

**REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

21 OCTOBER 2008

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE – HIGH
SPEED 1 (CTRL) DOMESTIC RAIL SERVICES**

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Summary

This report advises the Committee of the work of the Kent County Council Select Committee on High Speed 1 (CTRL) Domestic Rail Services. Medway Council was invited to nominate a Member to attend the meetings in order to participate in the discussions and evidence gathering, as well as to ensure Medway's viewpoint was included within the final recommendations.

The Committee is asked to consider how it wishes to respond to the draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 Any response from this Council to Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Kent will need to take account of any relevant Council policies such as the Local Transport Plan 2 and the Development Plan.

2. Background

2.1 The Kent County Council Select Committee was formed in September 2008. The Council was invited to nominate one Member of the Council to attend the meetings to represent Medway's views. Initially,

Councillor Filmer, as the relevant Portfolio Holder was nominated to attend these meetings. However, as KCC wished to formally co-opt a Medway Members and Cabinet Members cannot be appointed to serve on Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Councillor Ken Bamber has been substituted as the Council's representative on the Select Committee.

2.2 The issues the Select Committee were considering were:

- Regeneration effects linked to fares – particularly on Channel Tunnel Rail Link Domestic Service (CTRL – DS) – will the premium fares required in the franchise have a deterrent effect?
- Fairness of fare rises compared to rail fares in London
- Future train capacity
- Access to stations/car parking capacity/bus shuttle services
- Parkways (Minster and Westenhanger)
- Rail heading (Ebbsfleet).

2.3 The aim of the committee was to identify the best rail passenger services solution for Kent (including Medway), both in terms of:

- The immediate benefits of improvement to journey times and services to London and around “Kent”; and
- The long term benefits to the regeneration of “Kent” and the likely impacts on the wider rail network and transport in the area of improved services.

This involved investigating the following:

- Current proposals of the franchise holder, Southeastern, for services from December 2009 and proposed fare levels;
- Forecasted effects of these proposals and whether they are robust – including whether rising general fare levels and additional premium fares on CTRL DS will prove to be a deterrent to travel by rail;
- The effects the proposed services will have on the regeneration of Growth Areas and the coastal towns;
- The case for new parkway stations;
- The likelihood of rail users heading to certain stations with significantly improved services and the likely effects;
- Access to stations forecast to attract significant rises in passenger volumes.

2.4 The committee set the following timetable:

Date	Meeting/Interview
2 September	Inaugral meeting
5 September	Presentation and interview with Southeastern
8 September	Tour of depot
9 September	Interview Visit Kent Interview with Mouchels
15 September	Interview Passenger Focus
18 September	Interview Locate in Kent Interview Stagecoach Bus Co.
22 September	Interview KCC officer
23 September	Interview with Network Rail Re-interview Southeastern
26 September	Final meeting to establish recommendations
21 October	Meeting to discuss draft report

2.4 Written evidence was given by:

Louise Bibby, Thanet District Council
 Julian Brazier MP for Canterbury & Whitstable
 Ken Bultitude, Stanford Parish Council
 Kevin Charles, Pfizer Ltd
 Matt Clarke, Kent International Airport
 Cllr Nigel Collor, Dover District Council
 Zaher Deir, Lydd Airport
 Linda Doran, Ashford's Future
 Roger Gabriel, Kent County Council
 Roger Gale MP for North Thanet (x 2 letters)
 Cllr Chris Garland, Maidstone Borough Council
 David George, Fastrack Project Manager, KCC
 Cllr Bernard Heyes, Ashford Borough Council Transport Forum
 Hirst Commercial
 Michael Howard MP for Folkestone & Hythe
 Dr Stephen Ladyman MP for South Thanet
 Ian Lewis, Swale Borough Council
 London & Continental Stations & Property Ltd
 Vince Lucas, Southeastern Railways
 Andrew Osborne, Ashford Borough Council
 Viv Pritchard, Canterbury City Council
 Sevenoaks District Council
 Chris Shaw, Highways Agency
 Howard Stoaate, MP for Dartford
 University of Kent

3. Advice and analysis from Medway's officers

- 3.1 The Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) was awarded to Southeastern for eight years from 1 April 2006. The final two years depend on satisfactory performance by the franchise. The IKF subsidy is expected to be £585 million over eight years. There will be a revenue share mechanism with the Department for Transport (DfT) and a small premium payment paid to the government by the end of the franchise. Annual revenue (including subsidy) was expected to be £560 million at the start of the franchise.
- 3.2 The baseline service for the franchise was set by the DfT. There are two levels of service specified – up to December 2009 (Service Level Commitment [SLC] – 1) and from December 2009 onwards when the high speed services will be introduced (SLC2). Changes to the timetable need the DfT's agreement which is unlikely if the financial impact on the DfT is worsened.
- 3.3 Southeastern's bid made a commitment to provide a number of services over and above the baseline set in the current timetable. These include:
- Additional peak services to ease overcrowding (including an additional train from Medway to Cannon Street)
 - Extra mid and late evening trains
 - Changes to improve punctuality (introduced December 2007)
- 3.4 There is also a commitment to improve punctuality and reliability to 91.6% by March 2010 and 93.74% by March 2014. Southeastern is showing good performance on punctuality and the latest Southeastern Stakeholder newsletter showed that punctuality for the period ending 16 August 2008 was 95.3%.
- 3.5 Other plans include:
- £18 million interior improvements for Networker trains
 - £5.5 million station improvement scheme – including help points and improved accessibility
 - all stations repainted in three years
 - Investors in People accreditation by 2009
 - £1.8 million investment in new ticket machines.
- 3.6 In discussions with Medway Council, Southeastern was keen to use the opportunity of Local Transport Plan (LTP) and other partnership sources of funding to help achieve improvements in rail facilities.
- 3.7 The December 2009 timetable provides CTRL DS services from all of the Medway main-line stations to St. Pancras. From Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham, the times to St. Pancras will be similar to the current fast trains to Victoria/Cannon Street, however, Strood and

Rochester will enjoy significant reductions in journey time compared with the “slow” train services that are currently provided.

- 3.8 However, with the franchise specification, services on the existing lines are subject to the introduction of additional stops which will slow the services down. This particularly affects the Victoria services. There are concerns in peak times that the capacity from Medway to London will only be achieved by making people travel on the slower services rather than the popular fast trains.
- 3.9 Having taken over the franchise, Southeastern has been able to consider the service to be provided from December 2009 in more depth. They do have concerns about the levels of service specified by the DfT. Alternative proposals have been put to the DfT for their agreement. These have been agreed for the off-peak services – for example, three trains an hour will now be provided to Victoria including two “fast” trains (albeit with additional stops at Longfield and Meopham.) Confirmation of the DfT’s agreement to the changes for the peak timetable is still awaited.
- 3.10 Southeastern has carried out market research which predicts substantial passenger growth throughout the network during the life of the franchise. For Medway stations the figures are:

		Annual	journeys
	2007	2014	% change
Strood	758,000	1,100,000	+51%
Rochester	758,940	973,736	+28%
Chatham	3,000,000	3,900,000	+28%
Gillingham	2,100,000	2,800,000	+33%
Rainham	1,700,000	2,100,000	+23%

- 3.12 Network Rail is currently developing the Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Kent. This seeks to identify where viable interventions need to be made in the network to deal with the anticipated growth. Consultation is expected on this at the end of the year or early in the New Year with the report being completed in Spring 2009. There will be a formal 60 day consultation period and Network Rail will encourage a response from Local Authorities at that time.
- 3.13 Fares have been specified by the DfT within the franchise. It is expected that fares will rise by 3% above inflation for three years from 2007, in recognition of the extent of investment in the Kent network. The franchise also requires that premium fares are charged for travel on the CTRL domestic services. For Medway, the suggested premium is 35% of the single fare between Gravesend and London (approximately £2.50 per journey). This may be seen as inappropriate in Medway’s case where many of the journey time savings are slight.

3.14 The KCC Select Committee is currently compiling its draft conclusions and will be meeting again on 21 October 2008 to finalise these. Councillor Ken Bamber and the Public Transport Manager attended the first draft conclusion meeting to ensure Medway's viewpoint was included and will continue to ensure that this is the case throughout the final meetings. Therefore, officers are unable to report the Select Committee's recommendations before they are published but Medway will have a further opportunity to input into the rail planning process through the forthcoming RUS consultation.

4 Financial and legal implications

4.1 There are no financial or legal implications for the Council arising from this report. If projects develop through the Local Transport Plan or other partnership arrangements, the detail will be considered through the Council's normal procedures.

5. Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the:-

- (a) KCC Select Committee – High Speed 1 (CTRL) Domestic Rail Services recommendations are sent to the Committee by way of a briefing note when they are published;
- (b) Committee awaits the proposals set out by Network Rail in their draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) due to be published in early 2009 and that a presentation and report is submitted to an appropriate meeting in order that Members may consider this matter and the proposals fully. The committee can then make a decision as to whether it wishes to respond to the draft proposals.

Lead officer contact

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Background papers

The Future of Rail in Kent – report of Joint Select Committee with KCC – January 2003

Integrated Kent Franchise – Stakeholder Briefing Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) – December 2005