

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: 18th January 2011

11

Title: Essex Local Transport Plan Consultation

**Author: Jeremy Pine, Planning Policy / DC Liaison
Officer (01799 510460)**

Item for decision

Summary

1. This report seeks the Committee's view on Essex County Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultation. Any comments that the Committee has will be sent as part of the Council's formal response via the consultation questionnaire. The response is due by 11th February 2011. To assist, all Council Members have been asked to send any initial comments to officers by the start of the New Year.

As part of the consultation process, Members can send individual responses to the County Council if they wish.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee makes its views known as part of the consultation process.

Financial Implications

3. None. There are no costs associated with the recommendation.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

The Essex Local Transport Plan Consultation

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	The Council has the opportunity to respond to the consultation by 11 th February 2011
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal	None

Implications	
Sustainability	The new Local Transport Plan will have the promotion of sustainable transport as a key aim
Ward-specific impacts	District wide
Workforce/Workplace	Part of officers' normal transport liaison duties

Overview

6. The new LTP will set out how the County Council will invest in transport in the next 15 years and help to achieve sustainable economic growth in Essex. This is the 3rd LTP, following on from LTP2 2006-2011. The LTP will also set out how transport services will be provided. In an earlier countywide survey road maintenance, journey time reliability and improving transport were the most popular priorities.
7. There is limited funding for local transport, particularly for investment in major improvements. The short term focus is, therefore, on what can be achieved with the available funding. The change of Government and the spending cuts has presented the opportunity to reassess how resources are used and to ensure that local needs are best met. This is the same kind of approach that the County Council followed when it recently carried out a review of bus services in Uttlesford.

The new LTP Approach

8. The County Council has identified 3 options for investment in transport. In each option there would be similar expenditure on safety and maintenance, but the remaining funding would be focussed in different ways. The 3 options for Consultees to choose from are:

Option 1 – investing in growth – where expenditure is focussed on improving transport connections within and between main towns, especially to improve the reliability of journey times, with less spent both on reducing CO² emissions and on sustainable travel.

Option 2 – a better place to live – where there would be a balanced spread of expenditure on economic growth, reducing CO² emissions and on sustainable travel by improving access to work, education and leisure activities.

Option 3 – a low carbon future – where expenditure is focussed on providing travel choice and encouraging less car use, especially to reduce CO² emissions and promoting sustainable travel, but with less expenditure directed towards economic growth.

9. The consultation also asks for views on what the proportion of expenditure should be between seven types of transport infrastructure and services,

namely:

Improving facilities for bus users
Supporting non-commercial bus services
Supporting community-operated transport services
Walking and cycling infrastructure
Improving road safety
Managing traffic and improving journey time reliability
Other

Further views are sought on priority for maintenance of the road network, namely:

Main roads between towns
Minor roads between towns and villages
Local roads in residential areas
Pedestrian pavements (alongside roads)
Public footways
Cycleways
Street lighting
Street furniture, including signs and bus stops

10. The consultation also asks if there are any issues of concern about the rail or trunk road networks, which the County Council is not responsible for. The County has identified the reliability of journeys using the A120, A12 and the Dartford Crossing and the current poor access to Harlow from the M11.

11. The LTP will be structured around four distinct areas, each centred on a main town. Each area will have an implementation plan. The West Essex area consists of Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford (the other areas are Thames Gateway, Haven Gateway and Heart of Essex).

In the brief description of the West Essex area, the following gaps in transport provision are identified:

Harlow: *Only one access to the strategic road network. All key routes are congested and improvements to key transport hubs are required. Major regeneration required, with sustainable transport the key.*

Stansted Airport: *Improved access by public transport needed, particularly from local centres.*

Interurban Routes: *M11 and M25 suffer from congestion, as does the A414. The London to Cambridge railway is at capacity during the peak period.*

Saffron Walden: *Improved public transport links and other non-car based links required (also to Audley End and Stansted Airport). Air quality is also an issue.*

12. In order to address these gaps, the consultation sets out seven priorities, which Consultees are asked to rank (top three only). There is also an opportunity to suggest other priorities. The priorities are:

Improving the attractiveness of bus services to and within Harlow through packages of improvements to facilities for buses at the busiest sites

Improving bus and rail public transport links to and between the West Essex centres – particularly from surrounding rural areas

Supporting regeneration initiatives within Harlow and local centres by improving the attractiveness of streets and public spaces

Supporting housing and employment growth and regeneration initiatives in Harlow and the local centres by providing transport access to development sites which encourages low carbon and low congestion travel choices (including bus, walking and cycling facilities)

Improving access to Harlow from the M11, particularly to improve journey time reliability

Improving access to Stansted Airport by low carbon forms of transport – particularly from Saffron Walden

Upgrading and improving cycling and walking networks in Harlow to encourage greater use

13. Finally, the consultation lists fifteen policies that ECC is developing to guide the delivery of transport in Essex. Responding to these policies is optional, but the way in which they are worded makes it difficult to disagree with any of them, although there is the opportunity to rank them in importance.

Officers' Comments

14. Whilst much of the West Essex strategy is Harlow-based as the major centre, it is pleasing to see that improving bus and rail links particularly from surrounding rural areas into the main centres is a candidate priority. The importance of what is said in Paragraph 7 of this report cannot be overemphasised, however. To exert its fullest influence, the Council needs to continue to work in partnership with others via the Uttlesford Transport Forum, Stansted Area Transport Forum and the West Anglia Routes Group to help implement the new LTP.
15. The Committee's comments are invited.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the Council fails to take part in the consultation, and as a result its views are not considered.	1. The Council has the opportunity to comment.	1. The views put forward will be considered by ECC.	Comment on the ECC consultation by the 11 th February 2011 expiry date.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.