

# Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

9 February 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## Response to Consultations on

**1: The prospectus for 'A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East'**

**2: Kent County Council draft consultation on the New Southeastern Franchise**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Steve Clarke: Principal Planning Officer; Spatial Policy
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

### **This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. Councillors agree the suggested response to the prospectus document as set out in the report and that the report is forwarded to Transport for London prior to 18 March 2016.
2. Councillors agree the suggested response to the consultation by Kent County Council on the new Southeastern Franchise and that this be forwarded to the Principal Transport Planner-Rail at Kent County Council.

### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – A reliable and well-connected train service is a key element in the drive to securing a successful local economy

### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	9 February 2016

## **Response to Consultations on**

### **1: The prospectus for 'A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East'**

### **2: Kent County Council draft consultation on the New Southeastern Franchise**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 On 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for London (TfL) jointly published a prospectus seeking to set out a commitment to improve capacity and service levels across London and the South East's rail network. The document: 'A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East' is attached at Appendix One.
  - 1.2 The document foreshadows the DfT and TfL working together with other partners and stakeholders to create a more 'joined-up' London rail network with more frequent services, increased capacity and better customer service to include integrated fares, travel information and a more accessible network, whilst at the same time seeking to ensure a greater input into train services by the South East's towns and cities.
  - 1.3 The prospectus seeks answers to six questions regarding the possible future procurement, management and delivery of rail services in London and the South East. TfL have requested that responses are forwarded to them by 18 March 2016.
  - 1.4 The report sets out the six questions and provides a suggested response to each and recommends that Councillors agree the responses for onward transmission to TfL prior to the deadline of 18 March 2016.
  - 1.5 This report also considers a draft consultation document prepared by Kent County Council that has been circulated to KMEP (Kent & Medway Economic Partnership) Members relating to the new Southeastern franchise to inform the official responses that the County Council and Medway Council will prepare for submission to the DfT later in the year. It is anticipated that the DfT will commence formal consultation on the new Southeastern franchise in June 2016 which will run until October 2016.
  - 1.6 It considers the questions posed and sets out a suggested response to be forwarded to Kent County Council.
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#### **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 On 21 January 2016, the DfT and TfL jointly published a prospectus seeking to set out a commitment to improve capacity and service levels across London and the South East's rail network. The document: 'A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East' is attached at Appendix One.

- 2.2 The document foreshadows the DfT and TfL working together with other partners and stakeholders to create a more 'joined-up' London rail network with more frequent services, increased capacity and better customer service to include integrated fares, travel information and a more accessible network, whilst at the same time seeking to ensure a greater input into train services by the South East's towns and cities.
- 2.3 The prospectus seeks answers to six questions regarding potential future procurement, management and delivery of rail services in London and the South East. TfL have requested that responses are forwarded to them by 18 March 2016.
- 2.4 The publication of this prospectus comes in the run-up to the awarding of a new operational franchise for Southeastern which is due in 2018. It is understood that Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the south eastern area will be sought in November 2016 with Invitations to Tender (ITT) for shortlisted bidders issued in April 2017 with the contract awarded in February 2018 commencing in June 2018.
- 2.5 For Councillors' information it is already anticipated that from January 2018 direct Thameslink services to Blackfriars and beyond will be introduced serving Maidstone East. The currently anticipated level of service will be two trains per hour to and from Maidstone East. These services will be during the AM and PM peaks and there will also be a more limited service in off-peak hours. As part of our response we will strongly recommend that the Thameslink proposals should include London to Maidstone peak services to enhance the business economy of Maidstone.
- 2.6 As indicated above, KMEP members have been circulated a questionnaire relating to the new Southeastern franchise and have been asked to provide comments to the Public Transport Officer (Rail) at Kent County Council. The questionnaire is attached at Appendix Two and asks a series of questions specifically related to user responses although KMEP members can submit a single response covering issues relevant to their interests.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 Option One: Councillors consider and respond to the prospectus and the issues it raises, in line with the suggested responses set out in this report. This will ensure that their views are conveyed to and are taken into account by TfL and the DfT as the planned further integration and envisaged partnership process moves forward.
- 3.2 This consultation comes at a key time in the build-up to the awarding of a new Southeastern franchise that is due to take place in 2018. The proposed partnership offers a potential additional channel that would enable the Borough Council, on behalf of the local community, to press for further improvements in terms of speed, reliability and choice of destination to rail services operating to and from the Borough. Responding to the KEMP questionnaire also provides a further opportunity for the Borough Council to make its view known regarding the new Southeastern franchise.

- 3.3 Option Two: Councillors could choose not to respond to the questions raised in the prospectus and the KMEP questionnaire. In doing so, the opportunity to have an input into how the proposed partnership arrangements would work would be lost. The further channel for enabling Maidstone's 'voice' to be heard during the run-up to the awarding the new South Eastern franchise in 2018 would also be potentially lost as would the opportunity to make comments via KMEP.
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#### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Option One is the preferred way forward. This will enable the DfT and TfL to be made aware of the Borough Council's views and will provide another potential channel for the Borough Council to lobby decision-makers relating to rail services in the Borough in the run-up to the new operating franchise for the South Eastern area being awarded which is anticipated for 2018. The further opportunity to make the Borough Council's views on the new Southeastern franchise known through KMEP is also welcomed.

#### **A NEW APPROACH TO RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES IN LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST**

- 4.2 This prospectus document covers four main themes and there are six questions relating to these themes.

#### **A partnership approach**

- 4.3 The document envisages a new partnership approach to oversee the specification of rail passenger services. The partnership would be between the DfT and TfL working closely with rail operators, Network Rail and the supply chain. It is also intended to provide a forum for all LEPS, local authorities and other local and regional bodies to have a say in the specification and management of rail services.
- 4.4 A central ambition of the partnership is a clear focus on local and regional issues with the aim of ensuring better links between local development potential and the railway investment upon which it often depends. In providing such links and bringing together differing funding sources and the specification and management of service delivery, it is anticipated that the delivery process will be speeded up and outcomes will more certain.

*Q1: Do you agree with the principle of a partnership to better integrate the specification of rail passenger services across London and the South East?*

#### **Suggested Response:**

In principle, a partnership approach to the integration of rail passenger services in London and the South East is a good idea and is supported by Maidstone Borough Council. The concern is that the communities and rail users in the outlying areas will not be given the same level of priority afforded to services in London and the inner suburban services if they are brought under the 'umbrella' of TfL. The key will be to ensure that there are effective channels for the LEPS and local authorities representing

communities and rail users in these outer areas to enable them to influence the procurement, specification and delivery of services to ensure investment and service provision is better related to planned local development.

### **Principles for success**

4.5 Three principles for success are outlined:

1: More frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity

Different needs of different users should be recognised, e.g. improvement of fast, longer distance services to support commuting and regional growth and the need for services that stop frequently to provide a 'metro' style service within London. Need for investment in high performing rolling-stock to assist in the delivery of improvements.

2: Greater reliability for all passengers

Where different rail services share the same infrastructure this is key and services should be planned and specified to ensure an increase in performance and customer satisfaction

3: High standards of customer service

These should be common to all services, regardless of the specifying body. Fares and passenger information should be integrated wherever possible and the travel environment, accessibility and the availability of staff all improved.

Q2: Do you agree with the principles that the partnership will work to? Are there any specific issues that have not been captured?

#### Suggested response:

The principles outlined above that the new partnership would work to are supported by Maidstone Borough Council. One key area that is of concern to the Borough Council is the need to ensure that previous direct links to the City of London (Cannon Street/London Bridge) and back to Maidstone during peak times are restored. There should also be means to ensure integration of rail services with other public transport services at stations within Maidstone Borough to allow for seamless transition and improved patronage.

### **Governance and timing**

4.6 The proposed partnership would cover train operator contracts specified by either the DfT or TfL. The prospectus makes it clear that the proposed partnership would have a responsibility to take into account the views of local authorities and LEPs and other local organisations as part of its work to recommend the specification and management arrangements for those train operator contracts. The principles relating to the contracts would be established by the partnership and then applied by either of the two awarding bodies.

4.7 A key element of the new governance arrangements would be for the responsibility for inner suburban services that operate mostly or wholly within Greater London to be transferred to TfL from the DfT; the DfT would continue to be responsible for outer suburban services. The precise

boundaries will be subject to discussion/agreement before the current franchise ends.

- 4.8 It is also indicated that all local authorities will have greater input, including the ability to specify service enhancements depending on local priorities and funding arrangements.
- 4.9 Page 21 of the prospectus sets out the currently proposed timings for the procurement of new train operator contracts. As stated previously, the next Southeastern franchise is phased for 2018. The aim is to establish the partnership to meet the published timetable for new contracts being awarded.
- 4.10 Safeguards would be put in place relating to the transfer of responsibility for inner-suburban services. In particular that there is no detrimental effect on fares (either those operated by TfL or outside London) and no adverse impact on frequency of journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services to and from London. It is specifically noted that additional capacity on peak local London services would only be added if there was no negative impact on longer distance services.

Q3: Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?

Suggested response:

Maidstone Borough Council is broadly supportive of the governance arrangements. However, it will be vitally important to ensure that the process is clear and transparent and to show how the views of local authorities etc. have been taken into account.

Q4: What form do you propose the input from local authorities and LEPs could take?

Suggested response:

Maidstone Borough Council considers that it should formally be consulted on the potential new rail operator contract in order that its views can be made clear on what level of service provision should be secured. This should be done in addition to any consultation via the LEP or Kent County Council in order that the Borough Council can fully represent the views of transport user groups in the Borough. The Borough Council will also work with its partners at Kent County Council and the LEP who can provide a more strategic overview and input into the process.

Q5: Do you agree with the safeguards for transfer of inner suburban services to TFL as set out here?

Suggested response:

The key for Maidstone Borough Council will be to ensure that the proposed safeguards for the longer distance services from outside the proposed TfL administered area are put in place and subsequently maintained. The direct service to the City of London from Maidstone East was cut a number of years ago and should, in the view of the Borough Council, be reinstated as part of any new Southeastern contract that is awarded. The Borough Council would not want to see the opportunity for this removed due to the

loss of potential train routing paths once the proposed TfL administered area is reached.

### **What can be achieved?**

#### More frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity

- 4.11 It is recognised in the document that considerable investment has and continues to take place on the network and its infrastructure. It highlights areas (pages 23 and 24) where additional improvements such as better signalling and shorter turn-round times at London Termini for example could increase capacity further. It also recognises that, in tandem with the proposed 'London Suburban Metro', improvements must be made to services that connect London with the wider South East and that extra capacity on suburban routes should not be at the expense of longer distance travellers into London.
- 4.12 This is a key issue for services to and from the Borough, especially on the Maidstone East line, where direct services to the City of London have been lost in the recent past. The quickest train journey into London from Maidstone East remains at around 1 hour, which compares unfavourably with neighbouring towns. The Borough Council should be pressing via this new partnership for service speed, as well as choice, to be increased. Clearly, the planned introduction of Thameslink services in 2018 is a very welcome step, but by then the new train operating contract for the South East will be about to be awarded. Now is the time to press for changes to enhance the connectivity of the Borough. The prospectus talks about enhanced services from Surrey, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Essex but no mention is made of Kent.

#### Greater reliability for all passengers

- 4.13 The prospectus cites what has been achieved with greater collaborative working between train operators, the DfT and TfL on the London Overground and C2C in Essex. It sets out an ambition to use the focus in what has been achieved on these routes as a benchmark for all train operator contracts going forward. As an example, it indicates that if all services were set a minimum 95.5% Public Performance Measure (PPM), this would equate to 50 million fewer delayed journeys each year than currently is the case. If this could be achieved in the South Eastern area, this would be a significant improvement from the current moving average annual PPM of 88.3%<sup>1</sup>

#### High standards of Customer Service

- 4.14 The prospectus indicates that the partnership will work to ensure common minimum standards for all rail services across the region. It indicates, helpfully, that visible and available station staffing is essential as is

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/about/performance/>

technology that helps staff and customers on the move. Measures that could be considered include:

- i) Wi-Fi and free open data to bring travel advice directly to mobile devices
- ii) Real Time Information to en-route passengers, to enable them to make choices to avoid delays.

All the information a passenger needs should be coordinated and easily accessible and suitable for their whole journey across a range of alternative channels.

- 4.15 The partnership would look at Sunday services so that they are more comparable to those provided on Saturdays given that people's lifestyles have so rapidly changed over the last few decades.
- 4.16 In terms of accessibility, the partnership would work towards a situation where disabled passengers are able to turn-up-and-go like everyone else with no requirement to book ahead. This is particularly important so as to ensure equal access to the rail network by all sections of the community.
- 4.17 With regard to fares and ticketing, the partnership would work towards a simpler and more integrated payment system for travel. New ticketing technology should be acceptable across London and the whole of the South East, and operators should work to the point where passengers who are due refunds receive this automatically on their cards (smartcard, contactless or Oyster card). The DfT is promoting ITSO (which is a national standard for smart ticketing) and is designed to ensure that all travel operators (not just train operating companies) develop compatible smart ticketing systems.
- 4.18 Stations should be clean and welcoming. Opportunities exist for other services such as retail or parcel lockers to be provided at stations. Third party funding also provides an opportunity for coordinated investment in station facilities.

Q6: Are there other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?

Suggested response:

The principle of safe, staffed and welcoming stations should apply beyond the suburban metro area particularly at stations in the more rural areas of the Borough, many of which are now unmanned, with closed and boarded-up station buildings and unwelcoming.

There is a danger that the focus will be on the proposed suburban metro network at the expense of other stations and railway lines outside Greater London. A two-tier approach would not be acceptable.

A significant number of rail passengers travel from the stations across Maidstone Borough to Central London and pay significant prices for their tickets. An annual 'All Zones' Travelcard (including potential for use on HS1) is now £5868.00 from one of Maidstone's three Town Centre stations whilst a similar ticket from Staplehurst is £6776.00. It is important that these passengers see the benefits from the new partnership and procurement arrangements in their daily journeys and travel experience.

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## **KCC CONSULTATION ON NEW SOUTHEASTERN FRANCHISE**

- 4.19 As Councillors will see, there are 18 questions on the questionnaire attached at Appendix Two. However, KMEP Members have also been advised that they can also submit a brief written response setting out the main areas for development of the rail network. It is proposed that the Borough Council's response will take the latter form.
- 4.20 The new Southeastern franchise will be awarded at a time of significant background growth in rail travel across the network and when there will also be significant planned growth in housing and employment not only within Kent and Medway but also in neighbouring counties by 2031. The existing network is already approaching capacity and there is a clear need, in conjunction with Network Rail, to plan for that growth and also at the same time secure improved connectivity, speed and reliability for rail journeys within and beyond the County boundary.

### **Suggested response:**

- 4.21 The Borough Council welcomes the proposed introduction of the new Thameslink service in 2018 to Maidstone East along with the new rolling stock that it will bring. It also welcomes the potential for a reduced service time from Maidstone East to Victoria.
- 4.22 As part of the specification for the new Southeastern franchise and in addition to the Thameslink improvements, the Borough Council wishes to see the re-introduction of the direct services to Cannon Street and London Bridge that were withdrawn in 2009. The Borough Council would also wish to see the HS1 service from Maidstone West move to an all-day service from the current early morning and evening three trains in each direction service.
- 4.23 The Medway Valley Line has seen a considerable increase in patronage in recent years since the formation of the Community Rail Partnership. The line has potential for further growth not only with the possible increased HS1 services referred to above, but also through better connectivity with the communities in south west Maidstone and further west along the Medway Valley and also relating to tourism along the Medway Valley.
- 4.24 The Borough Council would wish to see, particularly in the event that the Syngenta Site at Yalding is redeveloped and in partnership with the developer, improvements at Yalding station not only for commuters but also reflecting its tourism potential. The station is currently unmanned and closed-up and is not a welcoming place, neither are both platforms accessible to all.
- 4.25 Similarly, the possible provision of halts at Teston and in the Fant/Lower Tovil Area could encourage commuters and tourists to use the train rather than the private car to access the Medway Valley and Maidstone Town Centre. Additional parking provision and better public transport connections/information at Maidstone West should also be explored. In addition, the possibility of a halt in the Allington area on the Maidstone East line should also be explored.
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- 4.26 The Borough Council would wish to see the new franchise include a requirement for improvements to ensure all platforms at Maidstone West and Barracks, Harrietsham, Hollingbourne, Headcorn and Marden Stations are fully accessible and that disabled travellers can 'turn-up-and-go' without booking in advance and where stations are unmanned, consideration given to them being re-staffed as boarded-up unmanned stations are not welcoming or inherently safe places.
- 4.27 The new franchise should include a firm commitment to investment in the redevelopment of Maidstone East station as part of a wider area and public transport interchange improvement project.

## **5 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 5.1 The next steps will be for the report which comprises the Borough Council's response to be forwarded to TfL before the comment deadline of 18 March 2016 and also to forward the Borough Council's response on the KCC/KMEP consultation to Kent County Council.

## **6 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The promotion and delivery of a good rail service will assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
<b>Financial</b>	No implications directly arising from this report	Paul Riley Head of Finance & Resources and Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	No implications directly arising from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
<b>Legal</b>	No implications directly arising from this report	Kate Jardine Team Leader (Planning) Mid Kent

		Legal Services
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	Promotion and increased use of the rail network will take account of the needs of all groups including those without access to a car.	[Policy & Information Manager]
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	Promotion and increased use of the rail network may encourage a reduction in the use of the private car.	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
<b>Community Safety</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development and Paul Riley Head of Finance & Resources
<b>Asset Management</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development

## 7 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix One: 'A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East.'
- Appendix Two: Kent County Council draft consultation on the new Southeastern Franchise

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## 8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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