

Minutes of the meeting of the **SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION)** Committee held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Friday 5 March 2010 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor G J Hood

Councillors: A Friend  
L A Keen  
D R Lloyd-Jones  
P A Lodge  
J A Rook  
J F Tranter  
R S Walkden

Also Present: Councillor T A Bond  
Councillor N J Collor  
Councillor C J Smith  
Mr M Gibson (Southeastern Trains)

Officers: Democratic Support Officer  
Senior Transport Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C M Edwards, S R Nicholas and J C Record.

464 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor J A Rook had been appointed as substitute for Councillor J C Record.

465 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J F Tranter advised the committee that she should have declared a personal interest in Minute No. 446 of the meeting held on 1 March 2010. The interest arose by reason of her being a leaseholder with the Council.

466 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The following persons were also in attendance and spoke in connection with the items indicated:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Deal Rail Services	Mr J Daniel
Deal Rail Services	Mr R Osmond
Deal Rail Services	Mr I Killbery

467 DEAL RAIL SERVICES

Mr Michael Gibson, the Public Affairs Manager for Southeastern Trains, was present to answer the Committee's questions on changes to the rail timetable for services from Deal to London.

Q1. In the response to the questions raised by the Deal and Walmer Neighbourhood Forum provided by Southeastern Trains it is stated that the service specification for the high-speed services is written into the franchise agreement. What is the process for making amendments to the franchise agreement for high-speed services?

It was stated that any change to the specification would need the approval of the Department for Transport. Before approaching the Department for Transport to request such a change, an operator would need to be satisfied that that proposed change was both operationally possible and financially viable.

The Committee was advised that Dover District Council should be proud of the work that it had done to attract inward investment and a stop in Dover on HS1. A contrast was made with the situation of Maidstone, which had failed to attract a high-speed service despite being the county town for Kent.

Q2. How long would you expect the amendment process to take?

Major changes to the specification would need approval from the Department for Transport, Network Rail and other industry partners and could take approximately 12 months to implement, particularly if the proposed amendments required changes to Southeastern Trains subsidy profile, as this would require Treasury approval.

Q3. In principle, would Southeastern Trains support an amendment to its franchise agreement to introduce a stop in Deal, for either all or a limited number of high-speed services, if it were financially viable?

The Committee was informed that Southeastern Trains would not support such an amendment. The terms and conditions of a rail franchise were set by the Department for Transport and stipulated the level of service the Government wished to see on the network. A key part of the franchise document was the service specification that detailed the number of services and the stopping pattern the successful bidder for the franchise had to operate. This formed the basis of the operator's timetable. Meeting the service specification was a legal requirement and any change to the specification needs the approval of the Department for Transport.

The timetable that came into effect on the Southeastern network on 13 December 2009 was based upon the Integrated Kent Franchise service specification prepared by the Department for Transport and was the result of a consultation exercise carried out by the Department for Transport and the former Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) in 2003/2004.

The original specification set by the Department for Transport for high-speed services was from St Pancras to Folkestone Central, with an option to extend to Dover Priory. This option was taken up and now formed part of the service. However, the specification did not stipulate that high-speed trains should serve Deal. In formulating the service specification the Department for Transport and the SRA consulted with a range of stakeholders including Passenger Focus (then known as the Rail Passengers Council), Kent County Council and Dover District Council and the final draft was amended in light of representations received at that time. This was the opportunity for the Council to flag up its aspirations for the timetable including stops on High Speed 1 at Deal.

When Southeastern Trains took over the franchise in June 2006 it commissioned an extensive demand validation study to assess whether the assumptions on which the

Department for Transport had based the specification were still operationally and commercially valid in light of more accurate passenger numbers derived from loading software fitted to trains and recent Government decisions such as the Thameslink programme. The outcome, shared with stakeholders including KCC and DDC, prompted Southeastern Trains to seek changes to the specification from the Department for Transport, including a request for more main line services to London on the Hastings and Chatham main lines, and a reduction in peak stops at Lewisham.

In regard to stops on HS1, the original Department for Transport specification had included stops at a number of smaller stations including Westenhanger, Sandling and Higham which in Southeastern Trains view were commercially unviable given the relatively small number of passengers likely to use the service from those stations and the impact on journey times would reduce the attractiveness of the service to passengers from larger stations further away from London. Consequently, it requested that these stops be removed from the specification, which was agreed by the Department for Transport. It was the view of Southeastern Trains that stops on HS1 at Deal would also fall under this category.

Furthermore, regular stops at Deal on HS1 would require more trains to be built, platforms on the line to be modified and the lighting to be upgraded for the operational system on the train. Doing so would require considerable investment and/or Government subsidy and this was not covered by the franchise agreement. In addition, the signalling system at Deal was also not compliant with the standards operated at other stations where the HS1 stopped and would require further study.

If the HS1 service were to stop at Deal, it would result in two London bound services in the early morning and two late evening return services which would create a service that passengers could not reasonably rely upon for commuting. In addition, the recently published Kent Route Utilisation Strategy which examined passenger demand for the next thirty years did not envisage high speed services on this route so such a service did not form part of the industry's funding for future years.

Councillor N J Collor stated that transport matters were the responsibility of Kent County Council and that Dover District Council had sought to work with it in responding to consultation on rail services. The first responses in respect of Deal were only received by the Council five weeks previously. It was suggested that a rail users group could be useful in championing the case for Deal given how effectively a similar group had worked for Shepway District in securing support from Kent County Council for its high-speed case. Councillor Collor assured the committee that he would be lobbying Lord Adonis on the matter of a stop on the HS1 service for Deal.

Q4. How many passengers on average depart from Deal Station with tickets for London Stations during peak commuter hours on working days?

There were currently 52 passengers holding season tickets from Deal to London including both point-to-point journeys and travel cards. This figure included on-line sales.

Q5. What is the level of passenger occupancy on the first four high-speed services leaving from Dover Priory on a weekday morning?

The passenger occupancy level for the first four high-speed services leaving Dover Priory on a weekday morning was as follows:

06:12	20 passengers	(on leaving Folkestone its up to 55)
06:28	32 passengers	(on leaving Folkestone its up to 114)
07:08	30 passengers	(on leaving Folkestone its up to 120)
07:38	31 passengers	(on leaving Folkestone its up to 123)

Q6. How many minutes to the total journey time from the high-speed trains point of origin at Ramsgate to St Pancras would the shortest feasible stop in Deal add?

A station stop in Deal would add approximately three minutes to the journey time for the HS1 service. The Committee was advised that for the reasons cited in the response to Q3, this would still be something Southeastern Trains would be unlikely to consider unless asked by the Department for Transport to do otherwise.

Q7. The Southeastern Trains Mainline Timetable shows the variation in journey times from Dover Priory to St Pancras of between 66 to 71 minutes. For Deal originating passengers this increases to in excess of 100 minutes given the connection time at Dover Priory for the high-speed service is between 16 and 23 minutes. What consideration, if any, has been given to reducing the connection waiting time during peak hours for Deal originating passengers joining the high-speed train at Dover Priory?

It was stated that improving connectivity at this location was difficult given the need to allocate slots on both the high-speed and main line network, as the services were not sourced from Dover Priory.

Q8. What has been the impact of the new high-speed service on pre-existing 'normal' rail services in the Dover District? For example, have any stations seen a reduction in services or change of timetable?

There were six trains via Folkestone in the old timetable and this remained unchanged including the additional High Speed services and by changing at Ashford, connections could be made into other main line trains starting there.

For services via Canterbury East, there were seven in the old timetable and this also remained unchanged.

Q9. What plans are there, excluding the high-speed services, for the improvement of rail services in the Dover District over the next five years?

Southeastern Trains franchise agreement was due to end in 2014 (with a break point in 2012) but within the time remaining it was looking to improve performance and reliability, upgrade stations and improve passenger satisfaction.

The nature of the network inherited by Southeastern with its high number of stations split over a network that historically began as two separate companies meant that it was complex to timetable. In addition, the high number of mainline London stations it served when compared to other franchises further complicated the timetable given that the main lines were only double track. This meant that unlike the other

franchises serving London, the Southeastern Trains express and slow services had to share the same track space and this impacted on the potential for timetabling improvement.

However, in partnership with Network Rail and local bus companies Southeastern would be looking to work with Dover District Council and Kent County Council on jointly funded schemes to improve stations and public transport integration.

Q10. Would you accept that the frequency and timing of train services could enhance efforts to regenerate an area and if so, what consideration has been given to matching train services to housing growth plans for the Dover District?

It was accepted that improved transport links would have a knock-on impact on local regeneration initiatives. The service specification on which the current timetable was based took into consideration housing growth forecasts supplied by local councils to the Department for Transport and the former Strategic Rail Authority.

Q11. How do individuals wanting to make suggestions for inclusion in the train timetable go about doing so?

Passengers who were seeking amendments to the timetable should, in the first instance, contact Southeastern at PO Box 63428, London SE1 5FD or via Southeastern Trains website ([www.southeasternrailway.co.uk](http://www.southeasternrailway.co.uk)) and their suggestions would be forwarded to the timetable team. Members of the public may also make representations via their local Member of Parliament or via Passenger Focus.

Q12. While accepting the principle that passengers who do not park at a train station should not subsidise those that do, is there any scope for changing station car-parking charges to encourage more people to use the train?

Southeastern Trains kept car-parking prices under review and in the past it had reduced prices to encourage additional use. However, car parking was provided at a cost as land had to be leased from Network Rail at a market rate and sites needed to be maintained and serviced.

It was stated that in the main, car-parking charges compared favourably or in some cases were lower, than private sector or local authority car parks. While the cost of providing car parking was much the same for a rail operator as it was for a local authority or private company, the income stream for stations was much lower. This was because, at a station car park a space was usually utilised only once a day. At a town centre local authority or private sector car park, spaces would be utilised several times a day with a concomitant increase in revenue to the operator.

Q13. How does Southeastern Trains currently promote its schedule of engineering works?

The schedule of engineering works was planned by Network Rail in consultation with Southeastern to ensure the least disruption possible. The plans for December 2010 to December 2011 were currently being developed. Forthcoming engineering works were promoted by means of posters on stations for each week up to 8 weeks in advance and on Southeastern's website for each week up to 12 weeks in advance.

Q14. What alternative methods, if any, are being considered for promoting the schedule of engineering works?

There were no plans to change the way it was shown currently. Southeastern Trains has debated whether to show the schedule in all its printed timetables however the level of changes to the schedule by Network Rail meant that it was impossible to guarantee the schedule for the lifetime of any timetable.

Q15. How many instances of anti-social behaviour have been recorded at stations and on trains in the Dover District in the last year?

This information was held by the British Transport Police and figures for the last 12 months could be found on its website ([www.btp.org.uk](http://www.btp.org.uk)). The site had a look up tool enabling comparisons to be made with reported crime per 100,000 passenger journeys with the previous 12 months.

Q16. How is Southeastern Trains working to further reduce instances of anti-social behaviour?

Southeastern Trains had an excellent working relationship with both the British Transport Police (BTP) and Kent Police. It also employed a team of Railway Enforcement Officers (REO) who patrolled trains and stations on an intelligence led basis. The REO's were accredited by the BTP and although they did not have powers of arrest they were authorised to issue penalty fares, confiscate alcohol and escort passengers in breach of the railway bylaws from stations and trains.

On all Southeastern Trains, conductors were responsible for patrolling the carriages as a method of reassuring passengers and deterring anti-social behaviour. The idea of separate carriages for unaccompanied women had been considered but there was some concern that this would only make the problem worse by highlighting where unaccompanied passengers were on a train. Furthermore, all train carriages were fitted with emergency buttons.

CCTV covered the majority of stations and Southeastern Trains ensured that they were well lit in order to give a sense of security to passengers using them after dark. All trains serving Dover Priory had CCTV cameras installed and the Department for Transport had accredited Dover Priory station with secure station status. Although the railway was obviously not immune to the wider problems of society, a passenger was statistically less at risk of crime on a train or at a station than on the street outside.

Q17. Do you have any plans for improving the presentation and cleanliness of stations in the Dover District over the next five years?

Dover Priory has already seen considerable investment and all stations in Southeastern's area were to be re-painted in the lifetime of the franchise. In addition, all stations were cleaned on a regular basis and repairs faulted by staff and reported to the maintenance contactor or network rail as appropriate. Southeastern also employed a team of quality assessors who visit all stations on our network to ensure standards are being maintained.

RESOLVED: (a) That Mr Gibson be thanked for attending the meeting and responding in an open and positive manner to the questions of the Committee.

- (b) That the Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager be requested to clarify if British Transport Police figures for anti-social behaviour were included in the district's figures.
- (c) That the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee states that it deplores the fact that Deal, as the second largest town in the District, was not served by the high-speed service and it expresses its concern that this was stifling regeneration potential.
- (d) That Mr Gibson be requested to provide further information on the following points:
  - (i) The season ticket sales figures for journeys to London from Dover Priory, Sandwich and Sturry.
  - (ii) The number of passengers departing Deal for London on peak commuter hour services prior to the introduction of the high-speed service.
  - (iii) To confirm whether the HS1 supplement cost applied for a journey to destinations beyond London.
  - (iv) To confirm if travel card tickets could be purchased through the Southeastern Trains website.
- (e) That it be recommended to the Cabinet:
  - (i) That the Cabinet urges Kent County Council to press the Secretary of State for Transport to hold a rail summit to discuss high-speed train services in Kent and in particular to put the case for a stop on HS1 to serve the area of Deal and Walmer and for improvements in timetabling and linkages for the area.
  - (ii) That Dover District Council and Kent County Council examine ways in which they could assist in improving communication between Southeastern Trains and the public.
  - (iii) That Dover District Council set up a rail users' group.
  - (iv) That Dover District Council lobby Southeastern Trains for the replacement of '0845' numbers with free phone numbers.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm.