

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

27 JANUARY 2014

Report prepared by the Chief Executive

UPDATE – ITEM 8 MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Cabinet's attention is drawn to correspondence dated 24th January 2014 from John Burr Director of Highways and Transportation at Kent County Council concerning this item. A copy of the letter is appended to this update note.

The letter covers a number of matters. Of direct relevance to tonight's Cabinet meeting is a request that the Chief Executive withdraws the report at Item 8 on your agenda "Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy" – the request is based on a number of points

1. Kent County Council is the local Highway and Transport Authority and the approach outlined in the report has no support from KCC whatsoever
2. References to transport interventions such as car sharing/bus priority lanes and Oyster cards are all entirely outside of your authority's statutory responsibilities
3. The paper gives the mis-leading and dangerous impression that KCC have jointly prepared it
4. In the light of our series of joint meetings last year KCC officers believed that we had reached a position where it was absolutely clear what measures were acceptable to the Highway Authority and whereby we agreed to meet again to discuss the transport strategy as the housing numbers emerged. To find that you are unilaterally embarking upon an approval process within the Borough Council for proposals which are as unacceptable now as they have been during our repeated conversations, represents a failure to co-operate with KCC as the appropriate Authority.
5. KCC's position is that there can be no further input to, or endorsement of the Transport Strategy for Maidstone by the

Highway Authority until your housing numbers and distribution are fixed, modelling work has been undertaken to assess their impact, and other County Council service departments have considered the feasibility and acceptability of the new Local Plan housing target.

In response MBC officers have proposed amendments to the report which would dispel any inaccurate impression that it had been agreed with KCC or in any way expressed advice or judgements that could be attributed to KCC.

The proposed amended wording is set out below. The objective is to make it clear that the report is advice from MBC officers to the Maidstone cabinet solely and identifies the vision, objectives and actions that Maidstone borough council wishes to pursue with the county council and other transport providers so that the recommendations become

1. That the Cabinet approves the refined vision and objectives for the Integrated Transport Strategy as the basis for officers to work with Kent County Council and other transport providers in achieving improvements to the transport systems in Maidstone
2. That Cabinet approves the work programme in section 1.3.42 for developing the ITS to a full draft document and public consultation in the summer of 2014.

And the wording of paragraph 1.3.1 is amended accordingly to become

This section provides the background and context to show how the ITS has developed since the previous draft ITS went out for public consultation in August 2012. Information is provided on the actions taken to review the ITS and refine the direction of the transport strategy and produce a new vision and objectives. It also identifies a programme of further work now required to develop a full draft ITS. The Cabinet is invited to agree these to guide Maidstone officers' work in achieving a jointly agreed strategy with Kent County Council with a view to achieving the timetable for further modelling in spring 2014 and public consultation in summer 2014 as set out in paragraph 1.3.42.

Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council are working to achieve a jointly agreed document and significant work has been undertaken together including jointly funded traffic modelling. In this Council's view the existing traffic situation in Maidstone is one of significant congestion on our roads. It is accepted that traffic congestion will increase as the borough grows, so the ITS is designed to minimise this increase and to mitigate the associated impacts on the local economy

and air quality. The ITS is also directed towards improving road user safety and education

These amendments have been shared with KCC officers and their Leader. They are not sufficient for their request for the item to be withdrawn to be withdrawn itself. This has been confirmed in a further letter from Cllr David Brazier received on the afternoon of 27th January 2014 and which is also appended to this update for your information and consideration.

Given the circumstances officers recommend that

1. The Cabinet considers the request for the ITS report to be withdrawn from the agenda and gives reasons for its response to the request
2. If the report is not withdrawn then the changes recommended above are made. The purpose would be to clarify that the views expressed in the report are those of Maidstone Borough Council alone

In response to the points made in the correspondence from the Director of Highways and Transport the following information is brought to the attention of the Cabinet.

The report on the Cabinet agenda was prepared by MBC officers in good faith and was felt to be the product of a series of meetings with a variety of KCC officers and members which have taken place in the period since November 2012 when the original draft ITS was considered and criticised by the advisory Joint Transport Board. The report was shared with the officer who is the main point of contact on transport matters at an early stage and before publication; amendments were proposed and taken on board. The report was commended as a good report. MBC has subsequently been advised that this response was provided without authority.

It is appreciated that KCC's internal governance procedures may not have been followed. Hence the amended recommendations to the Cabinet that make clear that the vision, objectives and programme are simply to transparently guide MBC officers in work to achieve an Integrated Transport Strategy.

Of course we recognise that KCC is the highway and transport authority. However, it is disappointing and surprising that KCC do not support the transport vision and objectives expressed in the report in any way what

so ever given the wide scope of the objectives and programme proposed especially in the light of

- the County Council's Local Transport Plan 2011-2016 adopted by a decision of Cabinet on 4th April 2011
- the decisions made by Councillor Brian Sweetland in October 2012 concerning transport improvements to complement development at the strategic housing land allocations in South East and North West Maidstone and the strategic employment site allocation and junction 7.
- the fact that three of the most significant infrastructure schemes referred to in the Maidstone ITS report were the subject of funding bids submitted by KCC officers during 2013 ie for park and ride and the bridges gyratory. However it is becoming apparent that KCC may now have changed their position on this, without any dialogue with MBC, evidenced by changes to current bidding documents to be submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- the support expressed for the bridges gyratory scheme by the Joint Transport Board in October 2013
- the NPPF which, among other things, lists a series of core planning principles including the requirement for councils to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable

In particular KCC have said that the inclusion of bus priority measures for Maidstone is a sensitive issue.

The Cabinet's attention is drawn to the KCC Local Transport Plan (LTP) in this respect. Among other things the LTP identifies bus priority measures as playing a key part in Kent's transport systems and measures are identified for a variety of locations including in Ashford, Dover, Dartford and Gravesham. For Maidstone specifically paragraph 8.48 of the LTP states " The Maidstone Transport Strategy, and hence the County Council's Integrated Transport Programme for 2011-2016, will be **driven by the desire to preserve and enhance the accessibility of Maidstone town centre by sustainable means**. The proposed level of development will be underpinned by a package containing a number of traffic management **measures including the enhanced provision and priority of bus services** through the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership involving the County and Borough Councils along with the town's principal bus operator, Arriva. **These priorities will drive scheme delivery**

irrespective of the future development scenario, with the detail and phasing dependent on the specific sites that come forward through the LDF." While it is appreciated that the housing need now identified exceeds previous housing targets and that this may lead to more development than envisaged in 2011 – in officers' view this makes the role of sustainable transport modes more, rather than less, important in achieving effective use of transport infrastructure and limited financial resources.

On the specific point about Oyster cards Maidstone has been identified for a trial of contactless ticketing and it is officers' understanding that KCC supports this and at least in September 2013 had intended to jointly fund the initiative with Arriva.

It is clear that collaboration is needed between MBC and KCC to manage growth as development and transport are closely related. MBC is keen to have a productive dialogue with KCC focussed on solutions so that the core planning principles in the NPPF can be achieved and the needs of the whole community addressed in a coherent way.

On 3rd October 2013 we agreed to share our Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Strategic Housing Land Allocations work confidentially with KCC ie before they were published. It was estimated that the work would be sufficiently progressed by the end of November 2013 to enable this to happen. This information was shared on 9th December 2013. It was accepted that the transport modelling would be relatively straightforward – although the capacity of the KCC consultants could be an issue and that the transport system issues would be the same as for previous scenarios. Given that it had been clear when the information to allow the modelling would be available since early October MBC asked for the work to be given high priority.

Since then there has not been any direct feedback from KCC on any infrastructure requirements eg education, transport, leisure and libraries. However actions have been taken with the intention of challenging MBC's SHMA. The transport modelling has not yet commenced some 6 weeks after the information was provided and is unlikely to take place before March 2014. In MBC Officers' view the timetable, set out in today's ITS report to Cabinet, for reaching the point of public consultation on an Integrated Transport Strategy by summer 2014 takes into account the timing of modelling in March and gives adequate time for consideration of the results.

Alison Broom
Chief Executive
Maidstone Borough Council
Maidstone House
King Street
Maidstone
Kent, ME15 6JQ

Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XX

Tel: 01622 694192
Fax: 01622 691028
Ask for: John Burr
Date: 07 February 2014

Dear Alison,

I write with reference to the report on the transport strategy for Maidstone presented to your Scrutiny committee on 21st January. For the avoidance of any doubt may I remind you that Kent County Council is the Local Highway and Transport Authority and the approach outlined in your paper has no support from KCC whatsoever. References to transport interventions such as car sharing/bus priority lanes and Oyster cards are all entirely outside of your Authority's statutory responsibilities and the paper gives the misleading and dangerous impression that KCC have jointly prepared it. To further discover that your officers have recommended to your planning committee the introduction of measures on the public highway on the A274 Sutton Road which we have repeatedly explained we do not support nor will allow is completely unacceptable to KCC.

In the light of our series of joint meetings last year I believed we had reached a position where it was absolutely clear what measures are acceptable to the Highway Authority, and whereby we agreed to meet again to discuss the transport strategy as the housing numbers emerged. To find that you are unilaterally embarking upon an approval process within the Borough Council for proposals which are as unacceptable now as they have been during our repeated conversations, represents a failure to co-operate with KCC as the appropriate Authority. I am therefore requesting that you withdraw the paper immediately and do not present it to any further Member meetings.

Once again, KCC's position is that there can be no further input to, or endorsement of the Transport Strategy for Maidstone by the Highway Authority until your housing numbers and distribution are fixed, modelling work has been undertaken to assess their impact, and other County Council service departments have considered the feasibility and acceptability of the new Local Plan housing target.

Please would you immediately confirm your intentions regarding the report so that I may avoid writing to the Members of the Joint Transportation Board to advise them of the position.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Burr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "B".

John Burr
Director of Highways & Transportation

cc. Paul Crick, Director of Planning & Environment

David Brazier
Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment



All Maidstone County Members
By email & post

Copy to:
Maidstone Borough Council Cabinet Members

Members' Suite
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XQ
Tel: 01622 694434
Fax: 01622 694212
E-mail: members.desk@kent.gov.uk
Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 27 January 2014

Dear Member

I am writing to let you know that there is a report being presented to Maidstone Borough Council's Cabinet this evening concerning the Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy. A similar report was taken to the Borough's Scrutiny Committee on January 21st.

I have asked for this report to be withdrawn, but that request has been refused. I now therefore wish to make it absolutely clear to you all that the report has neither KCC Member nor senior officer approval. Many of the transport measures outlined in the document come from a "menu" drawn up by officers for discussion with JTB Members over a year ago, since when the amount of housing being put forward for the Borough has increased dramatically. My position remains that no endorsement of the Borough's own Integrated Transport Strategy for Maidstone can be given by KCC as the Highway Authority until the new housing target is fixed, modelling work has been undertaken to assess the impact, and other County Council service departments have considered the feasibility and acceptability of the new increased target once it has been set.

Yours sincerely

David Brazier