

CABINET
31 JANUARY 2019**WORCESTERSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT REVIEW
AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

Relevant Cabinet Members

Mr A T Amos, Mr M J Hart

Relevant Officers

Director of Economy and Infrastructure, Director of Children, Families and Communities

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills recommend that Cabinet agrees that:

- (a) a Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy be developed, taking a strategic and holistic view of all public and community transport provision, including home to school transport arrangements, fares and ticketing, concessionary travel, bus priority, infrastructure and information;**
- (b) this Passenger Transport Strategy will be informed by a Passenger Transport Review of needs and demands (including future development) together with an assessment of how well these are met by current services;**
- (c) the Passenger Transport Review will also consider changes in the local market for public transport and different options for the future; and**
- (d) the Directors of Economy and Infrastructure and Children, Families and Communities be authorised to undertake the Passenger Transport Review and, in consultation with the Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Highways, and Education and Skills, develop a draft Passenger Transport Strategy to be presented to Cabinet in June 2019 for formal approval for public consultation with a view to a decision regarding the Passenger Transport Strategy at the November 2019 Cabinet.**

2. The findings of the Passenger Transport Review will inform the Passenger Transport Strategy which will set out a way forward. There will be clear policies detailing the Council's position on aspects of transport provision and it will highlight future approaches to be adopted.

3. The Passenger Transport Strategy will set out the general policies that will be delivered and will provide a methodology specifically on which to measure the requirement for bus services, the relative priority for delivering services and the threshold for funding bus services. In areas where conventional public transport cannot be provided, the Strategy will provide options for alternative types of provision.

Background

4. In 2013/14 the Council undertook an extensive public consultation exercise on proposals relating to financially-supported bus services. The objective was to understand people's priorities for service provision and the likely impact of proposed service changes. This consultation defined the shape of the current network within Worcestershire.

5. Since the consultation, there have been many changes in the commercial bus market, reflecting the difficulties that operators have in identifying and maintaining profitable services. First Bus has gradually reduced its network and completely withdrawn from operating in parts of the county. Other operators have ceased to operate altogether and some have stopped running local bus services.

6. This decline in the commercial bus market is likely to continue, in line with national trends of falling patronage. This is due to rising car ownership and use, changing shopping and employment patterns, and rising operating costs. The Council is continually facing calls to consider subsidising those commercial routes that have been withdrawn and, without a robust Passenger Transport Strategy, the Council is hindered in its ability to make decisions about public transport provision.

7. A consultation into the future use of libraries in Worcestershire was launched in October 2018. This has highlighted information concerning bus needs in local areas and should be considered within the Passenger Transport Review.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

8. The Council's statutory duties with respect to the provision of public transport are set out in Sections 63 and 92 Transport Act 1985. These state:

Section 63(1) In each non-metropolitan county of England and Wales it shall be the duty of the county council—

(a) to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose; .

(5) For the purpose of securing the provision of any service under subsection (1)(a)...above [the] council shall have power to enter into an agreement providing for service subsidies; but their power to do so—

(a) [in England and Wales, shall be exercisable only where the service in question would not be provided, or would not be provided to a particular standard, without subsidy;

Section 92(1) An authority responsible for expenditure on public passenger transport services shall, in the exercise and performance of their functions in relation to agreements providing for service subsidies, [have regard to the interests of the public and of persons providing public passenger transport services in their area].

9. The legislation surrounding the provision of home to school transport is covered in sections 508A, 508BB, 508C, 508D, 508AD and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996. The Council must meet its duties to arrange home to school transport for eligible students.

10. The Council should consider the transport needs of its residents and to provide financial support for local bus services where appropriate, to meet those needs. It must also have specific regard to the needs of elderly and disabled people. In formulating its policies, the Council should engage with stakeholders, such as operators and district councils. In devising a new Passenger Transport Strategy it will be important to consult with the public and the draft Strategy produced following the Review.

11. Given these statutory requirements, it is important we develop an appropriate Passenger Transport Strategy for Worcestershire.

12. The Passenger Transport review will give consideration to all of the elements that make up the Council's £20m spend on transport activities. The Passenger Transport Review and Strategy Board will have representatives from Finance and Commercial and Procurement.

Home to School Transport

SEND Transport

Public Transport

Community Transport

Concessionary Travel

Severncard.

13. Financial costs can generally be divided into two areas: external and internal. These costs are estimates only at this stage and calculated on a percentage of the core project team, and may vary based on outcomes of the consultation and resources required. More accurate information will be available as the project progresses.

External costs include:

- Appointment of specialist consultant circa £40K
- Public Consultation and associated media costs £10K
- Potential additional resource may be required as the project progresses circa £20K.

Internal costs include:

- Core project team circa £100K.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. The Council recognises that Public Transport is of particular relevance in the lives of individuals who share Protected Characteristics such as Age and Disability. In order to ensure the Council complies with its Public Sector Equality Duty an Equality Impact

Analysis will be undertaken, any analysis will accord with data protection requirements. Additionally, any detriment to services that have potential to impact on Equality will also be assessed. As part of any Strategy development the findings will be taken into account in future planning and decision-making.

Risk Evaluation

15. A comprehensive risk assessment will be carried out to identify the short, medium and long-term risks and mitigation of these. Initial assessments indicate that preliminary risks relate to timing due to operational needs and service start dates together with procurement and contractual compliance.

15. Purdah and Cabinet dates have directly influenced the timeline of the project (see Appendix).

16. Whilst we accept that this is an emotive subject with high public feeling, it is unclear at this stage what the level of response will be following the Public Consultation.

17. Our project plan assumes that this will be presented to Cabinet for formal approval for public consultation (June 2019) with adoption of the Passenger Transport Strategy from November 2019. Any delays to the project plan are likely to have an adverse impact on project delivery and timeframes.

Public Health Impact Assessments

18. A Public Health Impact Assessment is not currently required but will be conducted at a later date and form part of this project. There are no matters arising at this stage.

Supporting Information

- Appendix – Passenger Transport Strategy – Outline Project Plan

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Economy and Infrastructure) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and background papers to the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 December 2018 – Response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways to the Scrutiny Report on Bus and Community Transport Provision. The scrutiny report highlighted a significant number of points and these will be considered as part of the full Transport Passenger Review.