

**5 March 2020****Agenda Item:7****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****TRANSPORT REVIEW UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. Approve the Colson Bassett Taxi/bus pilot to be implemented in June 2020.
2. Approve the preparation of National Bus Strategy bids, following the release of bidding guidance.
3. Note other transport developments related to Information, ticketing and infrastructure.

**Information**

4. Since the 1985 Transport Act all buses outside London operate in a deregulated environment. Subsequent Acts in 2000, 2008 and the Bus Act 2017 have enabled all Authorities to pursue re-regulation but to date no Authority has done so and chosen instead to develop Quality Bus Partnership agreements. Many Mayoral Authorities/Devolved Regions with the automatic powers to re-regulate bus services and ticketing are currently considering whether to pursue these franchising powers with the Manchester Mayor out to consultation at the moment.
5. The County Council using the powers from the 1985 Transport Act has a duty to consider the introduction of bus services, when service are withdrawn or changed but no obligation to provide them. The County Council current budget for local bus support is £3.9m which supports over 60 contracts as outlined in **Appendix A** and graphically illustrated in **Appendix B**. The County Council, for efficiencies, also utilises 15 Adult Social Care Fleet vehicles to provide local bus services. It is also worth noting that for every £1 spent on bus services it generates £2.50 for the economy and for every £1 spent on public transport infrastructure generates between £4.90 for bus priority measures and £6.80 for Mansfield Interchange.
6. The County Council's local bus support was benchmarked against 26 other County Councils in 2018 and the Council's net expenditure per head of population was £5.14 compared to the national average of £4.19 per head of population.
7. Currently over the whole county, services are approximately 85% commercial and 15% supported. However, this does vary across the county with over 98% in the Nottingham conurbation commercial and approximately 10-20% commercial in East Bassetlaw.
8. County accessibility score: 83% of households are within 800 metres/10 mins walk of a bus stop with an hourly and better bus service on weekdays, Mondays to Saturdays, 0600-1800 hrs.
9. Transport focus results - 2018; Nottinghamshire's Overall satisfaction with the bus journey is 93% and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in England. The county has consistently been in the top three for

the last few years. Local Bus companies also have high overall satisfaction scores with Stagecoach, trentbarton and NCT scoring 94% which put them all in the top five.

## **Future Opportunities**

10. On the 6<sup>th</sup> February the Government announced further details of their National Bus Strategy and the bidding opportunities for Local Transport Authorities. This strategy is focussed on passenger priorities and how national, local government and the private sector can work together to address the connectivity needs of local communities. This long-term vision is to be accompanied with long term funding commitments and a review of existing funding for bus operators which includes Bus Service Operating Grant (BSOG). The announcement included over £220m of investment in bus services.
11. As part of the announcement there was several funding opportunities:
  - All electric bus town: Building on the Government's continued investment in low emission buses (Low Emission Bus Fund and Clean Bus technology Fund) the DfT will be seeking expressions of interest for an all Green Bus town or City (up to £50m); where there are local issues with Air Quality.
  - Rural Mobility Fund: A further £20m is being allocated for Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and will be via an expression of interest. This is in-keeping with the Transport Review programme where we are looking at DRT/taxi/bus/Community Transport solution as an alternative to current fixed routes. It is also an option to provide new services (evening/Sunday/ new services for housing/business park developments). It is also in-keeping with our vision for improved information and to develop on-line/app-based booking provision and payment to complement traditional telephone booking service provision.
  - Funding for Supported Bus Services in 2020-21: The Government is looking to allocate a further £30m directly to local authorities from 2020/21 to improve current services or restore local services. The Government has confirmed £648,608 for Nottinghamshire.
  - Superbus Fund: this fund is to support the introduction of a package of measures to increase bus patronage with its emphasis on bus priority, fare caps and increased frequencies. The funding is for £70m for up to three locations with population over 75000.
12. It is proposed to start preparing proposals to bid for monies to deliver the Council Plan, Place Strategy and Local Transport Plan objectives.
13. As part of the Transport Review Members agreed to explore different and alternative delivery strategies and solutions for local bus services in Nottinghamshire and it was agreed that a series of pilot schemes would be introduced in 2020/21 and following that a revised bus strategy and approach to be developed for July 2021.
14. At Communities and Place Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019 <sup>(1)</sup>, Members were informed that consideration was being given to the further deployment of Demand Responsive Transport solutions such as service 190 in Tuxford, Taxi buses such as those in Leicestershire and Interconnect services of which there are many examples in Lincolnshire. Members should note that when considering local bus options, officers will look for external funding opportunities to enhance the network. This includes funding from Developers, District Councils, NHS and Government.

## **Pilot Schemes**

### **200 Service: Ladybrook - Mansfield – Oak Tree**

15. Local Mansfield Members have identified a demand for the reintroduction of evening services to support the Mansfield town centre evening and night-time economy and a semi-fixed bus service covering two key areas of Mansfield (Ladybrook and Oak Tree) was introduced on the 5th December 2019 and is operated by Stagecoach - the service is for 3 days a week. It was agreed that this service would operate for 6 months and depending on its performance, continue as it is, become a purely taxi/bus option or be withdrawn.
16. The service was introduced in early December; timetables, at stop information and web information was produced and Social Media platforms used to promote the service. Also, as the service was operated by Stagecoach residents could also take advantage of Stagecoach ticketing options. To date, there has been 78 passenger journeys. It is too early to draw any conclusions from these figures, especially as ridership in January is traditionally low following the expense of Christmas; as well as new services taking time to bed in and people become aware of them. The service will continue to be monitored and promoted over the coming months.

### **852 Service: Colston Bassett – Upper Saxondale – Bingham/Radcliffe/Gamston**

17. It is proposed to introduce a flexible bus route to cover the villages of Colston Bassett, Owthorpe and Upper Saxondale. These communities are currently served by the 850/852 services operated by our own Fleet Transport. Following the introduction of a new commercial route and a revised supported route in the area the 850/852 are largely duplicated with the exception of the 3 villages named. The proposal is to withdraw the 850/852 and provide the 3 villages with a flexible on-demand taxi-bus service. This will operate from the designated areas to a flexible range of destinations reflecting local demand and services like Bingham Market on Thursdays. Local stakeholders have been consulted and the Parish Council is going to consider the proposals at the end of January/ beginning of February.
18. Depending on the outcome of the Parish Council meeting the revised service will be introduced in April/May 2020.

### **Revised Ollerton Network**

19. Work has also begun on a wider review of services in the Ollerton area which could be included in any future Rural Mobility Fund bid. This includes routes to Retford and Newark and is intended to develop a central transport hub in Ollerton which will provide for a range of smaller services connecting with the main commercial network. Detailed plans are being developed, in partnership with local operators. This follows the Interconnect model.
20. In parallel to this work, sites for infrastructure improvements including Real time Passenger Information displays are being investigated. This is being carried out in conjunction with colleagues in VIA EM and Property.
21. Following this work public consultation will be carried out in late summer/autumn and the new network of routes could be commissioned to start in late 2020.

## **Future Local Bus Plans**

22. With the announcement of the National Bus Strategy Monies Officers are currently considering whether this funding could be used to help with the development of future plans for the supported bus network to help achieve the Council's key objectives.

## **Other Bus Service Initiatives**

23. The Council successfully introduced electric buses on service 510/511 in 2015 and has been successful in a further bid to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV), administered by the Department of Transport, for 4 fully electric buses. These buses will be introduced on County Council or developer funded services. <sup>(2)</sup>

24. Two of the buses will be introduced on the Berry Hill Flyer bus service. The service is funded using Developer section 106 funding secured through the planning process and the Council will look to integrate other services in Mansfield. The Council also bid for a further 2 buses for Sharphill Wood which will also be funded using section 106 monies secured through the planning process.

25. As part of the bid the County Council ensured there was flexibility in where these vehicles could be deployed because the Commercial sector may wish to also register services into the new developments. These vehicles would then be used on other County Council supported bus services or initiatives.

## **Bus Information, Application and Payment Improvements**

26. Travelchoices Website: The County Council does have a common brand for customers to identify all their transport options ([Travelchoices Notts](#)). However, the current website is limited in its scope and some travel information is still split between the Travelchoices web address and other County Council pages particularly for ASC/CFCS (School and ASC transport) and Place (Local Bus, Information, Strategy). Some travel Information is also contained on operator's website and ticketing websites so signposting to these is also an important consideration

27. To build on the Travelchoice brand the following work has been undertaken to improve travel information and the customer experience for those wishing to access County Council services or find about commercially provided travel and ticketing options. The site will be relaunched in March 2020:

### **Phase 1 - Website Refresh**

28. The Travelchoice website is being refreshed as follows so it becomes a one stop shop for transport information. This improved information includes:

- Local bus timetables for those services provided by the County Council.
- School bus timetables for those provided by the County Council and those provided by the commercial sector.
- Newsletter for local bus registrations and other public transport initiatives incl. EConnect
- Fare tables for all County Council services and any County Council sponsored integrated ticketing arrangements
- School bus pass and concessionary bus pass information including on line applications

- Robin Hood website for integrated ticket information.
- Community Transport (minibus and voluntary car schemes) information.
- Bus stop infrastructure: who supplies what and contacts to report damage or missing information.
- Bus stations: Information on the facilities and who to contact with comments or to report something.
- Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) arrangements in place for Mansfield, Beeston and Worksop.

## **Future Website Development**

### **Phase 2 – Application, Payments and Real Time Information Improvements:**

29. It is proposed to further develop and modernise the Travelchoice website and its functionality in keeping with customer expectations. Where applicable the Council will seek funding from the Rural Mobility Fund:

- Further develop the scholar and concessionary fare online application process, in line with Council modernisation and Digital roadmap;
- Further develop more on-line payments as is common for most public transport tickets and passes. This will improve affordability as customers will be able to pay by Direct debit or credit card. This will also improve revenue protection;
- Develop on-line booking for DRT and customer call centre for those wishing to phone up and book. Currently the DRT has to be booked by telephone with the operator of the contract;
- Develop a Community Transport on line application and on line booking and payment service for those customers who cannot access traditional public transport or have no other transport option;
- As part of the Bus Act 2017 there is a requirement for bus operators to provide open data which includes timetables and fares by January 2022. This data will be available for software developers to improve travel information for passengers. The County Council will enable this improved information to be accessed on the Travelchoice website;
- Develop further website pages on how to access; 'Leisure' as part of the Visitor Strategy, support the 'High Street (District Centres)' and access 'Health' facilities;
- Real Time information for bus, tram and rail services incl. interactive mapping;
- Roadworks information and its impact on public transport including RTPI disruption information;
- Twitter and Facebook information.

## **Ticketing Improvements**

30. The County Council continues to work with the bus operators to improve Integrated ticketing to address Value for Money concerns of passengers and to improve travel choice. This is not something the County Council can impose on operators and must be agreed by operators.

31. A number of bus operators have implemented contactless payments (trentbarton, Stagecoach and NCT from spring 2020) with bankcards which guarantees the best fare for passengers. The County Council fleet services will also be implementing contactless payments in the next 6 months to reduce cash handling /administration and improve the customer experience. The Council may also benefit from any future changes to Bus Service Operating Grants.

32. The Council will continue to encourage small bus operators to move to bankcard payments and is working with small operators to encourage its adoption. Hopefully the changes to Bus Service Operating Grant (BSOG) will help incentivise investment.

### **Infrastructure Improvements**

33. 3.2 million passengers currently use our bus stations and the staff have recently won the BID Platinum Award for customer service, in recognition of the high-quality customer care. The results of recent passenger surveys will be presented to Committee as part of the Transport Focus Committee report in June 2020.
34. The County Council has invested in digital journey planning kiosks at Mansfield, Newark & Retford Bus Stations with positive feedback from staff & customer. The County has also secured Better Care Funding to install further kiosks in Bassetlaw hospitals.
35. By September 2020 the majority of local bus operators in the County will be providing their customers with real time information at our bus station and on our substantial Real Time Passenger Information on street estate, that has recently passed the 650 mark.
36. In 2020, we will be investing in colour displays at key stops on street in Mansfield Town Centre as part of our Advanced Quality Partnership commitment to provide a high-quality offer. These displays provide significantly improved information to passengers and were well received when introduced at Beeston Interchange.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

37. Bidding for external funding supports infrastructure improvements to make the county an attractive proposition for investment.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

38. Consideration will be given to an Equality Impact Assessment as and when transport proposals are proposed.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

39. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public-sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

40. The proposals outlined in this report support existing and future bus users to access employment, training, health and leisure facilities.

## **Recommendations**

- 1) Committee approves the Colston Bassett Taxi/bus trial.
- 2) Committee grants delegated power for the Service Director for Place & Communities to agree the National Bus Strategy bids and associated financial commitments in conjunction with the Group Manager for Highways & Transport.
- 3) That Members consider whether there are any further actions they require in relation to the issues contained within the report.

**Adrian Smith**  
**Corporate Director, Place**

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### **Constitutional Comments (EP 27/01/2020)**

41. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Communities and Place Committee by virtue of its terms of reference. If the Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SES 28/01/2020)**

43. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers**

- Communities and Place Committee: Local Bus update and Bus Strategy - July 2019
- Communities and Place Committee: Clean Bus Technology Fund 2017- November 2017

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

- All