

Mr Mike Gibson
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Direct line: (01732) 227315
Ask for: Steve Craddock
My ref:
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Email: steve.craddock@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Date: 27 September 2013

Dear Mr Gibson,

SOUTHEASTERN DIRECT AWARDS

Thank you for your email to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) requesting its views on services to be provided by Southeastern during the forthcoming 'Direct Awards' period. SDC understands that the Direct Awards period for the South Eastern network is intended to last for over 3 years from April 2014 and is intended to allow the Government to move towards a new timetable for rail franchising, following delays resulting from the legal challenge to the franchising process for the West Coast Mainline. SDC also notes the Government's stated intention (from the Transport Minister's statement of 26 March 2013) to 'negotiate further passenger benefits' during the Direct Awards period.

SDC responded to the DfT's consultation on the proposed new South Eastern franchise in August 2012. In order that it was able to reflect the opinion of local rail travellers, SDC organised a forum with the Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Tonbridge rail travellers associations before responding to the DfT. Whilst SDC would suggest that Southeastern also consults with these groups on the Direct Awards, it considers that many of the local priorities identified in the consultation on the new franchise are equally applicable to the Direct Awards period.

SDC's full response to the DfT's South Eastern franchise consultation is included at appendix A and the Council would ask that all of these points are considered. The key points that SDC would particularly draw Southeastern's attention to are set out below.

Services

- At least maintain the level of peak fast services to Cannon Street and Charing Cross and address peak time overcrowding on these services, including through 12 carriage trains on all peak services and more shoulder evening peak services

on the London – Sevenoaks – Tonbridge line.

- Journey time reductions on the Maidstone to London Victoria line (via Otford and Swanley).
- No loss of services between Otford and Sevenoaks (via Bat and Ball) or reduction in services from Shoreham and Eynsford to allow more Thameslink services from Maidstone, as proposed by Kent County Council.
- Consider the potential for fast Tunbridge Wells – Tonbridge – Sevenoaks – Otford – Swanley – London services to relieve congestion on mainline services.
- Better early morning connections to Eurostar at Ashford International.
- Better spacing of evening services and an introduction of night time services.

Fares

- Equitable approach to how Government-mandated fare increases will be applied across Kent.
- Cheaper tickets on shoulder peak services.
- Study to consider extending the TfL zone structure to all stations covered by ‘Metro’ services, including Sevenoaks, and allow Oyster cards to be used from these stations.
- Websites and Ticket Vending Machines (TVM) should always offer the cheapest fares.
- Passengers to be refunded a greater proportion of ticket prices in the event of delays and disruptions.

Stations and Access

- Better staff presence at quieter times, CCTV and toilet cleanliness at stations and on trains.
- Adequate cycle storage at all stations and better integration with local public transport.
- Step free access to be introduced at Bat and Ball station.
- Continuation of Southeastern’s current approach to helping travellers with mobility issues.

Delays and Disruption

- Minimise disruption to services serving Sevenoaks District during the re-building of London Bridge and ensure that accessible and clear information on the impacts of the scheme is provided to passengers.
- Ensure services from Cannon Street run later during the period in which Charing Cross trains are not stopping at London Bridge to ensure that there are trains from London Bridge after the evening peak.
- Better management of disruption, including through more frequent and accurate information to passengers, with a more customer-focused approach.
- Better co-ordination of planned engineering works.

Monitoring

- Performance information to be supplied on a line-by-line basis and with raw data made available on a monthly basis.
- Lateness to be measured without the 5 minute allowance and to be weighted by affected passenger numbers and key stops missed.

Sevenoaks District Council also notes that Southeastern has previously expressed a desire to 'deck' one of the car parks at Sevenoaks Station. The Council would welcome an assessment from Southeastern to identify whether it considers this to be necessary and feasible.

Should you wish to discuss any of the points in more detail then please do not hesitate to contact Steve Craddock on 01732 227315 or steve.craddock@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

CLlr Ian Bosley
Portfolio Holder for Local Planning and Environment