

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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QUALITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT CORRIDORS PROJECT

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Summary

The report seeks to describe the aims and objectives of the Quality Public Transport Corridors Project (QPTC) and provides details of the main schemes that will deliver those aspirations.

Following the submission of the Business Case for Community Infra-Structure Funding of the Medway Strategic Bus Corridor Improvements in May 2008 (now known as the QPTC and Urban Traffic Management Control Projects, UTMC), Medway Council was successful in being awarded £13 million. The QPTC and UTMC Projects have important links with each other but are both managed separately.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 In a letter dated 18 November 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) now known as the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) confirmed that the Secretary of State had agreed to provide a grant of £13 million to Medway Council from that date until 31 March 2011.
- 1.2 A claim is made each month to the HCA for all expenditure incurred during that period and is subject to a rigorous monitoring procedure to ensure that spending is on track and has been spent on the intended purpose.
- 1.3 The QPTC Project accords with two key Local Area Agreement Targets; NI 167, 'Congestion – average journey time per mile during the morning peak' and NI 175, 'Access to services and facilities by walking, cycling and public transport'.

- 1.4 NI 167 states that a number of transport interventions are being implemented to encourage travel by bus, (as well as encouraging walking and cycling) with the QPTC Project being an extremely important means of delivering that objective. Similarly with the aspirations of NI 175, to foster social inclusion and ensure that residential units with a development of 50 units or more have access to public transport services.

2. Background

- 2.1 Having been awarded a total of £13 million from the Government's Community Infra-structure Fund (CIF) for the implementation of the Quality Public Transport Corridor Project (QPTC) and Urban Traffic Management Control Project (UTMC), this sum has been split between the two projects, £5 million and £8 million, respectively.
- 2.2 Although there are aspects of the QPTC Project which have dependencies within the UTMC Project, eg., Real Time Passenger Information and traffic signal bus priority, the latter is a separate project with its own Project Manager. Fortnightly QPTC/UTMC meetings are held which ensures project integration and co-ordination.
- 2.3 An Officer Group meeting is held every month, involving the Assistant Director of Front Line Services, the Assistant Director of Development, Economy and Transport, the QPTC and UTMC Implementation Managers, the Integrated Transport Manager, Capital Projects Manager and other key officers as appropriate.
- 2.4 The QPTC Project is made up of a number of separate but closely related schemes which, together with UTMC, will combine to create a step change in the quality, reliability and attractiveness of local bus services in Medway. These are listed as follows:
- Chatham Hill bus priority improvements
 - North Dane Way bus priority measures
 - Rochester, Corporation Street bus priority measures
 - Strood Riverside, sustainable link
 - Real Time Bus Passenger Information displays
 - Quality bus shelters.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The objective of the QPTC Project is to reduce congestion across Medway and improve air quality through improvements to local bus services. This will involve the provision of bus priority measures at key locations, to help improve the reliability and attractiveness of bus services, the creation of enhanced bus stop waiting facilities, high quality bus passenger information through the use of the latest generation of real time displays and the provision of quality bus shelters through the adoption of a Medway standard to create consistency and an improved streetscape.

- 3.2 Medway regularly suffers from high levels of peak time congestion which affects the reliability of existing bus services, creating delays, reduces the attractiveness of services and risks creating a spiral of decline. The package of improvements within the QPTC Project of which these elements are a key part, complement each other and are designed to reverse this trend and drive up the quality and designed attractiveness of local bus services.
- 3.3 In addition these measures will help prepare Medway for its regeneration during the next 20 years, as part of its Growth Area Status (as defined by the Government's Homes and Communities Agency, HCA), which will see its population increase to 300,000.
- 3.4 All the schemes and elements of the QPTC Project accord with Medway's Local Transport Plan (2006-2011) which lists public transport improvements as one of its five key priorities and the Transport for Medway Study (TfM).

4. Schemes

- 4.1 **Chatham Hill**
Although the existing layout will be subject to minimal change, except for the provision of a shared footway/cycleway on the northern footway, the latest traffic signal technology will be installed to provide improved bus priority at the Luton Arches and Rock Avenue junctions.
- 4.2 **North Dane Way**
This scheme involves a long length of northbound bus priority on the approach to the Capstone Road junction, with a by-pass of the roundabout and signal control to enable buses to re-enter the westbound traffic flow in Capstone Road.
- 4.3 **Rochester, Corporation Street**
A length of northbound bus lane is to be provided between Northgate and Esplanade with a pre-signal arrangement at the Esplanade junction to enable buses to get ahead of the main traffic flow. The scheme is also intended to be the vehicle to deliver the first phase of the public realm improvements in Corporation Street as part of the overall Development Framework to improve sustainable connectivity between the planned Rochester Riverside development and historic Rochester. The modelling has predicted time savings for buses of about 10% along this section at peak times.
- 4.4 **Strood Riverside Sustainable Transport Link**
The scheme will deliver a new bus, cycle and pedestrian only link between Canal Road and Commissioner's Road with the objective being to provide a more direct link from Strood town centre, Strood Riverside regeneration site, Medway City Estate and the proposed Park and Ride site at Whitewall Creek.

Strood Station will be served by the New High Speed 1 service from December 2009, bringing significant journey time reductions to London. Medway City Estate currently employs approximately 6,000 people and better connections by sustainable means will help give relief to the local network at peak times.

The scheme will also form an emergency route from Strood Riverside in the event of flooding, which is a requirement of the Environment Agency.

4.5 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)

The latest generation of real time passenger information displays provides television quality images giving live next bus information, and enables a mix of other media. This therefore provides the opportunity to display additional public information, eg., network problems, weather warnings and Council information, eg events at The Castle, concessionary fares.

This project has been carried out jointly with Kent County Council as part of a joint procurement exercise.

Another important element of this is live travel information to mobile 'phones. Each bus stop nationally has a unique code. By texting '84268' with the bus stop code the next 3 live departures will be sent to the mobile 'phone. All bus stops across Medway are currently being up-graded to show these codes.

4.6 Quality bus shelters

A contract has been awarded for the installation of up to 63 new, high quality bus shelters alongside a more frequent maintenance regime to ensure that quality and appearance is maintained. All shelters will be lit through the use of solar power.

5. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Project delays	<p>The CIF funding for the QPTC (and UTMC Projects) has to be spent by 30 March 2011, otherwise all unspent funds will have to be returned to Government.</p> <p>This risks Medway Council having difficulty securing future Government funding.</p>	The QPTC Implementation Manager has ensured that the programme has taken account of risks and dependencies at an early stage as much as possible as part of the delivery planning.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Detailed public consultation has been carried out in connection with the Transport for Medway (TfM) Study and Medway's LTP. As part of the TfM Study, various methods of engagement were used including workshops and presentations to key stakeholders, questionnaire surveys and exhibitions in town centres.
- 6.2 The North Dane Way scheme was subject to a consultation exercise with the local ward members in June 2009. Strood Riverside Sustainable Transport Link received planning approval on 8 July and was subject to a public consultation exercise on 20 and 21 July 2009.
- 6.3 Both schemes were very well received and have enabled progression to detail design.

7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 All elements of the Project are to be completed by 31 March 2011 and the Council must submit a final grant claim within 30 days of the completion of the Project, i.e., by the end of April 2011. Payment after that time is unlikely to be approved by the HCA. There is a risk that should elements of the Project remain incomplete by that time, any costs that occur after 30 April will have to be funded from other sources.
- 7.2 The risk of non-completion is only likely to arise if unforeseen difficulties and delays emerge and if there is insufficient time to rectify or overcome them. In trying to take account of the 'unknown' the Project Implementation Manager has endeavoured to minimise that risk by ensuring that the programme has as long a lead time as possible, and that key milestones are adhered to as closely as possible, for example, the completion of all scheme detailed designs by the end of January 2010.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are asked to endorse the objectives of the Quality Public Transport Corridors Project and support the schemes described in the report.

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Background papers

Business Case for CIF Funding Medway Strategic Bus Corridor Improvements, May 2008
DCLG (HCA) Funding approval letter, 18 November 2008
Minutes of QPTC/UTMC Officer Group meetings