

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee North Warwickshire Area Committee
Date of Committee 24th September 2006
Report Title Train Services to North Warwickshire Stations and the Future of Polesworth Station

Summary In December 2008 the train services calling at North Warwickshire stations will be substantially changed. This report informs Members of these changes and request that Members confirm their views on the future of Polesworth Railway Station.

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Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? Yes/No

Background Papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- *Details to be specified*

- Other Committees Cabinet – 28th April 2005
- Local Member(s) Councillor Mrs A Forwood
(With brief comments, if appropriate)
 Councillor M Stanley
- Other Elected Members Councillor R Sweet – for information.
- Cabinet Member Councillor M Heatley – for information.
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)
- Chief Executive
- Legal I Marriott – comments noted.
- Finance

- 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
- To Council
- To Cabinet Report to Cabinet – date to be agreed.
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

**North Warwickshire Area Committee -
24th September 2006**

**Train Services to North Warwickshire Stations
and the Future of Polesworth Station**

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

Recommendation

That:-

1. Area Committee welcomes the increase in train services to North Warwickshire stations proposed in the December 2008 timetable.
2. Area Committee supports the retention of a limited train service to Polesworth station of up to three trains per day in each direction, subject to the external funding of the infrastructure works required to return the station to full operation.
3. If external funding is not forthcoming to carry out the infrastructure works at Polesworth Station, Area Committee supports the provision of an hourly train service to Atherstone and that Officers should seek to ensure the Department for Transport or the rail industry funds a public transport link to Atherstone and Tamworth Stations from Polesworth.
4. The above recommendations of the Area Committee are made known to Cabinet should the Department for Transport seek to start the formal closure procedure for Polesworth Station.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The route modernisation of the West Coast Mainline (WCML) will be substantially complete in December 2008. From this date an increased number of trains will be able to operate and an increased level of service to local stations on the WCML is to be provided.
- 1.2 The Department for Transport (DfT) is seeking the view of the local authority as to the pattern of station calls made by the increased service and the future train service provision made for Polesworth.

- 1.3 At its 28th April 2005 meeting Cabinet resolved to oppose the closure of Polesworth Station should the DfT launch the statutory procedure required to close the station.

2 Proposed Future Train Service to North Warwickshire Stations

- 2.1 The Department for Transport is proposing to introduce in the December 2008 timetable an hourly service between Crewe and London calling at Stafford, Rugeley, Lichfield, Tamworth, Atherstone or Polesworth, Nuneaton, Rugby, Long Buckby, Northampton, Milton Keynes and Watford Junction. Some journeys may be extended beyond Crewe to and from Liverpool via Runcorn.
- 2.2 Due to the need for the trains operating this service to arrive at set times at the key junctions at Rugby and Crewe it is not possible for individual trains to call at both Polesworth and Atherstone on the same journey.
- 2.3 This service represents a significant increase over the current level of service offered at North Warwickshire Stations. Currently a rail replacement bus service provides five of the ten scheduled journeys at Atherstone and four of the five journeys at Polesworth. The new timetable will allow for up to a total of 32 journeys from Atherstone or Polesworth stations.
- 2.4 A regular interval hourly service to Atherstone would be possible if Polesworth was not served and this would significantly aid the development of the town and increase its attractiveness to business. Experience elsewhere has shown that a regular hourly train service to London from towns of a similar size to Atherstone has had significant benefits for the local economy. This would, however, leave Polesworth to rely on a bus link to Atherstone or Tamworth for public transport access to the rail network.

3. The Future of Polesworth Station

- 3.1 Polesworth Station currently has only one of its two platforms in use. The footbridge connecting the southbound (up) platform to the station entrance was removed in 2004 due to being unsafe and therefore trains to Nuneaton, Rugby and London are unable to call at the station. A replacement footbridge to the latest accessibility standards would cost approximately £1.5million. The DfT does not consider this expenditure to be good value for money and has worked with Network Rail and the County Council officers to examine other options to make the station fully operational.
- 3.2 The preferred option would be to construct a footpath ramp from the adjacent road bridge to the up platform. This would require the installation of traffic signals on the bridge to allow the construction of a footway across the bridge due to the limited visibility for pedestrians at this point. An initial estimate puts the cost of these works at £400,000.
- 3.3 These works would ensure the station remained open but it likely that the DfT would allow only a limited train service of up to three trains each way on Monday to Saturdays to stop at Polesworth. The exact times of these trains would need to be agreed by the rail industry to meet local requirements.

- 3.4 The County Council's Capital Programme for Transport is fully committed to other important schemes, therefore, the funding of these works would need to be secured from within the rail industry. Initial discussions between officers and rail industry representatives have taken place and further talks are scheduled to confirm if railway funding can be made available. Network Rail was allocated funds to replace the footbridge by the DfT but this money has now been spent on other projects DfT considered represented better value for money.
- 3.5 Should rail industry funding for the required works not be forthcoming it is unlikely that an effective train service to Polesworth Station would be able to be operated and the DfT would instigate the formal closure procedure. Should this occur Warwickshire County Council officers will seek to ensure that the DfT is required to fund the provision of an alternative public transport service to Polesworth that would connect with trains at Atherstone and Tamworth.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The increase in train services to North Warwickshire stations is welcome and will be of considerable benefit to the area.
- 4.2 The retention of a limited train service to Polesworth Station is desirable, subject to the external funding of the infrastructure works required to make the station fully operational. If this funding is not forthcoming the provision of alternative public transport links to Polesworth should be funded by the DfT or the rail industry.
- 4.3 Retention of services at Polesworth Station will mean that the service that can be provided at Atherstone will be reduced since each train stopping at Polesworth will not be able to stop at Atherstone.

JOHN DEEGAN
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29th August 2006