC Highways system of notification to bus service providers of road closures had worked well. However service providers reported it had recently become “erratic”. Service providers stressed the importance of receiving this information in a timely manner, to minimise disruption, was paramount to them being able to deliver their services.
- 7.4.1.3 The Traffic Commissioner requires bus service providers given eight weeks-notice of road closures but it was accepted that this was not always possible with emergency road closures. The Traffic Commission, the regulator for bus service providers, has a rigid legal framework service providers have to work within.
- 7.4.1.4 Service providers are required to give 56 days notice of changes to bus routes and the Commissioner applies this requirement rigidly. If bus services followed diversions put in place because of road closures they could be found to be breaking the law. However, there is some flexibility in this. Whilst there is a need for operators to register changes to their timetables and routes (with short notice support from the Local Authority where appropriate) the Traffic Commissioner does have a facility whereby operators can register short notice variations required due to road works at no cost and without the need for 56 days notice. Operators can also specify within their permanent registrations that the registered route “may be subject to change in the event of an emergency or if roads specified are not available”.
- 7.4.1.5 Responsibility for putting up notices to notify service users of cancelled or suspended services lies with KCC for their part funded routes. Arriva are responsible for putting up notices for all their routes.
- 7.4.1.6 It was reported that KCC Public Transport department had recently moved to the same site as Kent Highways department and was now under the same banner of Kent Highways. It was planned to organise regular meetings between Public Transport Planners and Highways to liaise and discuss approaches to road closures taking into account the needs of the service users affected by them.
- 7.4.1.7 It was noted that an appreciation that some road works have to take place at short notice due to the emergency nature and as such bus service cannot always be fully considered.

#### 7.4.2 Parked cars blocking roads

7.4.2.1 This was an issue already being considered through groups such as the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) and the Punctuality and Improvement Partnership (PIP). Issues can be raised by the predominant commercial operator (Arriva) as these forums are attended by the appropriate authorities to deal with these issues.

7.4.2.2 Where parked cars become regular occurrences on roads served by buses, service providers report it to MBC as the delegated parking authority so the appropriate measures can be considered, for example, enforcement. NuVenture reported they always found MBC very responsive in dealing with such reports.

#### 7.4.3 Buses arriving and leaving earlier than scheduled

7.4.3.1 There are legal obligations on bus companies to ensure buses run to time and use of electronic ticketing equipment makes it much easier to detect issues. Early running of buses is always avoidable and generally dealt with through disciplinary action.

*“Provision of a regular and reliable bus service is paramount for the passenger – and for their part, the operators will always seek to provide the most reliable service”*

Norman Kemp, NuVenture Coaches Ltd, 16 September 2014

7.4.3.2 Groups such as the QBP and PiP see various partners work together to help buses run more reliably where possible. Discussions at meetings include looking at issues such as congestion, bus priority measures and funding streams to increase service provision. KCC have a performance monitoring/compliance process in place for contracted services to ensure they are running as per the Kent Bus contract terms and conditions and agreed service specification.

#### 7.4.4 Real time service updates

7.4.4.1 Real time service updates could be provided at bus stops or in nearby shops. Technology to provide this service was already available on every bus, transmitting details of where they were.

7.4.4.2 Where funding is available this service could be provided by parish councils or funded through Section 106 Agreements. The cost would need to be weighed against the number of users. The maintenance and repair of the equipment would also need to be taken into consideration.

7.4.4.4 Commercial services are monitored by the responsible statutory body, the Traffic Commissioner.

## Recommendation

G. *That the Public Transport , Kent County Council at his meeting with KCC Highways raise the following requests and report back to committee on the response before the end of the 2014-2015 municipal year:*

- *A definitive list of forthcoming road closures be sent to bus service providers in a timely manner to facilitate compliance with the Traffic Commissioners regulations;*
- *A set of processes and procedures are established and put in place for communicating road closures to avoid problems when changes to Highways personnel are made;*
- *A definition of what constitutes an emergency road closure is published and shared with bus service providers.*

## 7.5 Availability

7.5.1 Issues raised by parish councils included:

- Services finishing too early and not catering for workers returning home and the twilight economy;
- Services not linking rural villages to train stations or Maidstone town;
- No Sunday bus service;
- No cross Borough service, eg, Headcorn to Lenham or Staplehurst;
- One bus per hour out of the parish was not enough;
- Not enough return services from Maidstone;
- Some bus routes not serving local shop and other facilities.

7.5.2 It was reported that the KCC's Local Bus budget was fully allocated. KCC had managed to maintain a high number of subsidised services despite the current financial climate. If a new service required funding KCC was not currently in a position to fund it.

7.5.3 Funding streams were becoming increasingly important in providing bus services such as Section 106 Agreements, Kickstart and the Community Transport sector.

### 7.5.4 Quality Contracts

7.5.4.1 A House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger Transport in Isolated Communities<sup>33</sup> raised the potential for local authorities to use Quality Contracts to introduce franchising systems similar to those operating in London –

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<sup>33</sup> HC288 published 22 July 2014)

where the local transport authority specifies what service is required and the private sectors compete for the right to provide it.

7.5.4.2 For KCC contracted services there is usually a tender round per district (involving the majority of services within that district) every four years. The tendering of a district as one allows operators to submit proposals, where appropriate, to provide a more total network solution. KCC Public Transport was going through a restructure and will look to challenge traditional tendering methods. Quality Contracts are an area that may be explored further. The re-structure will see the combining of Local Bus and Mainstream (school transport) functions at KCC.

### 7.5.5 Service enhancements

7.5.5.1 The 20% reduction in Bus Service Operator Grants was still having an effect on supported bus services. This reduced the ability of local authorities to respond to transport needs in isolated communities and impacted on employment and the local economy.

7.5.5.2 NuVenture reported if there was enough demand for a particular service they would be interested in providing it. Parish councils and residents who had ideas for bus service enhancements were encouraged to speak to the bus operators. If the idea was considered viable and linked with an existing service it is possible it could be provided.

7.5.5.3 NuVenture also reported they would be happy to provide a 'twilight' service if funding was available. Medway Council are currently running a pilot twilight service that could be used as a model.

7.5.5.4 Any local authority (District or Parish) could use their funds to provide a service. If the service is proven to be socially important, authorities can put the service out to competitive tender.

### **Recommendation**

- H. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to re-establish the Maidstone Borough Transport User Group with membership to include representatives from all public transport service providers, KCC transport planners, MBC officers/members, parish councils, service users and other interested parties to ensure on-going issues with transport and ideas for enhancements to services are communicated and dealt with.*
- I. *That a Maidstone Borough Council Officer investigate and report back to the Committee before the end of the municipal year 2014-2015 on the progress and lessons learnt from the Medway twilight bus service once the trial is completed.*

## 7.6 Cost

- 7.6.1 Concern regarding the cost of bus services was raised by several parish councils particularly for their unemployed and low income residents.
- 7.6.2 MBC's Maidstone Financial Capability Partnership (MFCP) has been looking at ways to assist residents with making their money go further and provide support during, what may be for some, financially difficult times using partner organisations expertise across the Borough.
- 7.6.3 The project has been looking at household expenditure including transport costs. A meeting between members of MFCP and Arriva officers was held on 29 September 2014 to discuss the role of bus services in social inclusion.
- 7.6.4 During the meeting it was discussed that Arriva may be able to allow organisations to bulk buy tickets, and give to struggling families who are in crisis. Each organisation would apply for the deal, and decide which family to help with a discounted ticket. Organisations who would benefit from this are Children's Centres, Kent Support and Assistance Service (KCC), and Troubled Families Programme (MBC Maidstone Families Matter). A bulk buy scheme could also benefit residents attending work experience, interviews and apprenticeship schemes through Job Centre Plus, MBC and KCC.
- 7.6.5 Demographic information on residents of the Maidstone Borough would enable Arriva to revise their fare structure for the more deprived areas of the Borough.

### 7.6.6 Total Transport

- 7.6.6.1 The House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger Transport in Isolated Communities already mentioned discusses the concept of Total Transport.

“Total Transport involves integrating transport services that are currently commissioned by different central and local government agencies and provided by different operators. Such integrated services might deliver improved passenger transport in isolated communities by allocating existing resources more efficiently. That might entail, for example, combining conventional bus services with hospital transport.”

- 7.6.6.2 The concept of Total Transport for Maidstone Borough was considered by service providers as a way forward. However, they reported the issue would be how to calculate how much of the fares each provider would get and what methods would be used to buy services. Joint thinking and working was key to success and was something providers were keen to investigate.

## 7.7 Bus Stops and Shelters

- 7.7.1 Several parishes reported issues with the provision of bus shelters and bus stops. The issues included safety; positioning, shelter from the weather; seating and maintenance.
- 7.7.2 The basic advertising bus shelters are managed by MBC through a contractor. The new contract was in the process of being procured and if the existing contractor was unsuccessful in renewing the contract they would be likely to take away the existing shelters.
- 7.7.3 Parish councils can provide their own shelters and can apply for up to £2000 Rural Bus Shelter Grant from KCC, which would require match funding. There is a Kent Design Guide to help parishes with the design and siting of their shelter and signing and on-going maintenance to ensure it is built in keeping with the surrounding area.
- 7.7.4 KCC and bus service providers agreed it would be useful for parishes to get involved with Kent Highways regarding the siting of shelters. It was also recommended the bus service providers are consulted on the design to ensure drivers are able to see there are passengers waiting to be picked up. Tovil Green's new bus shelter was described as a good example of an effective bus shelter.

### Recommendation

- J. That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to include the potential use of Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies to support the provision of bus services, and/or provide capital equipment for bus services in the Borough in the Local Plan.*
- K. That Kent County Council Transport Planning Officers be recommended to make strong arguments where they can to give Section 106 agreements impetus to provide bus services in and around the Borough of Maidstone.*

## 7.8 Bus User Groups in the Maidstone Borough

### 7.8.1 East of Maidstone Bus Group (EMBG)

- 7.8.1.1 Membership of this group includes eight parish councils in the East of Maidstone; Kent County Council; NuVenture and Arriva.
- 7.8.1.2 The group meets two to three times each year to consider and address issues raised by parishes or bus operators to help improve and safeguard services across the area, draw attention to issues raised, publicise services and help drive up passenger numbers.
- 7.8.1.3 The main concerns raised by this group were:

- **Journey times** – and their impact on people deciding to travel by bus (or not). It was suggested that new routes should be considered side by side with the Local Plan;
- **Community Bus Services** – it was suggested it would be unrealistic for local authorities to expect voluntary/community projects to compensate for decreased bus services;
- **Section 106 Agreements** – should be used to support new/revised routes supporting the Rural Service Centres;
- **MBC Transport Committee** – this group was disbanded some years ago. It had high level representatives from bus service operators; Network Rail; Southeastern Rail; service users; MBC officers; KCC officers. The group discussed transport service issues across the Maidstone Borough as well as safety issues, planning consents and contributions from developers. EMBG considered this group to have been a valuable asset to driving forward improvements to public transport and should be re-established.

#### 7.8.2 Local Transport Accessibility Group (LTAG)

7.8.2.1 This group represents Staplehurst, Frittenden, Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Sandhurst and Bodiam, parishes who are connected in some way to Hawkhurst by bus.

7.8.2.2 The group meets every two months and is attended by parish councillors, residents' associations, bus service providers, Arriva, Kent County Council and service users. The group provides a forum for service users and providers to have face to face discussions regarding bus service provision.

7.8.2.3 The main concerns raised by this group were:

7.8.2.4 **Performance and reliability of the No 5 bus route** – the group reported the unreliability of this service had resulted in many parents not risking their children going to/from school using this service due to reliability and capacity issues. Parents chose to take their children to school by car instead.

7.8.2.5 It was requested that better, more timely, information from KCC in relation to the issuing of bus passes for young people and those in school, college or training, would help bus operators plan more effectively, especially at the start of the academic year when passes were issued and re-issued.

7.8.3 The number 5 service has distinct flows of children to Cornwallis Academy and Maidstone schools in one direction and to Angley School in the other. The service came under the spotlight during the 2013-14 academic year regarding both capacity and operational issues. As a result Arriva delivered a number of operational changes to

help with reliability, such as the introduction of a regular set of drivers and more frequent maintenance inspections of vehicles. It is believed these changes have had a positive effect on the service.

- 7.8.4 Regarding capacity, KCC's involvement with the commercial network is to purchase season tickets for children in education who are entitled to free home to school transport. Due to this, and the existence of the Young Persons Travel Pass, KCC do work with commercial operators to assist with genuine issues of overcrowding where they are identified and take an interest in the network in general .

*"KCC funds three additional capacity vehicles on the number 5 service as a result and are confident that the corridor is now robust enough to cater for all intending passengers. Our understanding is that correspondence this year has centred around operational issues which are actively being addressed by Arriva as the commercial operator. Ultimately, these need to continue to be raised with Arriva or failing that with the Traffic Commission which is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of commercial bus service operations. KCC is confident the capacity on the corridor but continues to liaise with Arriva on this and other issues."*

KCC Local Transport Planning (Mid Kent)

- 7.8.5 **Arriva App for mobile phones** – in relation to providing real time information and the location of buses was considered a useful advance and would make life easier for those who owned a Smart phone. However, many rural bus service users did not own a Smart phone.

#### **Recommendation**

- A. That *(who)* be encouraged *(by whom)* to form groups similar to the East of Maidstone Bus User Group.

## **8 Rail Services**

## 9 Recommendations

- A. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to lobby Kent County Council on the reconfiguration of the Maidstone Gyrotory system to ensure safe cycle passages. The design of the gyrotory system should incorporate surface cycle passages (not subways) for cyclist heading in and out of the town from west Maidstone using the A20 and A26.*
- B. *That the Head of Planning and Development be asked to report back to Committee before the end of the municipal year 2014-2014 on:*
- *The identity of potential routes for the provision of cycle ways from rural locations (villages and hamlets) with poor bus services, to bus stops on major routes with a more frequent bus service;*
  - *The costs of firstly providing cycle parking at the end of these routes;*
  - *The cost of the longer term aim of developing the cycle route to the cycle parking.*
- C. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to urgently refresh and update the draft Maidstone Borough Council Draft Cycling Strategy, dated June 2012, for further scrutiny by the Committee before the end of the 2014-2015 municipal year and before taking it for public consultation.*
- D. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development use the principal proposals from the refreshed Cycling Strategy to inform the emerging Integrated Transport Strategy.*
- E. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to:*
- *Reintroduce the Maidstone Cycling Forum and ensure it is supported by an officer with responsibility for cycling in their job description;*
  - *Identify a lead member to act as a cycling champion within the authority.*
- F. *That at the next Quality Bus Partnership meeting Dan Bruce, Transport Planner, Kent County Council, request that a member of Maidstone Borough Council's Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (PTD OSC) be invited to join the Partnership.*
- G. *That the Public Transport Team, Kent County Council at his meeting with KCC Highways raise the following requests and report back to committee on the response before the end of the 2014-2015 municipal year:*
- *A definitive list of forthcoming road closures be sent to bus service providers in a timely manner to facilitate compliance with the Traffic Commissioners regulations;*

- *A set of processes and procedures are established and put in place for communicating road closures to avoid problems when changes to Highways personnel are made;*
  - *A definition of what constitutes an emergency road closure is published and shared with bus service providers.*
- H. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to re-establish the Maidstone Borough Transport User Group with membership to include representatives from all public transport service providers, KCC transport planners, MBC officers/members, parish councils, service users and other interested parties to ensure on-going issues with transport and ideas for enhancements to services are communicated and dealt with.*
- I. *That a Maidstone Borough Council Officer be asked to investigate and report back to the Committee before the end of the municipal year 2014-2015 on the progress and lessons learnt from the Medway twilight bus service once the trial is completed.*
- J. *That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development be recommended to include the potential use of Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies to support the provision of bus services, and/or provide capital equipment for bus services in the Borough in the Local Plan.*
- K. *That Kent County Council Transport Planning Officers be recommended to make strong arguments where they can to give Section 106 agreements impetus to provide bus services in and around the Borough of Maidstone.*
- M. *That (who) be encouraged (by whom) to form groups similar to the East of Maidstone Bus User Group.*

## 10 Thanks

The Committee would like to express their thanks to:

- Bartholomew Wren – Economic Development Officer Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
- Colin Finch – Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council;
- Tay Arnold – Cycling Transport Planner, Kent Highways, Kent County Council;
- Sarah Shearsmith, Community development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council;
- Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy Team, Maidstone Borough Council;
- Giuliano Gianforte, Environment Officer (Air Quality)
- James Gower;
- Stephen Horton, Road Safety Team, KCC
- Dan Bruce, Local Transport Planner (Mid Kent), KCC;
- Shane Hymers, Public Transport Policy and Strategy Manager, KCC;
- Norman Kemp, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd;
- Matthew Arnold, Commercial Manager, Arriva;
- Mike Fitzgerald, Chairman of East of Maidstone Bus Group and Chair Kent Community Rail Partnership and Medway Valley Line Group;
- Parish Councillor Peter Spearink, Staplehurst PC;
- Mike Gibson, Partnership Manager, South Eastern Rail
- Keith Harrison, Chief Executive, Action with Rural Communities
- Stephen Gasche, Principal Transport Planner – Rail, Kent County Council
- Parish Councils:
  - Marden
  - Boxley
  - Leeds
  - Sutton Valence
  - Bearsted
  - Boughton Monchelsea
  - East Farleigh
  - Staplehurst
  - Headcorn
  - Kingswood and Broomfield

## 11 Evidence Log

- Department for Transport Road Congestion and Reliability Statistics, Congestion on local 'A' roads, England: Apr to Jun 2014 report ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343339/congestion-local-a-stats-release-jun-14.pdf))
- Department for Transport British Social Attitudes Survey 2012: public attitudes towards transport (July 2013)
- [www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk) - Transport Committee – Ninth Report, Out of the Jam: reducing congestion on our roads published 6 September 2011.
- [www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-576000-153000/page/3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/dblock/GB-576000-153000/page/3)
- Mid Kent Share Services – Environmental Health
- [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf)
- <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-and-press-releases/jobs-news/jobs-and-transport-boost-from-104m-growth-deal-funding>.
- Kent and Medway Economic Partnership is the local arm of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) which brings together key leaders from business, local government, and further and higher education to boost economic growth across Kent, Medway, East Sussex, Essex, Thurrock and Southend.
- <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/g2059/Public%20reports%20pack%2027th-Jan-2014%2018.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>
- <http://dynamic.maidstone.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2018.pdf>
- Report published 15 September 2014 – [www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/](http://www.cedar.iph.cam.ac.uk/blog/walking-cycling-public-transport-wellbeing/)
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-295663>
- Report of Head of Planning and Development to PTD OSC 22 July 2014 - <http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s37180/agenda%20item%2011%20Question%20Sheet%20-%20for%20front%20of%20Committee%20reports.pdf> page 21 paragraph 3.5
- [Bikeability.dft.gov.uk](http://bikeability.dft.gov.uk)
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- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-medical-officer-publishes-annual-report-on-state-of-the-publics-health>

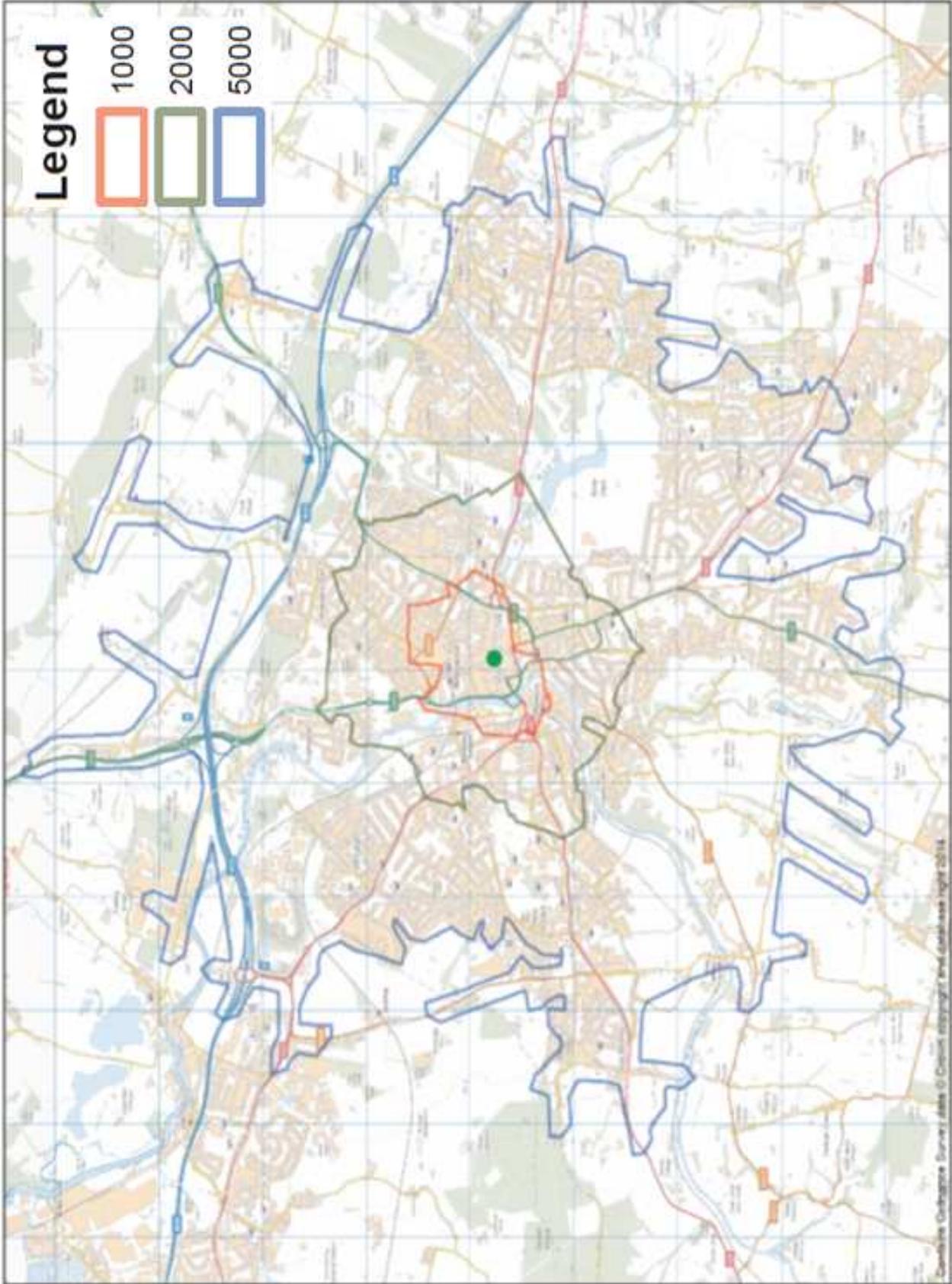
- <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2014/02february/pages/cycling-safety-a-special-report.aspx>
- <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43305/B1%20Updated%20Policy%20for%2020mph%20limits%20and%20zones%20on%20KCC%20roads%203102013%20Environment%20Highways%20and%20Wast.pdf>
- <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/parking-and-streets/quality-bus-partnership>
- HC288 published 22 July 2014)

## Written Evidence

## Meetings

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Appendix A - Maidstone Walking and Cycling Isochrones



## Appendix B - Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough - alternatives to using a car

### Cycling and Walking external witness interviews

#### Questions asked of witnesses to help them prepare

James Gower, cycling enthusiast

Tay Arnold, Cycling Planner, Kent Highways, Transport and Waste and Colin Finch, Senior Public Rights of Way Officer, Kent County Council:

- What is already being done to encourage cycling and walking in Maidstone and the Borough?
- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What are other areas doing?
- What is your 'dream vision' for cycling and walking in the borough?
- What can Councillors do to help?

Bartholomew Wren, Economic Development Officer, Regeneration and Transport, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council:

- What are Tunbridge Wells doing to encourage cycling and walking?
- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What is your 'dream vision' for cycling in Tunbridge Wells?

Sarah Shearsmith, Community Development Team Leader, Maidstone Borough Council:

- What is happening to promote walking in the borough?
- What is working?
- What are the issues/barriers to success?
- What is your 'dream vision'?
- What can Councillors do to help?

Tim Hapgood, Transport Consultant, Spatial Policy, Maidstone Borough Council (MBC):

- Where is MBC now with cycling and walking in the Integrated Transport Strategy?

## Appendix C - Review of Transport in Maidstone Borough - alternatives to using a car

### Bus Services external witness interviews

#### Questions asked of witnesses to help them prepare

- How viable is it to enhance the bus services (listed on the right) including to compliment the 'twilight' economy?
- If Arriva are unable to provide the suggested enhancements – is there funding KCC could provide?
- The House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger transport in isolated communities (HC288 published 22 July 2014) discusses the concept of 'total transport' which involves pooling transport resources to deliver a range of services, eg, combining hospital transport with local bus services – Is it possible to create a form of total transport for Maidstone Borough?
- Could an 'oyster card' type system be introduced to provide flexibility to move from service to service?
- What would need to be done to ensure bus routes are in place and running before new developments are completed?
  - What can MBC do to help with this?
- Has any consideration been given to providing a radial bus service running around Maidstone?
- How possible would it be to provide a 'flag down' service for rural services where bus stops are situated on roads without footpaths?
  - Could a service such as this be trialled?

When will real time service update boards be provided at rural bus stops?

- What can be done to minimise disruption ie car parked blocking roads and lack of timely information going to service providers
- How can the criteria for the different bus services be clarified?
- Why are people who live within 500 meters of a bus stop not able to use the Kent Carrier Service?
- How viable would it be to introduce interchangeability of tickets between the different service?
- What is being done to combat buses arriving and leaving earlier than scheduled?

- The House of Commons Transport Select Committee report on Passenger transport in isolated communities (HC288 published 22 July 2014) raise again the potential for local authorities to use Quality Contract to introduce franchising systems similar to those operating in London – where the local transport authority specifies what service is required and the private sector competes for the right to provide it – how viable would Quality Contracts be for the Maidstone borough?
- Has KCC investigated how the test case, Nexus in Tyne and Wear, has performed with Quality Contract? If not, is this something they could find out?

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