
Subject:	DOVER FASTRACK ADVISORY BOARD
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 7 November 2022
Report of:	Roger Walton, Strategic Director (Place and Environment)
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Martin Bates, Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To seek authority to enter into the Statement of Commitment and Understanding of the Dover Fastrack Advisory Board, which would provide the Council with an opportunity to influence the specification of the Dover Fastrack bus service.

Recommendation:

- (1) That the Council enters into the Statement of Commitment and Understanding of the Dover Fastrack Advisory Board.
- (2) That Cabinet notes that the effect of entering into the Statement of Commitment is to appoint the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services and the Strategic Director (Place and Environment) to the Board.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council is currently constructing infrastructure to support a new, quick, and reliable bus service between Whitfield and Dover town centre, known as Dover Fastrack. This capital project is largely funded by a grant from Homes England, is being delivered in collaboration with Kent County Council and is due to be completed late in 2023.
- 1.2 A bus service will commence shortly after completion of the physical works. The service will be procured and managed by Kent County Council, supported by a grant for purchase of electric vehicles obtained from the Department for Transport's Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area scheme. KCC has requested a DDC member representative sit on the Fastrack Advisory board (FAB) and Cabinet is requested to agree appointment of a representative, specifically Cllr Bates, to the FAB and to agree to the Statement of Commitment and Understanding appended to this report.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Within the funding agreement between Dover District Council and Homes England, the Council has undertaken to "work in partnership with Kent County Council Highways department and the operator of the Bus Rapid Transit System to use monies collected from s.106 contributions to operate, or subsidise the operation, of the Bus Rapid Transit System for a minimum period of 3 years from the date of its completion."
- 2.2 A Dover Fastrack Advisory Board (FAB) is being established by Kent County Council as the Local Transport Authority using powers provided by the Bus Services Act of 2017 and developed through the National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better", published on 15th March 2021. Membership will comprise representatives from Kent County Council, Dover District Council and Homes England.

- 2.3 The Fastrack Advisory Board (FAB) will build upon the objectives of the previous Dover Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) Agreement, copy attached at Appendix 1. As stated in the Dover Fastrack Advisory Board Statement of Commitment and Understanding, copy attached at Appendix 2, the objective is to support planning, delivery, and operation of the Dover Fastrack service. Member organisations will cooperate to create a public transport network that provides residents, visitors, and the business community with an attractive alternative to private car usage that enriches quality of life in the Dover District, attracts investment, and enhances work and leisure opportunities. FAB will provide advice on all elements of the Dover Fastrack operational programme including overall quality standards, timetable, and the most appropriate procurement mechanism.
- 2.4 The FAB will not have any powers in its own right, but its members will use their expertise to inform KCC's decisions regarding delivery of Dover Fastrack. Issues specific to Dover Fastrack will be decided by KCC's Cabinet, or where appropriate by KCC officers with relevant delegated powers. Issues that affect the wider bus network will be raised at the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Monitoring Group for East Kent, and if necessary, then raised to the Enhanced Partnership Board to request a variation to the East Kent Enhanced Partnership agreement. As specified in the Bus Services Act of 2017 and explained in Appendix 3, the EP East contains only two statutory representatives: bus operators and KCC in its capacity as the Local Transport Authority.
- 2.5 KCC advises that the most likely arrangement for procurement of the Dover Fastrack service will be through a separate de minimis contract (or procurement if necessary), with the contract forming an annex to the core EP East agreement. In any case, EP East will define the key requirements that will have to be met by the Dover Fastrack operator, which would be set out as commitments in the EP document.
- 2.6 The FAB will seek to ensure the service is sustainable and self-sufficient. Advice received to date from KCC, and its consultants, indicates that the Dover Fastrack service is likely to be economically viable from the start of operation. However, should it become apparent through discussions at the FAB that seed funding will be required, a further report will be presented to Cabinet. The S106 agreement associated with DOV/10/1010 Whitfield Urban Expansion Phase 1 secured a contribution of £1,795,312,50 as a "Bus Services Contribution", although this has not yet been invoiced.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option One – To appoint a representative to the Dover Fastrack Advisory Board
- 3.2 Option Two – To not appoint a representative to the Dover Fastrack Advisory Board

4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 Option One – Membership of the Fastrack Advisory Board would provide Dover District Council with a voice at the group, thus ensuring local concerns are taken into account when the Enhanced Partnership East and KCC define requirements that will have to be met by the Dover Fastrack operator. **This is the recommended option**
- 4.2 Option Two – If Dover District Council is not represented at the Dover Fastrack Advisory Board, then the Council will have no influence in defining requirements that will have to be met by the Dover Fastrack operator. This option is not recommended.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 The only direct resource implications are the use of elected member and officer time in attending the meetings. No financial obligations are associated with membership of the Fastrack Advisory Board and membership of the FAB will provide the Council with a voice when decisions are made regarding the service specification for Dover Fastrack, including ensuring that it has the best possible chance of being economically viable. Should seed funding for the service be required from the DOV/10/1010 S106 Bus Services contribution, a further report will be brought to Cabinet for consideration.

6. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications resulting from the appointment of Cllr Bates. However, the introduction of Dover Fastrack will help the Council to meet its ambition to see the district become carbon neutral by 2050, as it will provide a real alternative to the car for local journeys and creates an effective transport interchange with Southeastern train services. In addition, due to the funding secured towards electric buses, Dover Fastrack (along with Fastrack at Ebbsfleet) will be the first zero emission service in Kent.

7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment (DL)
- 7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make
- 7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
- 7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Dover Quality Bus Partnership Agreement

Appendix 2 – Dover Fastrack Advisory Board Statement of Commitment and Understanding

Appendix 3 – Notice that an Enhanced Partnership has been Made

9. **Background Papers**

DDC Cabinet Report 6 December 2021 DOVER FASTRACK PROJECT UPDATE

DDC Cabinet Report 9 November 2020 DOVER FASTRACK PROJECT UPDATE

DDC Cabinet Report 6 July 2020 DOVER FASTRACK PROJECT UPDATE

DDC Cabinet Report 4 November 2019 BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT UPDATE

DDC Cabinet Report 1 July 2019 BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT

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