

Innovative Transport Solutions

A report by the Borough Council's Head of Economic Development to the Joint transportation Board on 20 April 2015

SUMMARY

At the 19 January 2015 JTB meeting it was requested that a report about innovative transport solutions for Tunbridge Wells be brought to the next meeting for further discussion. The paper in Appendix A has been prepared by consultants DHA Planning. Further exploratory work on the more viable innovative options is required with a view to gathering a sound evidence base relating to passenger demand, capital and revenue costs, potential funding sources, operating models, and planning constraints to inform future decision-making.

Report status

For recommendation.

BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

At the 19 January JTB meeting, Cllr Scott presented a paper on driverless transport solutions for Tunbridge Wells. It was agreed that this would be a topic for further discussion at the April JTB meeting and a further paper on this was requested.

In response to this request, TWBC commissioned DHA Planning to prepare a discussion paper on innovative transport solutions in order to further the debate and assist in establishing a way forward for this work. The paper is attached as Appendix A to this report.

The paper sets out information about a number of innovative transport solutions. It questions whether Tunbridge Wells and its hinterland exhibits the necessary urban form, development density or travel behaviour to support rail or guideway-based transport solutions. It notes that the configuration of the town's highway network, around which its architectural and cultural heritage has developed, provides limited opportunities for the more innovative bus-based mass transit systems to be implemented to the extent required to achieve meaningful modal shift and congestion reduction. In addition, it points out that the ready availability of low cost or free long-stay car parking within close proximity of the town centre remains a barrier to delivering viable public transport solutions.

However, the paper acknowledges that the preparation of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan and Transport Strategy presents the Borough Council, its residents and stakeholders with the opportunity to reflect on these constraints and to consider the extent to which there is the desire and capability to overcome them in the medium to long term. A detailed appraisal of the more viable options available is required in order to gather a sound evidence base relating to passenger demand, capital and revenue costs, potential funding sources, operating models, and planning constraints to inform future decision-making.

The current draft Transport Strategy which will be presented to JTB in July has been reviewed and amended as a result of the consultation carried out in 2013/14 and further supporting technical work. The Strategy makes clear the timeframe it is seeking to address (to 2026) but highlights that schemes and opportunities not deliverable in this timeframe will continue to be reviewed. Specifically, the following is set out in the strategy:

...Additionally, proposals for innovative solutions for public and private transport (for example driverless cars and personal rapid transit systems) will be kept under review as potential schemes for the future.

CONCLUSION

TWBC Members are supportive of the work being undertaken by Cllr Scott and colleagues to explore options relating to personal rapid transit. However, there are not the staff or financial resources available to take this work forward at present at the Borough Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that JTB:

1. Endorses the inclusion in the Borough Transport Strategy referring to the need to explore innovative transport solutions for the future (as outlined above);
2. Asks Cllr Scott and colleagues to continue their exploration of ULTRA and other driverless solutions and accepts that whilst TWBC Cabinet are supportive of this work, the Borough Council is unable to offer up staff or financial resource at the present time; and
3. Agrees that any future Local Plan Review and Transport Strategy Review, is accompanied by further technical work and support from KCC, to ensure that there is transport infrastructure to support future development within the Borough.

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Name of Director

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Innovative Solutions to Traffic Congestion in Tunbridge Wells Discussion Document – DHA Planning