

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE**LOCAL BUS UPDATE AND BUS STRATEGY****Purpose of the Report**

1. That members note information related to local bus support to connect Nottinghamshire communities to employment, training, health and leisure facilities, and the opportunities afforded by the Abbey Road fleet relocation
2. To seek approval to develop alternative local bus pilots, including Demand Responsive Transport, Interconnect and Taxibus to maintain and improve access to employment and other important destinations for residents.
3. To seek approval for the development of a Bus Strategy to guide future investment in local bus and infrastructure.

Background 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 de-regulation but to date no council has done so. Rather, councils have chosen instead to develop Quality Bus Partnership agreements.
5. The County Council has a statutory duty to consider the introduction of bus services where commercial services are withdrawn but has no obligation to provide them. The Council can also introduce service enhancements relating to frequency or kickstart new services, but the majority of the financial risk must be borne by the commercial operators. The 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 also directly delivers local bus services through our own fleet.
6. The Council's fleet vehicles are currently located across the County with the main depot located at Abbey Road, West Bridgford. Alternative locations for this depot are currently being explored which may offer further options to integrate routes and also provide a suitable base for the Council's electric buses.
7. Many of the supported bus services operate between A and B on a fixed route. These bus services are split between different journey purposes, such as:-
 - *Peak hour journeys to get people to and from work.*
 - o Service1/6/16a early morning journeys in the Mansfield area

- Services 1/2/3 early morning journeys in the Newark area
 - Service 354 peak hour service between Bingham and Newark
 - *Peak and Off-peak journeys to get people to college and training*
 - Service 190 Tuxford – Dunham- Retford
 - Service 195 Gainsborough – Retford
 - *Off Peak journeys to access health facilities i.e. GP Surgeries and Hospitals*
 - Service 339 Tuxford – North Muskham
 - Services 21/25 Worksop – Harworth – Doncaster
 - *Off peak Leisure and shopping journeys to Town centres and recreational opportunities*
 - Service 108 Worksop Town Service
 - Services 100 – Nottingham – Lowdham – Southwell
 - Service 417 Sutton Town Service
8. Increasingly many fixed routes, especially in rural areas, have struggled commercially and have become financially unsustainable. Therefore, the County Council has introduced some semi fixed and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) routes where the services only operate part or all of the route if customers have requested it. Currently a number of services operate in this way, such as:
- Service 190: Tuxford- Dunham- Retford Tuxford Village link phoneabus
 - Service 335: Retford- New Ollerton – Norwell - Caunton - Newark
9. In Nottinghamshire the total number of passenger journeys by bus is 27.21m per annum. Of this total 1.8m passenger journeys are carried out on County Council Supported services. In terms of accessibility, 83% of households are within 800 metres/10 minutes' walk of a bus stop with at least an hourly bus service on weekdays.
10. National annual surveys to measure overall passenger satisfaction rates have consistently ranked Nottinghamshire first in England, with the local bus companies (NCT, Trentbarton and Stagecoach) amongst the top five operators in the Country¹

Transport Review

11. As part of the Place Strategy a comprehensive review of current local bus provision commissioned and delivered by the County Council has been undertaken.
12. As part of that review, officers have considered alternative ways to commission local bus services to deliver efficiencies and saving whilst maintaining and, where possible, improving levels of accessibility to employment and other important destinations. Officers have also considered ways to secure and maximise external income from Planning Obligations and other sources to support the Council's growth and innovation agenda.
13. From this review, alternative delivery arrangements for local bus provision have been considered, based upon proven concepts that can deliver positive outcomes for residents. These include:-
14. **Taxibus** is a pre-booked taxi or minibus service which only runs when it is needed on a demand responsive principle. The cost of a Taxibus is no more than a normal bus fare and concessionary passes are valid for use after 9.30am. This approach is currently used in Leicestershire.

15. **Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)** is a combination of a bus service and a taxi service. The destinations are fixed but the trips are booked like those of a taxi. DRT offers an affordable service for residents in areas which are too costly to serve by conventional buses.
16. In Suffolk for example, Community Transport operators play a key role in connecting people to main line bus and train services. Similar models also operate in parts of Leicestershire.
17. Elsewhere, mainline bus operators in Lincolnshire have been straightening out bus routes to improve journey time, improve reliability and reduce costs to drive up patronage. Stagecoach, in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council, has co-developed the Interconnect Network which is a series of routes that feed into Interchange hubs on the main corridors. It has been well received by passengers, and improved accessibility to desired destinations. Integrated ticketing is also in place to make the services affordable and easy to use. There are currently a number of services which inter-connect in this way in Nottinghamshire:-
 - Service 339 connects with service 37 at North Muskham & Sutton on Trent
 - Service 833 connects with service 33 at Cropwell Bishop (new from 28th May 2019)
18. From this research there will be a number of further pilots building on the DRT and Interconnect work to shape future investment; as there will be different solutions for different areas as one size will most certainly not fit all. Any prospective changes as part of the review will be co-developed with the communities served through a consultation process similar to the one carried out in 2013. This will involve roadshows, Parish Council meetings and publishing details online and via community noticeboards.

Revised Bus Strategy and supporting reviews

19. Officers are currently reviewing whether current strategies and implementation plans are fit for purpose to reflect current priorities and guide future transport investment decisions.
20. The **Local Transport Plan and the Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy and Framework (IPTS)** currently act as the overarching strategic documents which outline the strategic ambitions of the County Council in terms of highways and transport investment. These are complemented by Departmental Strategies including the Place Strategy, which outlines key actions including the need for a Transport Review and looking at alternative ways to provide local bus services.
21. It is proposed that new, overarching strategic documents be developed to cover all aspects of bus travel to help inform future investment in local bus and bus infrastructure; as well as leveraging in funding contributions from developers and other funding opportunities such as the LEP, DfT and Midland Connect. This will include the following components:

Revised Quality Bus Partnership arrangements for Mansfield, Worksop and Beeston. Further Quality Partnership arrangements will be considered for other parts of the County.

Community Transport: A Mobility Strategy to guide Community Transport investment and delivery has been in place since 2011 and the action plan has been largely completed, so it is proposed to revise the strategy to focus on building capacity and improving the sustainability of services for those people with disabilities and/or limited access to transport. This will align and complement the Local Bus pilots, as we foresee a greater role for community transport to deliver transport options and solutions for rural communities to maintain and improve access to services.

Infrastructure and Information: The Bus Stop Policy approved in 2009 needs to be refreshed or replaced to guide investment bus stations, bus stop Infrastructure and Information. This will better reflect current market trends, technology development and Council and bus companies' priorities since 2009. Key areas of focus will be:-

- *Bus station/on street Interchange/hubs:* to improve the waiting environment for people connecting between services. This is very important when residents have to connect between services as outlined in paragraph 19.
- *Bus shelter and Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) investment:* This will take into account when we should invest in new shelters or displays or refurbish existing shelters. This will also support requests for planning obligations from developers.
- *Information at stops:* Where the Council will invest in paper-based timetable information and integrated map information.
- *Website/social media:* Integrated travel information from one source
- *Bus stop clearways:* when these should be considered to improve access to bus stops and to manage traffic flows.
- *Punctuality Improvement Partnership:* Hot spot management to address some operator concerns affecting punctuality and reliability including bus priority where appropriate.
- *Strategic bus corridors (incl. growth corridors):* investment in transport infrastructure to stimulate growth and maximise road capacity.
- *Promotion and Marketing:* this area will also be developed to promote Council investment in local bus and provide a one stop shop for integrated travel information to promote bus usage and help with congestion management. It will also reflect lessons learnt from the D2N2 real time information review to improve communication to customers using a combination of digital and traditional paper-based solutions.

Integrated Ticketing Strategy and Delivery Plan - This will include plans for:

- Integrated ticketing between operators to reduce waiting time and travel costs
- Through ticketing between Council and commercial bus services
- Ticketing for young people on school/college and commercial services
- Concessionary ticketing for elderly and disabled customers
- Ticketing technology developments such as account based ticketing, mobile phone ticketing and smartcard provision.

Reasons for Recommendations

22. The introduction of further local bus pilots will help inform future investment and help secure external funding.
23. The production of a Bus Strategy will inform future investment priorities in local bus and infrastructure.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

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

Statutory and Policy Implications

25. 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

26. The Bus Strategy will help shape future provision for existing and future bus users to access employment, training, health and leisure facilities.

Recommendations

1. That members note the information related to local bus support, to connect Nottinghamshire communities to employment, training, health and leisure facilities, and the opportunities afforded by the Abbey Road fleet relocation
2. To seek approval to develop alternative local bus pilots including: Demand Responsive Transport, Interconnect and Taxibus as outlined in Paragraph 11 to 18 to maintain and improve access to employment and other important destinations.
3. To seek approval for the development of a Bus Strategy following the transport review to guide future investment in local bus and infrastructure.

Adrian Smith
Corporate Director, Place

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Gary Wood, Group Manager. Highways and Transport
Pete Mathieson, Team Manager, Development & Partnerships

Constitutional Comments (LW 28/05/2019)

27. Communities and Place Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (RK 03/06/2019)

28. This report details a number of areas for review within the existing TTS revenue service, the local bus revenue budget is £3.78m in 2019/20; and is a mixture of commercial services which are funded by the County Council and in-house services provided by the Fleet Operations Department. The information from these reviews will determine the most effective way of funding local bus services in the current and future years.

Background Papers

- TRANSPORT FOCUS – BUS PASSENGER SURVEY RESULTS 2017
- Communities and Place Committee: 14th June 2018
- STRATEGIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK – LOCAL BUS
- SERVICES: Transport and Highways Committee 9th October 2014

- BUS STOP POLICY (<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/123092/bus-stops-and-bus-shelters-in-nottinghamshire.pdf>) : April 2009

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

- All