



16 July 2015

Agenda Item: 6

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, TRANSPORT, PROPERTY &
ENVIRONMENT**

**A VOLUNTARY QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP FOR WORKSOP AND
WORKSOP BUS STATION UPDATE**

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve a Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership (VQBP) for Worksop as outlined in this report.
2. To provide an update on the construction of a new Bus Station for Worksop.

Information and Advice

3. On 9 January 2014 Transport & Highways Committee approved a report to commence consultation on the introduction of a Statutory (SQBP) or Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership (VQBP) in Worksop Town Centre to add value to the investment in the new Worksop Bus Station.
4. The report explained that the Transport Act 2000 introduced provisions for local authorities to enter into Quality Partnership Schemes with local transport operators in order to strengthen partnership working between Local Authorities and to improve the quality and reliability of bus services. The SQBP is a legal agreement between the County Council and bus operators to meet a particular quality standard, which is monitored by the Traffic Commissioner to ensure compliance. The SQBP can underpin voluntary agreements between authorities and operators, with agreed objectives and outputs on both sides. A VQBP, in contrast, depends on voluntary participation and does not guarantee delivery of any desired improvements.
5. The majority of bus services operated by Stagecoach in the Worksop area are run on a commercial basis, with fares revenue and reimbursement from concessionary fares and other sources used to cover the operating costs for the route network. In 2015/16 the County Council also provided £470k financial support for the Worksop local bus network. However, even though the majority of services are on a commercial footing some services are more marginal than others. Therefore to expect bus operators, as part of a SQBP to invest in new vehicles to improve standards, could compromise the sustainability of the current bus network. Therefore, at the present time NCC and the operators felt that a SQBP was not a viable option until the impact on passenger growth generated by the new bus station was understood.

Proposals

6. Nottinghamshire County Council and Stagecoach have therefore agreed to continue to work together and ensure the long term sustainability of supported services, within the framework of a Voluntary Quality Partnership, as set out in this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
7. This VQBP area will primarily centre on Worksop town extending from the Market Place in the south to North Notts College and from Newcastle Avenue in the west to Memorial Avenue in the east. However, the agreement effectively encompasses services operating within the Worksop town boundary
8. The establishment of the VQBP provides the opportunity for a SQBP to be introduced at a later stage. Under a voluntary agreement alone, an operator may undertake considerable investment in improving the quality of service provision. This may be put at risk or undermined by another operator running services to a lower standard than vehicles provided as part of a voluntary agreement. Under a SQBP, operators who are not prepared to provide services to the appropriate standards may not use the facilities, and enforcement action can be taken against operators who breach these rules.
9. The VQBP will operate for an interim period of 18 months to spring 2017, during which time Stagecoach have committed not to make any further changes to the commercial network until October 2017. It is hoped that by this time the viability of the bus network in Worksop will have strengthened, in particular through the following future developments:
 - A new bus station for Worksop opening late August 2015
 - New housing developments in Worksop with approximately 1600 new dwellings proposed by 2028
 - Continued enhancement of bus services and infrastructure including maintenance and cleaning.
 - Supporting bus operators to meet the Traffic Commissioner requirements for bus service reliability and punctuality.
 - To facilitate an increased modal share for public transport in line with Local Transport Plan and sustainability objectives.
 - To increase passenger growth and assist with traffic congestion.
 - To improve customer experience through the promotion of bus travel, information improvements (including real time information), integrated ticketing and new vehicles. Studies show that real time improvements alone can bring a 2% increase in passenger journeys.
10. The above package of improvements has proven to be successful in Mansfield where a SQBP was introduced to coincide with the opening of Mansfield Bus Station in 2013.

Worksop Bus Station

11. The construction of a new bus station in Worksop is part of Nottinghamshire County Council's programme to replace and renew its stock of bus stations. This began with the opening of a new bus station for Retford in 2007, continued with an upgrade of the facilities at Sutton bus station in 2009, a new bus station in Newark as part of the wider Potterdyke retail development scheme which opened in 2011, and a new bus station with connecting footbridge in Mansfield which opened in March 2013.

12. Planning permission for the Worksop Bus Station was granted on the 27th February 2014 providing an eight bay (including one coach bay) facility and consisting of a DIRO (Drive in Reverse Out) layout. Key facts relating to the building include:
 - Fully enclosed waiting environment
 - Comfortable seating
 - Digital travel information screens
 - Staffed information point
 - CCTV
 - 2 female, 2 male toilets, 1 fully accessible toilet and 1 baby change room (also with toilet)
 - Space and charging points for mobility scooters
 - Crew room
 - Retail/ café unit with outdoor seating area
 - Cycle parking – 3 number Sheffield stands
 - PV cells on roof
 - Rainwater harvesting – for toilets
 - Car park adjacent on Queen Street – managed by Bassetlaw District Council
13. Works started on-site during August 2014 with Wates Construction appointed as the principal contractor. The current building handover from Wates Construction to the County Council is programmed for 11 August 2015 and all structural works / external works (such as curtain walling, glazing and brickwork) relating to the building construction are complete. Ongoing and current construction activities include internal works to the building such as tiling, electrical, plumbing, joinery etc and external works such as landscaping on the building frontage, sewer connections, surfacing works for the bus parking / turning areas and highway works to reverse the one-way system on Queen Street and other signage / lining works required.
14. After the building handover on the 11 August, work will continue by the County Council to commission the building and setup systems relating to the Building Management System and other ICT requirements. The completion ceremony has been provisionally arranged for the 25 August 2015 and it is also intended that there will be a family fun day with a date yet to be agreed.
15. A leaflet will be produced to provide detailed information on where to catch the bus from the opening of the Bus Station. This information will also be available on the County Council, District Council and bus operator websites. Information about Worksop bus services will also be disseminated via social media including Facebook and Twitter. Other promotional activity for bus services including any route/timetable changes will be prepared in conjunction with the bus operators.
16. It is anticipated that the new bus station will encourage more people to use public transport to and from Worksop, therefore helping to increase the viability of the local bus network and acting as a driver for further investment in Worksop Town Centre.
17. A further progress report on the Worksop VQP will be produced for Transport and Highways Committee in July 2016.

Other Options Considered

18. The introduction of the VQBP with Stagecoach East Midlands enables both parties to work together within a voluntary framework to continue to invest in the local bus network.

It also establishes the basis for the potential future introduction of a SQBP for Worksop which could potentially act as a catalyst for future investment and to sustain quality standards. It would also give a statutory footing for local bus operations in Worksop potentially including minimum vehicle emission standards, electronic information bus stop clearways and other quality enhancements.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, 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.

Sustainability and Environment

20. The introduction of the VQBP for Worksop and the new Worksop Bus Station will encourage more people to use public transport thus reducing car use and congestion.

Financial Implications

21. The County Council has invested significant funding for Worksop, including the new £3.6 million Worksop Bus Station, and £35.1k bus stop improvements in the Worksop area.

Implications for Service Users

22. The provision of the Worksop Bus Station and VQBP will improve the customer experience for users and encourage modal switch to bus and tram from other modes of transport.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) To approve a Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership (VQBP) for Worksop as outlined in this report and approve the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Group Manager, Transport & Travel Services.
- 2) To review the VQBP in spring 2017.
- 3) To note the progress on the construction of a new Bus Station for Worksop and to approve the opening arrangements.

Mark Hudson
Group Manager
Transport & Travel Services

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Pete Mathieson, Team Manager, Commissioning & Policy

Constitutional Comments (SJE 24/06/2015)

23. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Transport & Highways Committee to whom responsibility for the exercise of the Authority's functions relating to the provision of passenger transport services, including bus initiatives, has been delegated.

Financial Comments (TMR 23/06/2015)

24. There are no immediate financial implications as a result of the creation of a Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership for Worksop.

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.

- Mansfield Bus Station And Mansfield Town Centre Statutory Quality Bus Partnership – Building On The Success - Transport & Highways Committee Report- 9 January 2014

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All