

Cabinet Member
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)

Councillor M Heatley

Chief Executive

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Legal

I Marriott – comments incorporated.

Finance

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Other Chief Officers

.....

District Councils

.....

Health Authority

.....

Police

.....

Other Bodies/Individuals

.....

FINAL DECISION

YES/NO (If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

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To Council

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To Cabinet

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To an O & S Committee

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To an Area Committee

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Further Consultation

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Cabinet - 19th July 2007

Changes to Rail Services at Nuneaton and Rugby

**Report of the Strategic Director for
Environment and Economy**

Recommendation

That Cabinet notes the contents of the report and approve the proposed response of the County Council.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The West Coast Main Line is a major rail route that links London with Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Holyhead and Glasgow. The West Coast Main Line Modernisation project, scheduled for completion in 2009, aims to deliver faster trains, faster journey times, more capacity, better performance and increased safety along the route.
- 1.2 In May 2006 the Department for Transport (DfT) published the 'West Coast Main Line Progress Report - May 2006'. The Report reviewed the completed projects on the West Coast route, gave details of the next stages of the modernisation project and outlined the expected December 2008 service levels along the route. A copy of the report can be made available to Members on request and it can also be found at:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/wcml/westcoastmainlineprogressrep3458>
- 1.3 The report outlined the proposed changes to rail services along the route, in particular the Trent Valley, and specifically at Nuneaton and Rugby from December 2008.

2. Implications for Warwickshire

Nuneaton

- 2.1 The proposed service changes at Nuneaton are:-
 - (i) The introduction of a service, using new electric trains, between Crewe and London Euston. This will call at Watford Junction, Milton Keynes Central, Northampton, Long Buckby, Rugby, Nuneaton, Atherstone, Tamworth, Lichfield Trent Valley, Rugeley Trent Valley, Stafford and Crewe. The DfT has recently proposed that this service will also call at

Stone and Stoke-on-Trent between Stafford and Crewe. This service will form a broadly hourly off peak service between Nuneaton and London and between Nuneaton and other Trent Valley stations; and

- (ii) High Speed 'Pendolino' trains will not call at Nuneaton during the daytime off-peak. They will continue to call at Nuneaton during the morning peak, evening peak and off-peak in the evening.

2.2 On 14th June 2006 a letter was sent to the DfT regarding service changes at Nuneaton and expressing concern that:-

- (i) The high speed 'Pendolino' trains would not call at Nuneaton during the daytime off-peak thereby increasing the daytime off-peak journey time to London Euston to 91 minutes compared to fastest current journey time of 65 minutes;
- (ii) The lack of direct trains further north than Crewe would impact rail users as Nuneaton is a key interchange point for journeys originating in the east of England.

2.3 A reply was received from the DfT on the 26th June 2006. Notable points that were made were that:-

- (i) Whilst the DfT understood the County Council's rail aspirations not every aspiration could be achieved. The DfT's final decision will be based on the service patterns that gets the best 'national' return on its investment.
- (ii) The hourly daytime off-peak service, whilst having a longer journey time to London Euston, would offer a wider range of destinations.

Rugby

2.4 The proposed service changes at Rugby are:-

- (i) The introduction of an hourly call at Rugby on high speed 'Pendolino' services between Birmingham New Street and London Euston.
- (ii) The re-instatement of two trains per hour between Northampton and Birmingham calling at Rugby.
- (iii) The introduction of a service, using new electric trains, as described in 2.1.1 that will call at Rugby. These trains will form a broadly hourly off peak service between Rugby and London and between Rugby and other Trent Valley stations.
- (iv) The hourly high speed 'Pendolino' services from London Euston to the North-West of England and to Scotland will no longer call at Rugby. Rugby will cease to have direct rail links to the North-West and Scotland.

2.5 On the 27th July 2006 a letter was sent to the DfT regarding service changes at Rugby and expressing concern that:-

- (i) The removal of calls on high speed 'Pendolino' services from Rugby to the North-West of England and to Scotland represented a major reduction in the level of service and journey opportunities from Rugby to the North-West and Scotland.
 - (ii) The loss of significant long distance rail links may have a detrimental effect on the local economy as the town of Rugby is set to grow over the next few years.
- 2.6 A reply was received from the DfT on 11th August 2006. The DfT said they would review the proposed changes in the light of the representations made from the County Council and the local rail user group.
- 2.7 There have been on-going discussions with the DfT over the proposed changes Rugby since the reply received in August last year. Details of further service changes have emerged which include a proposed reduction in the number of 0700-0800 AM peak departures to London from the current four trains to three trains. This is a cause for concern given the current level of overcrowding on AM peak departures.

3. Proposed Response

- 3.1 It is proposed, subject to the approval of the Cabinet, that a letter in the form of the draft attached as **Appendix A** be sent to the DfT.
- 3.2 In summary, the County Council's letter to the DfT will make the following points:-
- (i) The overall trend in the numbers of rail passengers in Warwickshire is one of sustained growth with rail travel becoming increasingly important;
 - (ii) The County Council is concerned with some of the proposed service changes at Nuneaton and Rugby stations, specifically:-
 - (a) That high speed 'Pendolino' trains will not call at Nuneaton during the daytime off-peak leading to an increase in the daytime off-peak journey time to London Euston.
 - (b) The proposals at Rugby to cease the hourly calls on high speed 'Pendolino' services from Rugby to the North-West of England and to Scotland.
 - (c) The proposed reduction in the number of 0700-0800 am peak departures from Rugby to London from the current four trains to three trains.
 - (d) Services to the North-West and Scotland must be timed to be useful both in terms of speed and departure time for passengers at Rugby wanting to travel to, and come back from, the North-West and Scotland.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the contents of the report and approves the proposed response of the County Council (attached as **Appendix A**).

JOHN DEEGAN
Strategic Director for Environment and Economy
Shire Hall
Warwick

9th July 2007

Appendix A of Agenda No

Cabinet - 19th July 2007

Changes to Rail Services at Nuneaton and Rugby

Draft Letter to the Department for Transport

The County Council acknowledges the publication in May 2006 of the Department for Transport's (DfT) 'West Coast Main Line Progress Report - May 2006' report.

The County Council has made substantial investment in providing improved rail facilities and continues to place a high priority on rail in delivering its transport policy. The overall trend in the numbers of rail passengers in Warwickshire is one of sustained growth with rail travel becoming increasingly important. There is significant use of rail for commuting and business travel to London and the South East. Rail journeys for retail, leisure and social activities are also growing.

In light of the growth in passenger numbers the County Council has included Policy PRS 3 in its Local Transport Plan. This states that "The County Council will seek the retention of existing levels of service and of existing stations".

The County Council is, therefore, very concerned with some of the proposals contained in the 'West Coast Main Line Progress Report' for service changes at Nuneaton and Rugby stations.

The County Council understands that 'Pendolino' trains will not call at Nuneaton during the daytime off-peak although they will continue to call at Nuneaton during the morning peak, evening peak and off-peak in the evening. Whilst the County Council understands this will increase the range of destinations available in the off-peak the increase in the daytime off-peak journey time to London Euston to 91 minutes compared to fastest current journey time of 65 minutes is unacceptable.

The proposals at Rugby to cease the hourly calls on Pendolino services from Rugby to the North-West of England and to Scotland is also a concern. This is a major reduction in the level of service and journey opportunities from Rugby to the North-West and Scotland. Rugby is set to grow over the next few years and the loss of significant long distance rail links may have a detrimental effect on the local economy. Services to the North-West and Scotland must be timed to be useful both in terms of speed and departure time for passengers at Rugby wanting to travel to, and come back from, the North-West and Scotland.

Following the publication of the 'West Coast Main Line Progress Report' report it has also emerged that there is a proposed reduction in the number of 0700-0800 AM peak departures to London from the current four trains to three trains. This is a concern as passenger experience is that these trains are already overcrowded upon departure from Rugby. The County Council would like assurances that overcrowding will not be a problem in the December 2008 timetable.