

13<sup>th</sup> September 2012

Agenda Item:5

## **JOINT REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR TRANSPORT, PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS**

### **MANSFIELD BUS STATION AND STATUTORY QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS REPORT.**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise Committee on the progress to date of Mansfield Bus Station and the Statutory Quality Bus Partnership for Mansfield Town Centre.
2. To seek Committee approval for the allocation of £18K County Council funding towards the operation of the bus station from March 2013.

#### **Information and Advice**

3. The construction of the £11.6M Mansfield Bus Station, will provide the following benefits:
  - Provide a state of the art modern bus station meeting all bus passenger needs
  - Replace the old bus station with a fully accessible facility
  - Improve access to the town centre
  - Improve access to the train station to provide interchange opportunities between rail and bus
  - Contribute towards economic regeneration
  - Enhance the passenger waiting environment with a customer service information office, retail units, toilets and electronic displays
  - The current bus passenger numbers are 5.2M per annum, these are forecast to increase by 5% to 5.47M by 2015
4. Mansfield bus station is currently under construction on the site of the former public car park on Station Road, Mansfield. The steel frame of the building is in place, and the skeleton of the footbridge that connects the new building to the railway station has been lifted in. Over the coming months, the roof will be fitted followed by the walls, windows and the groundwork's to the external

areas. In the New Year the building will be fitted out ready for opening in mid to late March 2013.

5. The bus station is on track for early completion in the 2012/13 financial year so £36K revenue funding will be required to operate the bus station in March 2013. Mansfield District Council share all running costs on a 50:50 basis and will contribute £18K towards the bus station operating costs for this period.
6. Funding of £250K per annum is necessary to operate the bus station from April 2013. Mansfield District Council will contribute a capped amount of £125K per annum and the County Council £125k per annum. The County Council will be responsible for any shortfall if the revenue costs exceed £250K per annum. This would only occur if there is a significant income reduction from the departure charges should bus operators shrink their bus networks.

## **Statutory Quality Bus Partnership**

7. To build on the investment in the bus station a report was brought to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways in January 2012 to introduce a Statutory Quality Bus Partnership (SQBP) for Mansfield Town Centre to ensure the quality of the bus services and on street bus infrastructure was comparable to the bus station.
8. The report outlined the benefits of introducing these partnership arrangements to improve the quality of the travelling experience for the bus user and therefore reduce the barriers to bus use, these included:
  - prescribed standards for buses relating to accessibility, customer service, emissions
  - high standards for bus infrastructure to ensure the waiting environment is safe and clean
  - enhanced passenger information provision such as electronic real time information

## **Progress to Date**

9. A number of steps need to be taken to implement a SQBP which will form a legally binding agreement between the local authority and the bus operators. The agreements are ultimately deposited with the Traffic Commissioner, who ensures the terms of the agreement are being complied with.
10. The steps are divided into four discrete stages which are :
  - Formulation of the draft agreement in conjunction with specialist legal advice
  - Informal consultation with the bus operators to minimise challenges during the formal consultation phase
  - Formal consultation where challenges by bus operators can be submitted

- Sign off of the final agreement and deposit with the Traffic Commissioner
11. To date a specialist legal advisor has been appointed and a draft agreement formulated. The draft agreement has set standards that are comparable to other SQBP schemes in the United Kingdom.
  12. Informal consultation has been completed with all major operators and standards agreed for bus service and infrastructure provision.
  13. Formal consultation will start at the end of September 2012 with a one month window for operators to object to any part of the agreement. A further update report will follow upon the completion of the consultation period.
  14. The bus Infrastructure improvements approved for the scheme are making good progress with procurement for real time displays, solar powered shelters and CCTV on track for completion by April 2013.
  15. Further works such as raised kerbs, bus stop clearways and bus priority measures have been commissioned from Highways and on schedule for implementation in April 2013.
  16. Maintenance contracts for bus infrastructure have been commissioned to ensure the County Council investment is maintained to a high quality with greater cleaning cycles and quick response times to any reported incidents of vandalism or graffiti.

## **Outcomes**

17. The provision of the bus station and the Statutory Quality Bus Partnership will reduce barriers to bus use and therefore increase bus patronage and reduce traffic congestion. The opening of Retford bus station and the complementary local bus services changes have increased bus patronage by 35% since it opened in 2007. Mansfield Bus Station is forecast to increase patronage by 5% per annum by 2014/15.

## **Proposals**

18. It is proposed that an allocation of £18K funding to cover staff and operating costs for the bus station from March 2013 be approved.

## **Other Options Considered**

### **Do Nothing**

19. If funding is not allocated from March 2013 the County Council will not be fulfilling the terms of agreement with Mansfield District Council and the bus station will not be able to open. This will have a detrimental impact on bus

passengers who will have to continue to use the existing bus station which will not help generate further bus patronage growth.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

20. The proposals in this report will ensure that the bus station and SQBP can be operational at the earliest opportunity thus providing significant benefits to the travelling public.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

22. The costs for the operation of Mansfield Bus Station, for March 2013 and the recruitment of the bus station manager prior to the bus station opening is £36K to be jointly funded by the County Council and Mansfield District Council. The County's contribution of £18K for 12/13 to be funded from the existing Transport and Travel Services budget.

## **Equal Opportunities**

23. The new passenger facilities in the bus station and town centre and the provision of low floor accessible buses will ensure all passengers can access the bus services.

## **Implications for Service Users**

24. The new passenger facilities and information will significantly enhance bus services operating in the Mansfield area, improve safety in the waiting environment and promote bus travel.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Committee:

- 1) Note the progress that has been made on Mansfield Bus Station and the Statutory Quality Partnership for Mansfield Town Centre.
- 2) Approve the allocation of £18K from the existing Transport and Travel Services budgets for 12/13.

**Mark Hudson,**

## **Group Manager, Transport and Travel Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:  
Mark Hudson, Group Manager, Transport and Travel Services**

### **Constitutional Comments (NAB 20.08.12)**

25. The Transport and Highways Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

### **Financial Comments (DJK 20.08.2012)**

26. There has been a virement to the Mansfield Bus Station cost centre of £18k, with the balance to be funded from the Passenger Transport budget for 2012/13. The funding of £125k for 2013/14 onwards will be funded from within the Property, Environmental and Transportation division.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Report to Transport and Highways Portfolio – 10 January 2012 (Decision Log No. ER/2012/0004): Proposal for Statutory Quality Bus Partnership

Report to Transport and Highways Portfolio – 16 January 2011 (Decision Log No. CM/2011/00029): Mansfield Public Transport Interchange Scheme – Department for Transport and Programme Update

Report to Transport and Highways Portfolio – 14 December 2010 (Decision Log No. CM/2010/00132): Mansfield Public Transport Interchange Scheme – Best and Final Funding Bid Submission to the Department for Transport

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

Mansfield