

Agenda Item IMD1

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD:

TITLE	Transport for the South East Transport Strategy: Response to consultation
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Pauline Jorgensen
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	9 January 2020 FF11 19:00
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

To set out a response to the Transport Strategy for the South East Consultation Draft issued on 11th October 2019 and open until 10th January 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport approves the proposed responses to the Transport Strategy for the South East Consultation Draft and thereafter authorises officers to submit the response on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report outlines the proposed response to the Transport Strategy for the South East Consultation Draft. This is a major public consultation prepared by Transport for the South East (TfSE), the Sub-National Transport Body for the South East of England, with support from its 16 Constituent Local Transport Authorities, 5 Local Enterprise Partnerships, 46 district and borough authorities and wider key stakeholders. The focus of this report and our response is in relation to the Strategy and its focus and position on Wokingham Borough Council's environmental target to become carbon neutral by 2030, which will in part need to be achieved through various transport improvements.

The key issues affecting the borough are described below with further detail in Appendix A. The executive summary of the Strategy is provided in Appendix B, the full draft of the strategy is in Appendix C and our proposed response is set out in Appendix D.

Background

The Transport Strategy for the South East consultation draft has been produced by TfSE, a unique partnership of local authorities, business groups and transport bodies formed to speak with one voice on the region's transport priorities.

The Strategy sets out a thirty-year framework to guide decisions about where, when and how money is invested in the South East's transport network, along with a range of policy changes and other initiatives to make sustainable travel easier and more attractive to people and businesses. The Strategy sets out an ambitious plan to more than double the South East's economy by 2050, create 500,000 jobs, reduce congestion, boost air quality by reducing the region's reliance on private cars and help cut the South East's carbon emissions to net-zero.

The consultation draft on the Transport Strategy for the South East was issued on 11th October 2019 and is open until 10th January 2020 for responses from various organisations and people on their position on TfSE's goals and initiatives.

Next steps

Following the public consultation, a final version of the transport strategy will be put to Transport for the South East's board in spring 2020. A strategic investment plan is planned for publication in 2021, providing a prioritised, costed, deliverable list of schemes, initiatives and policies to start turning the South East's vision into reality. The Transport Strategy will be reviewed and updated every five years after the final version is produced.

TfSE is also planning to commission a set of studies to further explore some of the themes outlined in this Transport Strategy such as: South West Area, Inner Orbital Area, Future Mobility Strategy, etc.

Analysis of Issues

Strategic Vision

The Strategic Vision of the Strategy is set out below:

By 2050, the South East of England will be a leading global region for net-zero carbon, sustainable economic growth where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step-change in connectivity and environmental quality. A high-quality, reliable, safe and accessible transport network will offer seamless door-to-door journeys enabling our businesses to compete and trade more effectively in the global marketplace and giving our residents and visitors the highest quality of life.

The consultation comprises 5 Topic areas:

Our Approach:

Our Area:

Our Vision, Goals and Priorities:

Our Strategy

Implementation

Appendix A details these topic areas and our position regarding these. A higher level commentary is provided below.

Key issues arising from the Consultation

In general the strategy as a whole takes a common sense approach and is aligned with many of our own transport aspirations and existing and emerging strategies. There is reference to a change in approach to “decide and provide” for transport as opposed to “predict and provide”; this is an emerging trend in the industry as there is acceptance that trying to continue to provide using existing/projected travel patterns is not sustainable. This is complimented by a change in approach in terms of planning for people and places rather than planning for vehicles. Again this represents acknowledgement that some of the practices of the past are no longer appropriate in many circumstances. This does not mean we should not enable use of private vehicles and continue to keep these vehicles moving by reducing congestion and removing pinch points, however, it does mean that where possible we should consider providing alternatives and plan for a future that reduces unnecessary car use. It has to be acknowledged that many of our residents are reliant on private vehicles and, particularly in rural areas, there is no viable alternative available currently.

The strategy suggests that economic growth in the region will be achieved without having a negative impact on the environment. This means that there will be a need to help support growth in Electric Vehicle use as well as a significant increase in provision for active and sustainable transport.

Transport for the South East has developed a framework that applies a set of principles to identify strategic issues and opportunities for each journey type in the South East. The key principles that have been applied in this process are as follows:

- supporting sustainable economic growth, but not at any cost;
- achieving environmental sustainability;
- planning for successful places;
- putting the user at the heart of the transport system; and
- planning regionally for the short, medium and long term

A number of route studies are proposed to establish issues on the strategic corridors (covering all modes). These will be useful in helping to direct funding towards the corridors most in need of support, however, there is little cross-boundary consideration and so the potential for a new river crossing (which would join TfSE to the England’s Economic Heartland Sub-national transport body) is unlikely to be determined by the proposed studies. We are therefore asking that travel into the neighbouring authorities and wider long distance travel is considered as part of this work.

Routes to major transport hubs such as Heathrow Airport are discussed. There is support for the Western Rail Link which Wokingham Borough are very keen to see introduced regardless of any potential expansion at the airport.

In implementing the Strategy, TfSE have proposed a set of Economic, Social and Environmental Key Performance indicators. These include aiming to achieve net zero

Carbon Emissions by 2050, which we would prefer to be brought forward to 2030 in line with the borough's commitment having declared a Climate Emergency.

Conclusion

There are six key areas which concern the Borough namely:

1. The Climate Change Emergency,
2. Environmental health and noise,
3. Investment needed for improving infrastructure,
4. Funding to deliver and improve services,
5. The need for the Western Rail Link to Heathrow, and;
6. The potential for a third Thames crossing.

The Transport Strategy for the South East has highlighted the need to improve air quality by reducing the region's reliance on private cars to reduce congestion and help cut the South East's carbon emissions to net-zero. It has also mentioned the Western Rail Link being an important transport development to improve public transport access to Heathrow Airport in order to alleviate congestion from our road network, thus reducing environmental damage through air and noise pollution. However, the Strategy fails to mention the need for the third Thames crossing, which is vital to reduce congestion and improve road capacity whilst bringing in environmental benefits.

Our response in Appendix D includes strong support for the majority of the strategy with comment added to support our key areas of concern above.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £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)	0	n/a	0
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	n/a	0
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	n/a	0

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications

Links to the Council-wide Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Public Sector Equality Duty

WBC guidance states that an EqIA should be completed for all projects, policy or service changes that the Council initiates so that the Council can undertake its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This response does not represent a change in policy or position relating to TfSE.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Director – Corporate Services	No additional comments
Monitoring Officer	No additional comments
Leader of the Council	No additional comments

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None.

List of Background Papers

Appendix A – Summary of key Issues and WBC position

Appendix B – TfSE Draft Transport Strategy Executive Summary

Appendix C – Transport Strategy for the South East Consultation Draft

Appendix D – Proposed Response

Contact Robert Curtis	Service Place
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6489	Email robert.curtis@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank