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SWALE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

AGREEMENT

1 APRIL 2012

A Voluntary Partnership Agreement between Kent County Council, Swale Borough Council, Arriva, Chalkwell and other KCC bus contract operators

A Quality Bus Partnership to achieve quality local bus services in the Borough of Swale

1. Statement of Principles

Kent County Council, Swale Borough Council, Arriva, Chalkwell and other KCC bus contract operators share the common objectives of:

- 1.1 Creating a public transport network acknowledged by local residents, visitors and the business community as an increasingly attractive alternative to private car use.
- 1.2 Seeking increased use of local bus services to assist in achieving a sustainable and self-sufficient transport system, capable of meeting the needs of the 21st century, enriching the quality of life in the Swale Borough, attracting investment, and enhancing work and leisure opportunities.

All parties to this protocol acknowledge that these objectives require high quality reliable public transport that can only be delivered through working in partnership, with a commitment to co-ordinated investment and complementary initiatives.

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SWALE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2012

Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and
Waste, Kent County Council

John Wright, Executive Member for Regeneration, Swale Borough
Council

Kevin Hawkins, Commercial Director, Arriva Southern Counties

Clive Eglinton, Managing Director, Chalkwell Coaches

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Important Note:

This is a Voluntary Partnership Agreement in accordance with the provisions of the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. As such it is an agreement in which each of the parties is a voluntary partner.

Section 46 of and Schedule 2 to the 2008 Act amend the Transport Act 2000 ("the 2000 Act") to introduce new provisions about "voluntary partnership agreements" (VPAs) and other "qualifying agreements". These provisions came into force in England on 9 February 2009.

These amendments to the 2000 Act made by the 2008 Act introduce a statutory definition of a "voluntary partnership agreement" (VPA). A VPA is a particular type of voluntary agreement, and is defined in the 2000 Act as any voluntary agreement under which:

- a local transport authority, or two or more local transport authorities, undertake to provide particular facilities, or to do anything else for the purpose of bringing benefits to persons using local services, within the whole or part of their area, or combined area, and
- one or more operators of local services undertake to provide services of a particular standard.

It is envisaged that most voluntary agreements that are entered into by local transport authorities and operators will fall within the definition of a VPA. It is important to note that an agreement must involve at least one local transport authority in order to satisfy the definition of a VPA.

(Source: Local Transport Act 2008, Improving local bus services: Guidance on voluntary partnership agreements – Department for Transport, February 2009)

Therefore, nothing in this agreement is designed or should be concluded as being legally binding on any of the parties, or in any manner being restrictive to the commercial or operational activities of any of the bus operators which are party to this agreement.

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2. Framework for Action

- 2.1 The bus network within Swale Borough has been identified as being appropriate for a joint commitment to invest and to upgrade facilities and operations, together with improved and imaginative marketing, which can contribute to the growth of passenger journeys and increase modal shift from car to bus travel.
- 2.2 The projected business development and housing growth in Swale during the next decade will provide opportunities for the provision of high quality public transport services, enhancing the Swale Borough and encouraging sustainable transport options whenever possible.

3. Voluntary Partnership Agreement

The parties to this protocol agree to:

- 3.1 Work together to implement a substantial improvement to bus operating infrastructure, including stops, shelters, passenger information, accessibility
- 3.2 Work together to increase the proportion of the bus fleet in Swale operated by low-floor, easy-access, environmentally friendly vehicles, to ensure that the aims, measures and targets of the protocol are delivered
- 3.3 Deliver, through market research and similar consultative measures, opportunities for the introduction of new or revised local bus services, which would increase the use of public transport
- 3.4 Identify through market surveys the means to increase the quality and availability of public transport services in the Borough of Swale
- 3.5 Co-ordinate the development of the public transport network with land use planning to maximise the opportunities for local bus services, especially in locations where significant housing development is planned as part of the emerging Swale Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy (e.g. Sittingbourne and Queenborough)
- 3.6 Co-ordinate the public transport network with other forms of transport to achieve maximum travel opportunities for the Swale Borough, subject to commercial viability, recognising the need identified in KCC's Rail Action Plan for Kent to improve connectivity between the Sheerness branch line at Sittingbourne with the High Speed rail service
- 3.7 Include the Swale Borough within the emerging Punctuality Improvement Plan for Kent, especially the inclusion of bus routes in the winter gritting schedule
- 3.8 Work with the Parish Councils within the Borough of Swale, and with other representative organisations, to exchange information and assist in the improvement of infrastructure and local transport information
- 3.9 The KCC Transport and Safety Policy Team will undertake the responsibility of organising and administering the meetings of the Partnership

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- 3.10 Develop Real Time Information (RTI) and SMS text messaging as methods of providing bus timetable information to the public.

4. Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council will:

- 4.1 Continue to plan and introduce, where possible, bus priority and other measures, to improve the timing, punctuality and reliability of local bus services
- 4.2 Support new or improved public transport infrastructure and/or services where appropriate through S106 funding from new developments, especially at Sittingbourne and Faversham, to provide an accessible local bus service for journeys to and from the nearest town centre, with the intention of integrating such new services within the local bus network
- 4.3 Seek funding through KCC's Integrated Transport Programme for public transport facilities in support of investment and other measures taken by local bus operators to improve local bus services
- 4.4 Secure, implement and maintain suitable attractive and appropriate arrangements for the provision of information and roadside infrastructure (stops and shelters) to a standard agreed between the partners; Kent County Council to be responsible for damaged bus stop posts & raised boarders or hardstanding, and Swale Borough Council to be responsible for maintenance of its shelters
- 4.5 Assist in identifying new market opportunities for local bus services and support new initiatives to encourage greater use of public transport, including Green Travel Plans for employers and education establishments
- 4.6 Give advance notice of roadworks affecting bus services and make every reasonable endeavour to safeguard bus access in cases of road closures, diversions and adverse winter weather conditions (Kent County Council)
- 4.7 Provide any other relevant infrastructure to improve bus access to stops (Kent County Council); and provide personnel resources for bus stop clearway site visits and parking enforcement of clearways (Swale Borough Council)
- 4.8 Ensure that parking policy reflects the aim of both Councils' transport policy to increase modal shift from car to bus by imposing realistic parking charges in town centres.

5. Arriva, Chalkwell and other KCC Contract Operators will:

- 5.1 Work and consult with both Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council over the design, planning and implementation of a viable and sustainable network of local bus services, establishing appropriate co-ordination with other public transport services
- 5.2 Introduce where commercially feasible improved local bus services in response to the introduction of bus priority measures
- 5.3 Seek to maintain all services in the Swale Borough area with minimum lost mileage and to a professional standard, and to report the results of their

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performance in the quarterly Working Targets and Reports at each QBP meeting

- 5.4 Continue to invest where commercially feasible in new and fully accessible vehicles, as well as presenting existing vehicles in an attractive manner, using environmentally friendly fuels
- 5.5 Consult with Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council on any significant proposed fare changes
- 5.6 Continue to develop higher standards of training and education amongst staff, including an understanding of passenger transport operation and customer care, in accordance with the standard required by the industry's Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)
- 5.7 Provide adequate management and supervision of services to uphold standards as well as being able to deal with emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances quickly and efficiently
- 5.8 Be responsible for timetable displays at bus stops served by their commercial routes. Bus stops on routes served by KCC-tendered services will be maintained by the appointed Roadside Infrastructure Unit contractor.
- 5.10 When services are disrupted by road works, ensure that the public are adequately informed of alternative arrangements by means of information on stops and buses and via Traveline.

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6. Aims and Measures of the Quality Bus Partnership

All parties to this agreement will work together using the following aims and measures of the Quality Bus Partnership:

(M1) Percentage increase in number of passenger journeys

Target is 2% pa increase during the first three years

(M2) Percentage increase in number of multi-journey ticket sales

Target is 2% pa increase during the first three years

(M3) Percentage increase in passengers expressing satisfaction with service provided

Target is 2% pa increase during the first three years

7. Targets for Next Three Years

All parties to the agreement will work together towards achieving the following targets for each of the next three years:

(T1) Percentage of services operating on time

Poor punctuality is due to many factors, including the increasing number of vehicles on the road and inconsiderate parking and loading at bus stops. We need to focus on better enforcement of illegal parking at bus stops and more rigorous monitoring of why and when delays happen, so that problems causing late running can be resolved.

Target is to build up to 95% within the first three years, determined as not less than 1 minute early and not more than 5 minutes late

(T2) Number of stops with raised boarders and bus stop clearways

Raised boarders give better access at bus stops, especially for passengers with limited mobility and for parents with children in buggies. The provision of more bus stop clearways is paramount, and these will continue to be introduced at all urban bus stops as soon as resources permit. KCC will also continue to provide new bus stop poles for use by bus operators.

KCC is committed to continuing funding for bus stop improvement measures through its Integrated Transport Programme, and during 2011/12 has already committed to delivering these measures on the trunk route in Swale between Sittingbourne and Faversham.

Target of new stops with new bus stop poles, raised boarders or hardstanding, and bus stop clearways is Faversham-Sittingbourne truck corridor.

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(T3) Number of departure stops with timetable information

The provision of clear and accurate timetable information at the majority of bus stops is an essential part of public transport provision. This will enhance the attractiveness of local bus services, and increase patronage.

Target is 40 new stops in each year for first three years

(T4) Bus stops with new or replacement shelters

The provision of shelters at all principal pick-up stops is an important facility for encouraging an increase in bus passengers. Combined with the elements of roadside infrastructure described above, a bus shelter provides essential protection from inclement weather, especially for the elderly, for those who are less mobile, and for parents with young children. There is a reasonable level of bus shelter provision in Swale Borough at present, and the Borough Council will continue to be responsible for the maintenance of bus shelters.

Swale Borough Council will, as resources become available, especially through developer funding from new housing growth areas, increase the provision of bus shelters at the busiest pick-up stops in the district.

Target is 5 new shelters in each year for first three years

(T5) Conversion of bus routes to low-floor easy-access vehicles

The parties to this agreement aspire to the delivery of low-floor easy-access buses on all bus routes in Swale by the end of 2016 which currently have step-floor vehicles, and Kent County Council will facilitate this improvement through various highway works as soon as resources permit.

Target is all Swale bus routes to be served by low-floor easy-access buses as soon as resources permit, and by 2016 at the latest

(T6) Percentage of drivers with CPC in Road Passenger Transport

The investment provided by all bus operators in their workforce reflects their commitment to a reliable, customer oriented service, and is to be welcomed and encouraged

Target is 40% in year 1, 50% in year 2, and 60% in year 3

8. Additional Improvements to the Bus Network

All parties to the agreement will work towards the following additional improvements to the bus network insofar as the provision of funding permits:

- 8.1 Swale Borough Council to encourage S106 developer contributions for public transport infrastructure, information and services
- 8.2 Kent County Council to carry out an audit of all remaining bus stops as part of the Roadside Infrastructure Unit contract (*due to be completed 2011*)

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- 8.3 Swale Borough Council will ensure that the requirements of public transport are considered in any proposals arising from the development of the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy
- 8.4 Kent County Council to consider the inclusion of bus services in Swale in plans for any future extension of Real Time Information (RTI) in the county

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 This agreement sets out some benchmark aims, measures and targets which form the basis of a Quality Bus Partnership for Swale. Provided there is commitment from all parties to the agreement, the bus passenger network in the Borough of Swale should enjoy significant new initiatives, improvements and investment in the immediate future.
 - 9.2 This agreement will also establish the foundations necessary for further bus service improvements envisaged in association with regeneration and new housing growth sites in Sittingbourne and Queenborough, linking these areas with their nearest town centre and High Speed rail station.
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