

## Area Board Project – March 2017

### Cllr Alan Macrae

#### 1. What is the project?

To use any remaining Area Board funding from its grants budget to help take forward the establishment of a railway station within Corsham

#### 2. Where is the project taking place?

Within the Corsham Community Area

#### 3. When will the project take place?

The project is currently under way but there are a number of different stages that it must go through before a station can be built. It is likely to be a long and challenging process

#### 4. Background Information

It has been an ambition of Corsham Area Board and its partners to see a railway station established within Corsham. Last year, Wiltshire Council commissioned Atkins to carry out initial feasibility work on a possible station in the town.

The main findings include:

- There is an identified market for a rail station at Corsham particularly in relation to journeys to and from Bath and Bristol
- Forecasts indicate Corsham station could carry up to 400,000 passengers per year and that future development plans would be expected to further increase this number
- A railway station at Royal Wootton Bassett would generate up to a further 330,000 passengers per year
- Initial analysis indicates it could be viable to introduce a new hourly train service between Bristol and Swindon to serve a new Corsham Station, with possible extensions to Oxford or Cardiff. (Four possible service options have been tested: a new service from Bristol Temple Meads to Swindon; a new service from Bristol Temple Meads to Oxford; a new service from Cardiff Central to Swindon; and an extension of the MetroWest service from Bath Spa to Chippenham).
- The main obstacle to a Corsham railway station is the provision of a suitable and viable train service:
- A regular direct London service is not considered to be feasible primarily due to incompatibility with wider rail industry goals to improve the quality of intercity services on the Great Western mainline
- For each of the four train service options considered, the estimated annual operating costs exceed the forecast annual revenue generated (to at least 2033/34)
- The addition of stops at Corsham and Royal Wootton Bassett significantly improves the revenue generation of each train service option and in particular the Bristol to Oxford

service option (although there is still the requirement for an initial eight year service subsidy of around £1.8m).

- Consideration of other economic benefits, such as journey time benefits and environmental benefits, may enhance the overall case for each service option.

The report suggests the next steps should be to focus on demonstrating a suitable service could operate to serve Corsham station (and potentially a Royal Wootton Bassett station) through engagement with key partners and further detailed analysis.

#### **5. What are the key issues that need to be addressed?**

Further work needs to be done to explore a possible new line linking Corsham with Oxford and then to Cambridge. This means working with the various councils, the LEP, the MP's, First Great Western and others

#### **6. Who has been involved?**

All key partners at local, regional and national level. There is agreement to take this project forward.

#### **7. What is being proposed**

The next stage is to carry out significant further work to develop the feasibility into a fully worked out proposal. The end product will hopefully be a station at Corsham

#### **8. What are the community benefits and evidence of need**

Corsham Station could carry up to 400,000 passengers per year. There are numerous benefits including:

- Environmental
- Providing an alternative to car use
- Improving access and connectivity to other areas and services
- Help attract investment and boost the economy

#### **9. Who will manage/be responsible for this project?**

Corsham Area Board will be responsible for this funding which will be used as a contribution towards the cost of developing the project

#### **10. How much funding is being requested**

To develop and build a station will need considerable investment for it to occur. The proposal is that the remaining balance of the Area Board's capital grants pot is allocated towards a local contribution to driving this forward. Other funding will come from partner organisations.

If all grant requests are granted at the March Area Board meeting, it is expected that the remaining balance will be in the region of £3k

#### **11. Additional information**

The project is deemed to be capital as long as the funding is directly being used to deliver a station