

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
24TH APRIL 2008

Draft West Midlands Rail Vision: Network Development Strategy Consultation
February 2008

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	A Better Environment
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Enabling Community Wellbeing
KEY PRIORITY:	Transport Infrastructure
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Stephen Clee
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Planning, Health and Environment
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APPENDICES:	Appendix 1: Submitted Comments regarding Centro Draft West Midlands Rail Vision: Network Development Strategy (Consultation)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's retrospective approval of comments and representations on the consultation document, which were submitted to Centro-WMPTA by the response deadline of 25th March 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to DECIDE:

- 2.1 **To approve the schedule of comments set out at Appendix 1 to this report as the District Council's formal response to the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority's (Centro-WMPTA) consultation on the Draft West Midlands Rail Vision: Network Development Strategy.**
- 2.2 **That, in instances where consultation deadlines fall outside scheduled Cabinet meeting dates, Cabinet delegates authority to the Cabinet Members for Planning, Regeneration & Prosperity and for Housing, Health & Rural Affairs to submit responses, within the consultation deadlines, in conjunction with the Head of Planning, Health & Environment and to report the response to the next available Cabinet meeting for information.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Draft West Midlands Rail Vision: Network Development Strategy Consultation document outlines Centro's vision of how the rail network in the West Midlands may develop in the future. The first section of the document shows those measures that are needed across the network on all routes, whilst the second section shows the route-specific schemes.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The following are some of the key issues arising from the consultation document. Appendix 1 to this report sets out detailed officer comments for the Cabinet's consideration and endorsement. These comments were reported to the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5th March. Panel Members concurred with the Officer comments set out at Appendix 1. They also raised particular concerns that there are no direct train services from Kidderminster to Birmingham New Street Station. The Panel felt that comments should be included to request that when the re-modelling of New Street Station takes place that some direct train services be reinstated.
- 4.2 Centro is actively working with Network Rail to ensure their respective plans benefit the region. It is also working closely with London Midland, the new local train operator. London Midland has plans to upgrade stations and rolling stock across the West Midlands; and their involvement will be crucial in delivering additional capacity. They are also engaging the other operators in the area – Cross Country, Chiltern Railways, Virgin West Coast and Arriva Trains Wales – as well as freight operators and the Shire, Unitary and District Councils so as to ensure that everyone's interests are recognised and that the Strategy is as inclusive as possible to enable it to be as influential as possible.
- 4.3 The route specific schemes are those that Centro see's as delivering the greatest benefits and having the best chance of being taken forward. Centro is working with industry partners to further develop these schemes and assess their costs and benefits so that they are in a position to justify the allocation of funds to them.
- 4.4 However, it is noted that there may be certain other schemes that ought to be included or at least reviewed in future development work. Some of these schemes are included in Worcestershire County Council's Top Ten Rail Aspirations 2008 document.
- 4.5 Improvements to Kidderminster Station are one of these aspirations. The District Council is working with Network Rail and other stakeholders to improve the access to the station, and the facilities it offers. A new footbridge with lifts to improve access for people with walking difficulties will be installed in early 2008, and this is acting as the catalyst for other improvements which aim to reduce congestion, improve accessibility, increase interchange opportunities and create a high quality gateway to Kidderminster. These include;
- A new modular station building

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- Improved access for pedestrians and buses from Comberton Hill, the town centre and the station forecourt.
- An improved station forecourt with improved bus and rail interchange facilities.

4.6 Members will note that Centro extended the closing date for consultation on this Draft Vision until the 25th March 2008 to allow sufficient time to consider the draft strategy and to respond to it appropriately. Following agreement of the Cabinet Member for Planning Regeneration and Prosperity, the schedule of comments at Appendix 1 has been submitted to Centro to meet this consultation deadline. This report therefore seeks the retrospective approval of this schedule.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications to the Council arising out of this report.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The recommended policy responses are in accordance with the Council's established priorities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Draft Vision sets out both the network wide and route-specific schemes that Centro-WMPTA view as essential to developing and establishing high quality rail services that will support the economic development of the city region. Appendix 1 sets out detailed comments on the consultation for the Cabinet's retrospective approval.

9. CONSULTEES

9.1 CMT

9.2 Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Centro Draft West Midlands Rail Vision: Network Development Strategy (Consultation)

10.2 Worcestershire County Council's Top Ten Rail Aspirations 2008

26.3.08

Cabinet 24/04/2008