

HEAD OF TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership was formed in 1999 and has made significant progress in improving bus services in the town. However in recent years the QBP has become less effective and therefore it is proposed to relaunch the QBP with Member involvement in autumn 2010.
- 1.2 The 'Access to West Kent Hospitals' Kickstart bid had been provisionally accepted by the Department for Transport (DfT), but the scheme has subsequently been withdrawn as a cost saving measure. KCC and Arriva are working in partnership to identify whether some service enhancements can still be delivered through a 'Kent Kickstart' initiative.
- 1.3 There have been rumours that local bus services supported by KCC are to be withdrawn due to cost savings. However, there are no plans to withdraw KCC supported bus services in the area.
- 1.4 It is recommended that:
 - the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board supports the relaunch of the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership
 - the Joint Transportation Board appoint two representatives (one Borough Member, one County Member) to sit on the Maidstone QBP board and attend meetings twice annually.

2 Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership

- 2.1 The Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) was signed between Arriva Southern Counties, Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council in November 1999.
- 2.2 Since its inception the QBP has delivered significant improvements to Bus Services in the area, including the introduction of new buses, infrastructure improvements and marketing campaigns.
- 2.3 Improvements delivered through the QBP on services 82 and 85 have delivered growth in use of the services of 14.4% between 2006 and 2009.
- 2.4 However, in recent years the Maidstone QBP has become ineffective. With LTP 3 and a new Maidstone Integrated Transport Plan currently being developed that will include the Quality Bus Partnership, it is

appropriate to revitalise and re-launch the partnership. It is therefore proposed to relaunch the Maidstone QBP with a new agreement being signed between the three parties.

- 2.5 Officers consider that it is important for Members to be involved in the Quality Bus Partnership. It is therefore recommended that the Joint Transportation Board appoint two representatives (one Borough Member, one County Member) to sit on the Maidstone QBP board and attend meetings twice annually.
- 2.6 It is recommended that the Board supports the relaunch of the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership.

3 The DfT Kickstart Scheme and Cost Savings

- 3.1 In July 2009 KCC submitted three Kickstart bids, including a 'West Kent Access to Hospitals' bid, focussed upon improving the services 6 and 7 between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. It was announced on the 25th March 2010 that all three bids had been provisionally accepted and that the West Kent bid would receive the full £380k requested over three years.
- 3.2 However, following the formation of the new government, the scheme was withdrawn by the DfT as a cost saving measure. KCC are now working with Arriva to identify whether some service enhancements can still be made through a 'Kent Kickstart' initiative. A report will be brought to the next JTB meeting with details of a new scheme.
- 3.3 There have been rumours that local bus services supported by KCC are to be withdrawn due to cost savings. However, there are no plans to withdraw KCC supported bus services in the area.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that:
 - the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board supports the relaunch of the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership
 - the Joint Transportation Board appoint two representatives (one Borough Member, one County Member) to sit on the Maidstone QBP board and attend meetings twice annually.

Tom Pierpoint
Public Transport Team Leader (West Kent)
Kent Highway Service
01622 221303