

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Planning, Transport and Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2014

Present: Councillor McLoughlin (Chairman), and
Councillors Chittenden, Munford, Ross, Springett,
Watson and Mrs Wilson

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Gooch

108. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: that all items on the agenda be webcast.

109. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

110. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

111. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

Councillor Mrs Gooch was present for Agenda Item 8.

Mr Sean Carter, Chairman of South Maidstone Action for Roads and Transport (SMART) was present to speak on Agenda Item 8.

Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development was in attendance for items 8 and 9.

Tim Hapgood and John Bunney from JMP Consultants were in attendance for item 8.

112. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

113. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

114. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2014

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February be approved as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed by the Chairman.

115. MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Chairman introduced the item for discussion and explained the Draft Integrated Transport Strategy had been presented to the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2014.

The purpose of revisiting the draft strategy was to clarify the options considered for the park and ride and the cost benefits of each along with the practicalities involved in establishing an effective park and ride service in Maidstone.

The Chairman welcomed Rob Jarman, Tim Hapgood and John Bunney to the meeting.

Mr Hapgood introduced his report and explained the Draft Integrated Transport Strategy presented to the Committee in January set out the direction the strategy was moving and the steps necessary to develop it further.

Mr Hapgood explained the test transport measures used were based on the growth outlined in the Draft Local Plan and was very much work in progress.

Mr Hapgood highlighted the cost/benefit analysis showed Option 3 (a combination of Option 1 plus additional measures) to be the best performing, with park and ride considered to be the most effective tool focussing on 'on demand' measures.

Mr Hapgood reported on his research visit to Chelmsford where the council operated a very successful park and ride scheme. 80% of Chelmsford's park and ride users reported they switched from using their car to using park and ride. The visit highlighted to Mr Hapgood what needed to be in place to create a successful park and ride scheme. This included:

- Inter party cooperation
- A good quality service to the customer
- Location – close to key routes

- Few and large sites
- Pay on the bus – rather than on site
- Cost and convenience
- Supported by a robust town centre parking strategy.

Mr Hapgood stated that park and ride was the right measure for Maidstone but acknowledged more work needed to be carried out. A north/south park and ride spine was proposed and the exclusion of London Road and Willingdon Street park and ride schemes would need to be considered.

Mr Jarman stated he could see the benefits of retaining a park and ride scheme at London Road, Allington and believed it was successful because it used bus priority measures.

The Committee acknowledged receipt of a letter from Mr N Yandle of Gallagher regarding the park and ride site at Eclipse Park.

In response to concerns raised regarding the availability of the proposed park and ride site at Eclipse Park at junction 7 of the M20 motorway Mr Jarman explained the Draft Local Plan referred to two draft locations for park and ride sites; Eclipse Park and Linton cross roads. The Linton cross roads proposals in the policy did not refer to any enabling development.

Mr Jarman reported as with any land at a motorway junction there were issues with the cost of the land at Eclipse Park. The land in question at Eclipse Park was an allocation in the Council's current adopted Local Plan from 2000, and that policy was saved in 2007.

Mr Jarman further reported Newnham Court had a current retail planning application being considered which did not include any proposals for park and ride. The medical campus in the same area had outline planning permission from Autumn 2013, this too did not include any proposals for park and ride.

Mr Jarman considered a site at Linton cross roads would be a good site for park and ride irrespective of any housing scheme.

Mr Jarman reminded the Committee the Draft Local Plan went out for public consultation on 21 March 2014 where landowners and the public could make representation during a six week consultation period. After which the Council considered all representations made.

Mr Jarman confirmed the Council will pursue Government funds for both sites (Junction 7 of M20 and Linton Cross Road) and if deemed necessary the Council could use Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire land.

It was explained other sites at Junction 7 and Newnham Court had been considered by the Council in past years and developers were aware of this. However, it would be up to developers to include park and ride in their plans as part of the negotiation process.

During their discussions the Committee raised the following concerns:

- Potential difficulty in finding sites in the borough large enough to accommodate a park and ride scheme with 1000-1500 spaces;
- Bus lanes between Willingdon Street and Armstrong Road along Sutton Road and Loose Road. Mr Jarman confirmed no bus lanes proposed were for this area. It was proposed the road would be widened and would include lanes for bus prioritisation between certain hours of the day – for example 7am to 9am. The bus route was considered to be the most direct route to attract users which would reduce car numbers and result in reduced congestion in this area;
- Increased traffic at Brishing Lane as a result of a new park and ride scheme at Linton cross roads;
- Retention of the current park and ride scheme at London Road, Allington as it operated successfully with bus priority measures.

The Chairman invited Mr Carter from the South Maidstone Action for Roads and Transport (SMART) group to address the Committee.

Mr Carter explained SMART was set up by residents because of the traffic situation at the south of the town. He outlined the work SMART had undertaken to monitor traffic at Linton cross roads, Cripple Street and the Wheatsheaf junction and voiced the concerns of the group around the increase in traffic in these areas if planned developments went ahead.

Mr Carter shared with the Committee some of the measures SMART had come up with to reduce the volume and waiting times of traffic at these junctions. He confirmed these had been presented to Kent County Council (KCC) who had confirmed they would be considered when they were able to plan a strategy.

The Committee commended SMART on the work they had carried out and considered the pros and cons of the suggested measures. Mr Hapgood acknowledge air quality was an issue in these areas and would take the comments on board when developing the strategy further.

The Committee discussed at length the follow points and concerns:

- Standing traffic at certain times of the day and the effect on air quality;
- Through traffic and the effect on the bridges gyratory system. Mr Jarman confirmed the modelling work carried out in this area showed the majority of motorist through this area were heading to urban destinations to shop or work rather than beyond the town (ie the M20). Mr Jarman also confirmed another bid for funding from central Government was to improve traffic flows in this area;

- Making park and ride a more attractive solution to parking in the town;
- The need to keep Maidstone vibrant while reducing traffic;
- The lack of representation from KCC at Committee meetings despite regular invitations to attend. It was discussed this was because KCC disagreed with the objectively assessed housing need figure of 19,600 and the widening of the A274.
- Mr Jarman expressed concern regarding KCC objecting to the widening of the A274. Three major applications for developments in this area would have been objected to by KCC if road widening measures were not included.
- The Committee agreed it would be to KCC's and Maidstone Borough Councils (MBC) benefit if traffic modelling was carried out based on the objectively assessed housing need of 19,600 as it could prove Maidstone is unable to take development on that scale and as a result the figure reduced.
- More clarity would be appreciated on the cost of each of the measures outlined for each of the three options.

Mr Jarman explained the objectively assessed housing figure of 19,600 was mainly based on the Government's own population predictions. He told the Committee MBC did not have a housing target figure (at the time of the meeting) but it was predicted it would be less than this figure. Capacity work carried out as part of the Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) showed the target would be below 19,600 due to constraints faced by the borough such as flooding, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the north and a small amount of Green Belt area.

Mr Jarman said if the Borough was unable to meet the housing need figure, other neighbouring local authorities would be approached to help as part of the Duty to Cooperate meetings and asked to help with supplying the remaining housing. He explained the Council would need to prove why they were unable to meet the provision and the traffic modelling work undertaken would be an important part of any discussions.

RESOLVED: That the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the points raised in the report on the park and ride proposals in the draft Integrated Transport Strategy and recommended:

1. That staff note the Committee's support for the park and ride proposals in the draft Integrated Transport Strategy provided the following is considered;
2. That Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council officers and Councillors urgently work together to:

- a. Provide up to date traffic modelling based on the objectively assessed housing need figure of 19,600 to assess the full impact this volume of housing would have on traffic in the Borough, with a view this might demonstrate it is unsustainable and thereby result in this figure being reduced, and;
 - b. Establish where potential misunderstandings between KCC and MBC have arisen and seek clarification on what KCC are and are not in support of in relation to the draft Local Plan.
3. That the Council works with private car park providers in the town on a pricing strategy to adopt that:
 - a. Discourages long stay parking in the town to support the viability of park and ride, and;
 - b. Promotes short stay parking to support local businesses.
4. That measures be taken to make the park and ride scheme more attractive to bus companies and users by considering costs, timing and frequency of buses, routes, etc.
5. That it is noted the Eclipse Park site is the preferred site of the Committee for a park and ride scheme at junction 7 of the M20 motorway.
6. That the information provided to Cabinet for the three Transport Strategy Options is presented showing for each option:
 - a. Duplicated elements with other options are aligned in the columns;
 - b. The cost of each element;
 - c. Total cost of each option showing at the bottom of the column.
7. That the consequential impact on Brishing Road of a park and ride at Linton cross roads be carefully considered.
8. That consideration is given to retaining in the strategy the existing east/west spine park and ride schemes at Willington Street and London Road, Allington in view of the increased housing allocation in the area including in Tonbridge and Malling.
9. That Mr Hapgood/Mr Jarman provide the Committee Members with the analysis from the traffic modelling of numbers and destinations of traffic passing through Maidstone.

116. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the draft Future Work Programme and a request from the Planning Department to move planned meeting dates in

June and September to provide time for Scrutiny to discuss the following issues:

- The results of a further Call for Sites and proposed additional sites for inclusion in the Local Plan;
- Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy;
- Open Space Standards and possibly action plan;
- Update on the Integrated Transport Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee hold two additional meetings on 9 June and 30 September 2014 and the Future Work Programme updated to include the following:

- **15 April 2014**
 - Evaluations of Cabinet Member Priorities for 2013/14 Municipal Year
 - Planning Enforcement and MKIP – invites to be extended to all Councillors
- **May 2014 – no date planned**
 - Possible training session on Planning Enforcement – to be confirmed
- **9 June 2014**
 - Results of further Call for Sites and proposed additional sites for inclusion in the Local Plan
- **24 June 2014**
 - Update on the Integrated Transport Strategy
 - Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy
 - Open Space Standards and possibly an action plan
- **30 September 2014**
 - Draft Local Plan and other reports.

117. DURATION OF THE MEETING

The meeting closed at 21:25hrs