

Agenda Item IMD27

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: IMD 2018/27

TITLE	Western Rail Link to Heathrow
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Keith Baker
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	28 June 2018 WSP Room, 9.30am
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Heathrow is a major employer within the Thames Valley and the economy and residents of Wokingham Borough currently benefit from being in proximity to this major driver of economic activity. The propose scheme will provide an improved connection from the Borough to Heathrow Airport.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport:

1. Notes the contents of the Western Rail Link to Heathrow consultation;
2. Approves the response to consultation as detailed in this report (appendix 1).

SUMMARY OF REPORT

A consultation is being undertaken by Network Rail on the Western Rail Link to Heathrow proposal.

Wokingham Borough Council has consistently supported the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP's) position on the need to deliver a Western Rail Link to Heathrow, and it is recommended that the Council repeats that support in our response to this consultation.

In the consultation response the Council supports the proposal and in terms of the route options support the most direct route as it represents the fastest, most efficient journey.

Background & Analysis of Issues

Network Rail is currently carrying out their formal (statutory) consultation on the proposed design for the Western Rail Link between the Great Western Mainline and Heathrow Airport. The purpose of the link is to provide direct access to Heathrow Airport from the west without having to change trains. This is seen as key to providing better access, and reduce congestion and pollution on the road network.

The consultation outlines the proposed route from the Langley/Iver area to Heathrow. There are two options under consideration for a section of the route close to Heathrow Airport.

The closing date for responses is 22nd June 2018. A holding response will be submitted that will be pending the approval from this IEMD.

The consultation details are set out in the following location:

<https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Western-rail-link-to-heathrow.pdf>

The consultation has only four questions which are listed below with the Council's recommended response.

- Do you agree with Network Rail's plans to improve access to Heathrow Airport from the west? Recommended response is Strongly Agree, which is consistent with the Council's previous position in relation to the scheme.
- Which of the two options for the route of the final section of the tunnel, closest to Heathrow, do you prefer? There is not direct impact on the Borough, but the recommended response is Option B as this is about 100m shorter and does not include a double slip set of points to provide a turnback facility at the west end of Terminal 5, which is not likely to be required should only 'through' services are operated as is expected.
- How could the plans be improved? Recommended response is 'No response.'
- Do you have any further comments on the proposals? Recommended response is "Wokingham Borough Council welcomes the continued inclusion of Twyford as a calling point for these services with a 2 train per hour service to London Heathrow. We also welcome the information that the business case is based on 'normal fares' rather than it being a premium service as that will help maximise the number of users".

A copy of the recommended response, as described above, is included in Appendix 1 to this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	nil	nil	nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	nil	nil	nil
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	nil	nil	nil

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
Not applicable.

Cross-Council Implications
No implications have been identified.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Interim Director of Environment	None Received
Monitoring Officer	None Received
Leader of the Council	None Received

List of Background Papers
WBC Response to Western Rail Link to Heathrow Consultation

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