



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

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Dear

LTP2 MID-TERM PROGRESS REVIEW

Thank you for submitting your mid-term progress report covering the first two years of your Local Transport Plan (LTP). The report has enabled the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the Department for Transport (DfT) to appreciate how well you have progressed with your second LTP.

The main focus of the review is to assess progress over the first two years of your LTP and to consider any opportunities or threats to future delivery, particularly in meeting LTP2 objectives, in delivering the Plan programme, and in achieving targets. These aspects of your draft Report were covered in meetings between GOSE and your officials on 4th November and 5th December 2008. This review is consequently not an assessment with any attached grading mechanisms or performance funding, but a means of providing support and challenge to help you meet the stated aims of your LTP.

During those meetings we discussed the outcomes where targets are on track or ahead of schedule, and where we consider mitigating measures should be put in place to ensure your LTP is implemented by the end of its five-year term in March 2011. We are now commenting on the extent to which your report matches the original aims set out in your LTP, and how delivering your Plan coincides with the priorities set out in your Community Strategy and the recently signed Local Area Agreement (LAA).

You have demonstrated strong progress in all of the four shared priority areas, with clear commitment and action to improve accessibility, safety, road condition and air quality. The evidence for this includes the increases in bus punctuality together with increased bus passenger numbers, greater numbers of cycling trips and improvements in the road network condition. This sits well with your LTP2 objectives of enhancing accessibility, tackling congestion, improving road safety and maintaining and managing your transport assets.

As an Authority with an excellent LTP2 and impressive delivery credentials you have, as expected, responded constructively to the comments in your December 2006 LTP decision letter about accessibility. Your accessibility target is currently being refreshed as part of the new Local Area Agreement and we look forward to seeing how the revised target emerges, particularly in the context of achieving your Community Strategy and LAA objectives.

We note that you are currently on track to meet or exceed 11 of the 14 mandatory targets reported on in 2007/08, together with 5 of your 6 local targets. This is an impressive result, and your success in improving bus patronage and punctuality is a clear indication of the work you have put in to enhancing sustainable travel. It is encouraging that where targets are not presently on track you have identified mitigating measures and that you expect them still to be achieved within the LTP2 period, and we would like to understand more what the outcomes of these measures are likely to be. The changes in your area wide traffic mileage and peak traffic flows are extremely encouraging and it would be illuminating to appreciate which measures have been most effective in achieving this.

You have also shown an excellent level of working with external partners, both within your authority boundary and with neighbouring authorities and sub-regions. There are a number of very positive outcomes identified in your report and we would also be interested to see the outcomes resulting from partnerships within your own authority.

I note your commentary on funding issues, which has and will result in less funding for integrated transport than set out in the LTP settlement. In view of the national economic situation and the challenge that you have in achieving growth in your authority, this presents an obvious high risk to delivery of targets and outcomes and we will take a particular interest in progress on your Invest to Save plans, as well as your longer term transformational change programme. It appears that you have taken clear steps to make best use of available funding (particularly in maintenance and safety related work) and this has brought about positive transport outcomes over the last two years, but we would be interested to discuss how the choices you are making in terms of rationalising and concentrating funding in particular areas might impact on future programmes and issues (such as sustainable travel and environmental impacts). I would like to continue discussion with you on the potential future impact of your funding position as you work towards developing your 3rd LTP in the next 12 to 18 months.

You identified particular issues around road safety, and I am pleased to note that you have provisionally taken up DfT's offer to review your plans and to assist your continued improvement work in casualty reduction, to recognise good practice within authorities,

and encourage the sharing of information. They may also be able to form contacts between practitioners in your Authority and colleagues in comparable authorities who have faced similar issues to find out how they tackled them and offer any assistance you require.

Your transport policies and programmes can assist in delivering your Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA, particularly in achieving the improvements sought in your Strategy for sustainable, accessible, safe, healthy, cohesive and prosperous communities, with high quality of life particularly for vulnerable groups. I am encouraged to see the commitment shown by your Council to embed transport issues/solutions within its Strategy, and your report has considered links between transport actions and wider outcomes such as these. We look to your programmes and activities to align with these and wider sub-regional transport objectives, and also to explore whether the other activities and programmes within the strategy can help to deliver transport objectives and outcomes. It would be helpful to see how your localism agenda and the 'Getting Closer to Communities' area action plans will support this.

Your Authority attended a regional workshop on 24th September 2008, hosted by DfT's Network Management Team. DfT emphasised the requirements of the Network Management Duty and advised that authorities amend their progress reports following the outcome of the workshops and take account of the Guidance Intervention Criteria. DfT will send regional summary reports to you by the end of February, and these should be taken into account for work during the remaining LTP period.

The draft Guidance on LTP3 confirms that local transport authorities are free to replace their LTPs to a timescale of their choice, and that this does include the option of replacing LTP2 before the April 2011 expiry date, at which point a new plan must be in place. We anticipate reviewing the final LTP2 progress reports in a similar vein to this review of your interim report, with the intention of illuminating progress and supporting future delivery.

Thank you for meeting to discuss your draft report and please extend my thanks to your transport officers for their continuing constructive and professional approach in communications with this office. I hope you have found our comments helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact Phil Crockford (email phil.crockford@gose.gsi.gov.uk or tel. 01483 885131) if further clarification of this letter, or advice or support would help in determining and delivering your planned objectives, programmes and targets.

Yours sincerely

Susan Stuart
Deputy Regional Director

cc

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