

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 14 OCTOBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

THIRD MERSEYSIDE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – PREFERRED STRATEGY & PROPOSED WORKSHOP

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the draft version of the third Merseyside Local Transport Plan's Preferred Strategy and seeks Cabinet's comments and endorsement.
- 1.2 Cabinet is also requested to approve the proposal to hold an LTP3 Member/Senior Officer Workshop, to be held in November, to consider Wirral's transport priorities within the context of the overall strategy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members may be aware that the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Merseyside expires at the end of March 2011, and that over the past year or so, officers have been working to develop the third LTP (LTP3) which will run from April 2011.
- 2.2 Wirral Member involvement in this process has particularly been via the Merseyside Strategic Transportation Committee (MSTC) and Merseytravel's Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) LTP Committee. Councillor Rennie and Councillor Hale represent Wirral Council on the MSTC and Councillors Abbey, Blakeley, Mitchell and Rowlands represent Wirral Council on Merseytravel's LTP Committee.
- 2.3 Over the last six months, Wirral officers, along with the other LTP partners, have continued to develop the LTP3 which is now at the 'Preferred Strategy' stage. This development has stemmed from a significant body of background data, and from the "Challenges and Opportunities" paper that was published for consultation in March of this year.
- 2.4 Cabinet will recognise that the national and local policy framework for developing the third LTP remains unclear following the change in Government in May 2010. At the time of writing, authorities still await the outcome of the new Government's Spending Review to be followed by the publication of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Business Plan. One of the biggest uncertainties remains the level of funding that will be available within the first few years of the next LTP. Notwithstanding this uncertainty, the LTP remains the framework within which authorities shall set out their transport priorities for the foreseeable future.
- 2.5 Due to this current uncertainty, it will be appreciated that the LTP3 will need to be kept as sufficiently flexible as possible to allow for further changes, not least changes arising from future decisions around funding.

3.0 DRAFT PREFERRED STRATEGY

- 3.1 The LTP3 Preferred Strategy was launched at a successful event at the Holiday Inn, Liverpool, on 8 September 2010. This marked the start of a twelve week consultation period to seek public and stakeholders' feedback on the draft strategy before preparation of the final LTP3.
- 3.2 Key points in the development of the draft Preferred Strategy for the third Merseyside LTP are as follows:
- 3.3 It is being prepared in uncertain times. What is clear however is that there will be less funding available. The Preferred Strategy uses a range of £15m to £19m per annum as possible funding levels. This is a substantial reduction on levels enjoyed for LTP2 (2006/07 – 2010/11).
- 3.4 The Preferred Strategy also recognises the importance that the Government now attaches to private sector funding at one level, and possible community and third sector funding at the level signalled by the 'Big Society'.
- 3.5 Our forecasts for the future also contain more uncertainty than in the past due to the financial challenges facing the country and its, and the Liverpool City Region's, ability to move out of recession, and to what timescales. This clearly has an impact on likely implementation dates for key initiatives such as Wirral and Liverpool Waters and the expansion of the Port of Liverpool.
- 3.6 Such developments will, in turn, impact on future demand for transport. The assumptions for LTP3 are based on the evidence that travel demand will remain static for the first few years, before starting to increase in line with an upturn in the economy from around 2014/15.
- 3.7 On this basis, it is believed that the existing highway and public transport networks will be able to cope without the need for major investment, other than at certain locations or pinch points.
- 3.8 This should help mitigate the pressure from reduced levels of funding. Fortunately, funding for the strengthening of Bidston Moss Viaduct is already secured (see previous Cabinet report dated 15th April 2010, Minute 401 refers), and Wirral does not expect to have any other major highway schemes identified for inclusion in LTP3, excluding those associated with Wirral Waters which will be subject to separate agreements as part of the planning process.
- 3.9 There also remain major uncertainties about organisational arrangements at a national and local level. The LTP partners are particularly concerned how the framework for the LTP delivery will be addressed at the Liverpool City Region (LCR) level within the developments around any Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and await to see how transport provision will be taken forward should the Liverpool City Region LEP be approved by Government. (Minute 122 of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 September 2010 provides further information about the LEP).
- 3.10 Taking all these issues into consideration, the LTP Partners have developed the Preferred Strategy based on three key principles:

- The “twin peaks” of supporting **economic growth** and delivering a **low carbon economy**;
- A clear need to demonstrate **value-for-money efficiency, and effectiveness** in a funding constrained environment; and
- The need to address multiple objectives and pool resources with other core policy areas, such as health, to address common goals.

3.11 In summary, the Preferred Strategy suggests:

- **Addressing multiple objectives:** Being more innovative and clever with available resources - pooling and sharing.
- Having a clear commitment to **work with private sector partners, operators and other agencies** to achieve this.
- **Targeted use of resources** to provide improvements to address known demand.
- **Maintenance of core assets** and making **best use of assets**.
- **Safety and Inclusivity** – Reducing road accidents and the provision of equality of travel opportunities to address disadvantage.
- **Focus on active modes** - lower capital investment required, potential for high benefit:cost ratios - health and carbon benefits.
- **Technological improvement** - using ITS and Smartcards to make existing provision work better and encouraging green technology.
- **Smarter Choices** with **behavioural change** programmes.
- **Collaboration and co-operation** - working with planners and developers to reduce reliance on transport capital solutions as an essential element of development.
- **Resilient planning** - Planning for the future to ensure capacity for potential large economic or policy/funding changes.

3.12 These are translated into the following areas of activity:

- **Maintain the existing highway and public transport assets.** This will ensure that district infrastructures are protected from further deterioration, enabling us to make the best use of what we have.
- **Develop Statutory Quality Partnership** routes, on approaches to, and within, city and town centres, and associated **enforcement** of these measures.

- **Expand the range of public transport services by examining the role of other providers backed up by a network of neighbourhood based information services.** This will have a direct impact in disadvantaged areas, creating greater opportunities to travel, access employment and foster well being.
- **Develop and begin to implement the next generation of technology.** On highway network, this will include systems to improve traffic flows and advise road users, and the introduction of smart cards will offer a range of benefits to public transport users. Such technology will maintain free flowing networks, increase journey opportunities and integrate a wide range of transport uses.
- **The creation of an extensive network of low speed zones** to create safer roads, encourage more cycling and walking, therefore, improving people's health and well-being whilst reducing carbon outputs.
- **Work with the Freight Quality Partnership and other interested parties to develop and enhance the freight and logistics network.** This will strengthen Merseyside's competitiveness, support Superport and access to the Port, reduce the impact of freight movement on local communities, promote the use of rail and make a major contribution to reducing carbon outputs.
- **Develop the low emissions strategy and prepare a complementary strategy that seeks to reduce reliance on oil.** This will reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and improve health and provide a stimulus to the creation of new technologies in support of the LCR low carbon economy.
- **Fully integrate the LTP with the Local Development Frameworks and community strategies.** This will provide a robust planning framework linking transport and future developments in ways that can reduce long distance travel, improve accessibility and provide a framework for future funding sources.
- **Step up promotion of sustainable travel and behaviour change.** This will reinforce the advantages of change to create a healthier and low carbon Merseyside and create the foundations for the area to join other sustainable and successful cities.
- **Plan for the long term.** This will ensure that Wirral and its City Region partners are best placed to react to any future up-turn in the market and ensure that local transport systems are best able to support local growth.

3.13 Most of the Preferred Strategy is set at the City Region level, however the document recognises the link between transport and future major developments at locations such as Wirral Waters. References to Wirral Waters are in the Summary at paragraphs 16 & 17, and within the main text in Section 2.23, Tables 4 & 5 and Section 4.25 of the Preferred Strategy document.

3.14 Copies of the LTP3 Preferred Strategy – A New Mobility Culture for Merseyside (110 pages) along with a Public Summary for Consultation (8 pages) are available in the Members Library. Due to the amount of supporting information, Members are directed to the Merseyside LTP website http://www.letstravelwise.org/content188_LTP3-Consultation.html where various documents and data can be viewed electronically.

4.0 FUTURE TRANSPORT PROGRAMMES

4.1 At the present time, it is not known whether two, three or four-year settlement periods will be adopted for LTP3. The previous Government had planned for a three-year horizon, which had the advantage of being aligned with Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships. It is hoped that the LTP partners will be informed by the DfT of the length of the first 'settlement' period soon after the Spending Review announcement, which is due on 20 October 2010, to enable the drafting of authority implementation programmes from 2011/12.

4.2 Once clarity around funding levels begins to emerge from the October Spending Review, the various LTP partners will develop draft Implementation Programmes. This will translate the Preferred Strategy into a delivery programme covering the first 3 or 4-years of LTP3 from 2011/12.

4.3 I anticipate bringing Wirral's final draft LTP capital programme to a Cabinet meeting early in the New Year for approval once the level of the financial settlement is known.

5.0 PROPOSED WIRRAL MEMBER/ SENIOR OFFICER WORKSHOP

5.1 In order to provide the opportunity for elected Members to receive a presentation on the development of the LTP3 to date, it is proposed to hold a workshop at a date to be arranged in mid November. This workshop will also enable attendees to consider Wirral's priorities for transport within the context of, firstly, the wider transport strategy and, secondly, other non-transport Council priorities, such as housing and economic regeneration.

5.2 It is suggested that nominated Members and key officers from various departments of the Council attend the workshop to provide an opportunity for a full debate, which will help inform Wirral's LTP capital programme from 2011/12. It is also proposed that the discussion at the Workshop can then provide the basis of the formal Wirral Council response to the consultation document.

5.3 Cabinet is advised that the following Members be nominated for the workshop:

- Councillor Lesley Rennie, Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Transport Services;
- Members of the Sustainable Communities O&S Committee - Councillors Hale, Smith, Wilkins, Anderson, McCubbin, S Williams, McLachlan, J Williams, Brighouse and Mitchell;
- Councillors Abbey, Blakeley and Rowlands as additional representatives on Merseytravel's LTP Committee;

- Councillors Clements, Gilchrist and Keeley as additional representatives on the Wirral Pedestrian Forum and Wirral Cycle Forum;
- All remaining Members of the Council.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 LTPs provide the main means by which to draw down capital funding from the Department for Transport. It is expected that funding levels will be greatly reduced in the early years of LTP3, given the national budget deficit and the associated reductions in DfT funding.
- 6.2 Reduced funding levels will mean that the Council will not be able to support and deliver the same level of transport infrastructure improvements and initiatives that have been seen over the last five years or so, hence difficult decisions regarding funding priorities will inevitably need to be made.

7.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Staff from my Department will continue to provide Wirral's input to the third LTP and its strategic development. Delivery of the Transport Capital Programme will also be managed in-house.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 LTP3 will continue to support strategic aims to reduce worklessness, promote greater independence and choice, improve support for those with mental health problems, reduce numbers not in employment, education or training, especially from disadvantaged communities.
- 8.2 An important part of the development of LTP3 is an Equality Impact Assessment as part of an overall Integrated Assessment, which will assess the Plan's alignment with legislative requirements.

9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 LTP3 will continue to address road safety as an integral element of the transport strategy, which links closely with the Council's Local Area Agreement and Corporate Plan objectives to reduce traffic accidents, and also complements most of the Council's corporate objectives.

10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Sustainability and LA21 issues are common threads running through all the transport policies, and as part of the LTP3 development a full Strategic Environmental Assessment, a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitat Regulations Assessment will be included within an Integrated Assessment of the Plan.
- 10.2 Projects to increase the use of sustainable modes of transport support the aims to reduce our carbon footprint, as well as encourage healthier lifestyles and participation in fulfilling activities, such as walking and cycling.

11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no specific planning implications under this heading.

11.2 However, in accordance with DfT guidelines, the LTP is closely aligned with the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and other strategic and local policies, including the Regional Transport Strategy, Wirral's Tourism Strategy and local environmental, social and economic regeneration strategies.

11.3 The Merseyside Authorities are committed to approving a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which will improve linkages between land use and transport within the planning approvals' process. Members may recall that the SPD was particularly noted by the Government in the settlement letter as "indicative of forward thinking on the links between transport and planning".

11.4 This SPD will form an integral part of the Core Local Development Framework (LDF), and will be approved and implemented in the near future.

12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no specific anti-poverty implications in regards to the LTP Preferred Strategy.

12.2 However, it is recognised that the cost of travel continues to be a barrier for some people. To this end, the LTP Partners continue to work to develop a transport network that provides different options for travel, and engage with commercial public transport operators to try and address such issues.

13.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Social inclusion is a thread running through the LTP, which aims to provide a fully integrated transport system that is accessible to everyone. However, reductions in future transport funding is likely to impact on the extent of the measures and interventions that could help improve social inclusion.

14.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no implications under this heading.

15.0 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS/IMPACT ASSESSMENT

15.1 A Health Impact Assessment will form part of the Integrated Assessment to be carried out as part of the LTP3 development process.

16.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

16.1 No papers have been used for the preparation of this report.

16.2 The DfT Guidance for LTP preparation is accessible at: www.dft.gov.uk/adobe/pdf/165237/ltp-guidance.pdf

16.3 Access to the LTP3 Preferred Strategy consultation documents and the various supporting documentation is available at:
http://www.letstravelwise.org/content188_LTP3-Consultation.html

17.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

17.1 The LTP contains a Wirral-wide transport strategy and implementation plan, therefore, will be of interest to Members in all wards.

18.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

18.1 Cabinet is requested to:

- (i) Endorse the Preferred Strategy for the third Merseyside Local Transport Plan;
- (ii) Approve that proposal to hold a special Member/ Senior Officer Workshop as described in this report.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL SERVICES