

Maidstone Joint Transportation Board	22 February 2015
---	-------------------------

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

Integrated Transport Strategy: Public Transport Progress

Final Decision-Maker	Maidstone Joint Transportation Board
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Steve Clarke: Principal Planning Officer Spatial Policy
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

- | |
|--|
| 1. Councillors note the progress made with regard to Public Transport interventions. |
|--|

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – A good public transport system within the Borough is an essential and integral part of achieving a successful and balanced economy. |
|---|

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Maidstone Joint Transportation Board	22 February 2016

Integrated Transport Strategy: Public Transport Progress

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out, for Councillors' information, a note of recent progress that has been made with regard to some areas of public transport intervention set out in the draft Integrated Transport Strategy.
 - 1.2 It focusses on the radial routes into Maidstone Town Centre and recent work on potential upgrading of the existing bus station facility at The Mall.
 - 1.3 Councillors are recommended to note the progress made to-date.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Draft Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) for Maidstone is currently subject to Public Consultation. The consultation period expires at 5pm on Friday 18 March 2016.
 - 2.2 The draft ITS sets out a number of public transport interventions including inter-alia, seeking improvements to bus frequencies along the main radial routes serving Maidstone Town Centre and to the bus station at The Mall in Maidstone Town Centre. Work has been on-going with the principal public transport service provider and the owners of The Mall with a view to progressing these elements of the draft ITS further.
 - 2.3 In terms of bus frequency along radial routes to the Town Centre, the ITS aims to ensure an average 10min frequency of service. This level of frequency is generally taken to be the 'tipping-point' for increased patronage. Some radial routes into Maidstone already have service frequencies around or in fact better than a 10-minute interval. (e.g. London Road and Sutton Road and A229 to the Medway Towns).
 - 2.4 It is recognised that it will not be immediately possible to move to 10 minute frequency on all routes as services will need to become embedded. Therefore, in addition, the possibility of increasing service frequencies from Headcorn and Staplehurst to half-hourly and along the A249 towards Sittingbourne and Faversham to a 20 minute frequency has also been explored.
 - 2.5 In addition, it is recognised that the existing bus interchange/station at The Mall in Maidstone Town Centre is not attractive for bus users and is in clear need of some improvement in the short-medium term. Our immediate aim is to work with the bus operators and the landowners to seek to provide a fully refurbished facility as part of a larger aspiration for the redevelopment of The Mall and its surroundings.
-

3. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

3.1 Meetings have taken place between Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council and the principal bus operator Arriva at an officer level with a view to establishing what would be necessary to achieve increases in the frequency of bus services. Particular emphasis has been given to the routes from Staplehurst and Headcorn to enable the provision of a half-hourly service as well as a 20 minute service from Sittingbourne/Faversham along the A249.

3.2 The indications are that on each route an additional bus/driver would be needed to provide the uplift in service frequency on each of the three routes mentioned above.

3.3 Such improvements could result in:

- An extra 7 journeys each way from Staplehurst to Maidstone, (Monday to Friday) and 9 on Saturdays;
- An additional 7 journeys from Headcorn to Maidstone and 8 in the reverse direction (Monday-Friday) and 9 in each direction on Saturdays and;
- On the A249 Sittingbourne route the extra journeys could amount to 3 buses/hour (between 0955 and 1555) from Maidstone towards Sittingbourne and also Sittingbourne towards Maidstone (between 0935 and 1535) Monday Friday; and between 0955-1655 from Maidstone and 0935-1635 from Sittingbourne on Saturdays.

We will report further on the scope for improved frequency and any financial implications.

3.4 I can also advise that Maidstone Borough has been working closely with Southeastern Trains to improve bus access to Staplehurst station.

3.5 Regarding The Mall bus station, a working group has been formed comprising MBC and KCC officers, Arriva (the principal user) and the Landowners Capital and Regional to move the project forward.

3.6 The possibility of introducing a 'departure charge' is being explored as such charges exist at bus stations elsewhere. There are more than 200,000 departures annually from the station, thus a nominal £1 departure tax could offset the annual operating costs which are around this figure. Care would need to be taken to ensure that any less commercial routes are not disadvantaged.

3.7 However, there would also need to be a series of very clear and visible improvements to the facility e.g. the lighting, the boarding area doors/screens and ventilation systems to improve the quality and ambience should such a charge be introduced. The need to consider Inspectors to reduce congestion from buses temporarily laying-over in the station will also need to be examined as the experience of the landowner on sites elsewhere has highlighted the benefits of this approach.

3.8 The potential for an injection of funds from the Local Growth Fund towards improvement/on-going maintenance is also being investigated.

3.9 Further meetings of the group are planned. The next in early March, will focus on what improvements can be delivered in the very short term. A further report on progress will be brought to the Maidstone JTB in due course.

3.10 Discussions are also being held by MBC/KCC with bus operators, Highways England and developers about the scope for improvements to facilitate improved bus facilities/services in the M20 Junction 7 area and in addition, MBC/KCC officers are also meeting with Network Rail and Southeastern Trains to improve bus facilities as part of Phase One of the regeneration of Maidstone East.

4 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

4.5 Officers of both MBC and KCC will continue to work together to consolidate the progress already made on the public transport interventions in the draft ITS. Any necessary changes to the ITS will be made following closure of the current consultation and in conjunction with consideration of the representations that have been made during the consultation.

4.6 They will be reported to this Board and to Maidstone Borough's Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee.

5 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	A good public transport system within the Borough is an essential and integral part of achieving a successful and balanced economy.	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
Risk Management	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
Financial	No specific implications arise from this report	Head of Finance and Resources
Staffing	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
Legal	No specific legal implications arise from this report	Kate Jardine Planning Team Leader Mid Kent

		Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An improved public transport system provides a means of securing access to services and community facilities for those with society that do not have access to a private car for day-to-day transport	Anna Collier Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	A good public transport system within the Borough is an essential and integral part of achieving a reduction in reliance in the use of the private car for day-day needs and increasing sustainability	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
Community Safety	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
Human Rights Act	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development & Head of Finance and Resources
Asset Management	No specific implications arise from this report	Rob Jarman Head of Planning & Development

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None