

19th January 2017**Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND
PROPERTY****QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE AND UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the Mansfield and Beeston Town Centre Statutory Quality Bus Partnership (SQBP) schemes.
2. To provide an update on the Worksop Town Centre Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership (VQBP) scheme.
3. To highlight the success of the schemes in delivering public transport improvements.

Information and Advice**Introduction**

1. The provisions of the Transport Act 2000, provided Nottinghamshire County Council with the powers to establish a Statutory Quality Bus Partnership (SQBP) to achieve the following objectives:
 - Enhance bus services and infrastructure.
 - Improve the quality of local bus services by restricting the use of bus stops within a defined area to those buses that meet prescribed quality standards.
 - To enable 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 which can be achieved through the promotion of bus travel, information improvements (including electronic information), integrated ticketing and new vehicles. Studies show that real time improvements alone can bring a 2% increase in passenger journeys.

Mansfield SQBP

2. The formulation of a Statutory Quality partnership was approved in January 2012 and on the 6th May 2013 Mansfield's Statutory Quality Bus Partnership came into operation. This has achieved improvements to the town centre infrastructure, the highway, vehicle quality and bus service information including:-
 - Investment by the County Council of £9.11M including the bus station.

- 24 new or refurbished bus stops and shelters in Mansfield. The shelters have clear timetable and bus service maps, providing passengers with additional journey planning and way finding information.
 - 14 bus stops that are Real Time enabled to take away some of the uncertainties related to bus travel.
 - Coach stands for four buses on Walkden Street outside the Rosemary Centre.
 - Bus stop clearways at all stops which improve accessibility to the bus stops and prevent services being delayed.
 - Targeted parking enforcement in the area to ensure bus accessibility to the Town Centre is improved and to improve reliability of bus services.
 - Refresh of four legally enforceable bus lanes, which improves journey times and reliability.
 - Investment of £4.8 million by the bus operators in vehicles as a direct result of the SQBP- Stagecoach East Midlands' Mansfield Miller and Trentbarton's Threes.
 - Vehicles meeting a minimum of Euro 3 emission standards and the provision of enhanced cleaning and customer care offers.
 - The fitting of equipment to Trentbarton vehicles and Stagecoach vehicles to provide a Real Time feed for passengers.
3. Nottinghamshire County Council commits to an annual passenger survey in Mansfield to measure performance and benchmark standards. Approval ratings for the passenger transport facilities rose from 60% to 90% at the launch of the SQBP and in September 2016 rose to 92% indicating that the investment continues to improve passenger satisfaction.
 4. Every shelter in Mansfield SQBP is fitted with an onward journey planning poster providing access to local bus services and nearby facilities. Mansfield Bus Station has a passenger information zone providing an electronic journey planning kiosk and a large supply of paper timetables. In the recent survey results, 95% of passengers rated information provision at Mansfield bus station as 'Good' or 'Very Good'.
 5. Mansfield Bus Station has 16 bays each fitted with a Real Time information display. There are a further 14 Real Time information displays on street at key bus stops in Mansfield Town Centre. 86% of passengers surveyed in 2016 would welcome more real time information displays in Mansfield.
 6. Nottinghamshire County Council continues to maintain Mansfield bus station to a very high standard and this is reflected in 98% of the public rating the bus station appearance as 'Good' or 'Very Good'. The partnership with Mansfield District Council has ensured there is a comprehensive capital investment plan in place to maintain the standards at existing levels.

7. Passenger numbers grew by 5% in the two years following the opening of Mansfield Bus Station. In line with national trends, operators have reported some loss of patronage in 2015, but passenger numbers have stabilised at 4% or more above the levels reported before the investment.
8. The highway works, install of bus only lanes and relocation of the bus station have successfully improved punctuality across the network. 93% of services operating in Mansfield in 2016 have adhered to the Traffic Commissioners window of tolerance.
9. The SQBP committed Nottinghamshire County Council to clean and maintain bus stop infrastructure to a very high standard. In 2016 98% of bus stop audits and cleans were completed with 95% of infrastructure in excellent condition and the remaining 5% repaired within the agreement timetables.

Further public transport developments in Mansfield and Ashfield.

10. In addition to the original £4.8M investment, the bus operators have spent a further £4.9M upgrading several bus services including the Mansfield town services and the Mansfield to Derby Nines service. The Mansfield to Nottingham services all provide complimentary superfast Wi Fi as standard and all local bus services far exceed the minimum emissions standards required by the SQBP.
11. In a bid to further improve punctuality for customers using the Threes service operating from Mansfield to Nottingham via Sutton in Ashfield and Hucknall service, the County Council and City Council have funded an upgrade to enable buses to seek priority at intelligent traffic signals. The results of this trial should be known in September 2017 and may lead to further operator investment elsewhere in the County.
12. The County Council continues to work with the operators to identify traffic 'hotspots' and look for solutions to further improve reliability and punctuality.
13. The County Council is working with Stagecoach to enable Stagecoach information to be displayed in Real Time at the bus station and on the Real Time passenger information displays.
14. The County Council is working with the operators to introduce Integrated Ticketing within the Mansfield/ Ashfield area as previously reported to Transport and Highways Committee.

Beeston SQBP

15. The formulation of the Beeston SQBP was approved in January 2015 and came into operation on 3rd May 2015. This has achieved significant improvements to the town centre, vehicle quality and information to complement the NET 2 investment. This included:-
 - Investment by the County Council of £59K in on street bus stop infrastructure, in addition to the NET public transport investment in Beeston Bus & Tram Interchange.
 - 30 new or refurbished bus stops and shelters in Beeston. The shelters have clear timetable and bus service maps, providing passengers with additional journey planning and way finding information.

- 27 bus stops that are Real Time enabled to take away some of the uncertainties related to bus travel.
- Ticket machines for customers to purchase and top up Robin Hood Cards.
- Bus stop clearways at all stops, which improve accessibility to the bus stops and prevents services being delayed.
- Bus stands for emergency planning should the interchange be closed.
- A coach stand with upgraded waiting facilities for tour operators, as there is no provision within the new interchange.
- Targeted parking enforcement in the area to ensure bus accessibility to the Town Centre is improved and to improve reliability of bus services.
- Investment of £2.8M by the bus operators in low emission vehicles including free Wi Fi and stop announcements for passengers; plus plans to undertake further investment in the near future.

16. Nottinghamshire County Council has committed to the annual passenger survey in Beeston to measure performance. In September 2016, 97% of passengers reported they were satisfied with the passenger transport facilities, up from 93% in 2015. Personal safety scored particularly highly, with 99% reporting they felt safe in Beeston Interchange.

17. Despite the arrival of the tram, bus operators are only reporting a 4% patronage decline year on year, which can be accounted for with the reduction in bus service frequencies and some abstraction from the bus to tram.

18. The ongoing strength of the bus network suggests that much of the tram patronage is new journeys that would not have previously been undertaken by public transport. This is supported by a survey result from September 2016 that reported 40% of passengers using the interchange did so despite having access to a car.

19. A patronage count undertaken in June 2016 at Beeston Interchange Tram indicated that the bus and tram split is roughly 60% and 40%, although it is expected to take several years to establish a stable pattern.

20. To date in 2016, an average of 82% of bus services in Beeston adhered to the Traffic Commissioners window of tolerance. Efforts continue to be made to improve the reliability of the bus services, and investment in smart signals at busy junctions in Beeston have delivered significant improvements for all traffic ; however the tram movement will always take priority over the bus and private car.

21. The SQBP committed Nottinghamshire County Council to clean and maintain bus stop infrastructure to a high standard. In 2016 98% of bus stop audits and cleans were completed with 93% of infrastructure in excellent condition and the remaining 7% repaired within the terms of the agreement.

Further public transport improvement in Beeston

22. As part of the LEP funded Southern Growth Corridor, we have identified a number of bus stop improvements in Beeston to complement the investments in the City Area and Gedling. The Stage 2 business case has now been approved and proposals are being firmed up.
23. The County Council continues to work with City Council on the roll out of further ticket machines in the Beeston area. There are also plans for further upgrades to the tram ticket machines to dispense Robin Hood Cards in the future.
24. The County Council will continue to work with the bus operators to improve reliability and punctuality.

Worksop VQBP

25. To coincide with the opening of the £3.2M bus station in Worksop, Nottinghamshire County Council established a Voluntary Quality Bus Partnership in Worksop as an interim arrangement, while the impact of the bus station and changes to local bus provision were evaluated. This agreement gave more flexibility than a long term Statutory Quality Bus Partnership agreement.
26. The Worksop VQBP came into operation on 30th August 2015 and it was agreed that the bus services would not be reviewed until at least April 2017 in order to give time for the improvements to have an impact on patronage and service reliability and punctuality.
27. The VQBP achieved improvements to the town centre infrastructure, the highway, and bus service information. This included:-
 - Investment by the County Council of £35K in on street bus stop infrastructure with further investment in real time of £38K delivered in 2016.
 - 26 new or refurbished bus stops and shelters in Worksop, with 17 of these Real Time enabled to improve confidence in accessing public transport.
 - Bus stop clearways at all stops which improve accessibility to the bus stops and prevents services being delayed.
 - Investment of £420K by the bus operators in 4 Double Decker low emission vehicles.
28. Nottinghamshire County Council has also committed to the annual passenger survey in Worksop to measure performance. In September 2016, 98% of passengers reported they were satisfied with the passenger transport facilities, with 63% rating it as 'Very Good'. 83% reported they were happy with the new location for the bus station and an impressive 35% reported that they used public transport more often since the bus station was opened.
29. Bus patronage in Worksop has been in decline for some years, but since the investment, the patronage decline has slowed and since March 2016 Stagecoach East Midlands has reported a modest growth of 2%.

30. In the recent survey results, 86% of passengers rated information provision in Worksop Town Centre as 'Good' or 'Very Good'.
31. To date in 2016, an average of 89% of bus services in Worksop adhered to the Traffic Commissioners window of tolerance. Operators have reported improvements in access thanks to the relocation of the bus station and priority given to buses at key junctions.
32. The VQBP committed Nottinghamshire County Council to clean and maintain Worksop Town Centre bus stop infrastructure on a monthly basis. In 2016 92% of bus stop audits and cleans were completed with 95% of infrastructure in excellent condition and the remaining 5% repaired within an appropriate window of tolerance.

Further public transport improvements in Worksop

33. The County Council continues to work with the operators to identify traffic 'hotspots' and look for solutions to further improve reliability and punctuality.
34. The County Council is working with Stagecoach to enable Stagecoach services to be displayed in Real Time at the bus station and on the Real Time passenger information displays on street.

Buses Bill

35. The Buses Bill is currently making its passage through Parliament which likely to be ratified in spring 2017. Within the bill there are a number of proposals to improve partnership arrangements between Local Authorities and bus operators and therefore the County Council will need to review the current arrangements in light of these developments. It is proposed that a further Transport and Highways Committee report is prepared follow the Bill's ratification and accompanying DfT guidance.

Statutory and Policy Implications

36. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working 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

37. The provision of local bus services enables users to access key services, jobs, training and leisure. The arrangements detailed above have been made to ensure access to the key priorities of employment, education, health and essential shopping.

Financial Implications

38. There are no financial implications within the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

39. It is recommended that Committee:

- Note the report regarding the Statutory and Voluntary Quality Bus Partnerships and the ongoing successes of the schemes in delivering public transport improvements.

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 23/12/2016)

40. Transport and Highways Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (SES 23.12.16)

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

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 - 9th January 2014

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

Mansfield North
Mansfield South
Mansfield West
Mansfield East
Worksop North
Worksop West
Worksop East
Worksop North East and Carlton
Beeston North
Beeston South and Attenborough
Chilwell and Toton
Bramcote and Stapleford