

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD 25 MAY 2016

SCRUTINY PROPOSAL: BUS TRANSPORT REVIEW

Summary

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) is asked to consider the attached proposal for a scrutiny of bus services.

Background

2. In February the Board was informed of Members' concerns about the potential impact of bus contracts being re-tendered in April 2016. It was agreed that this issue would be investigated by the Chairman of the OSPB together with the Chairmen of the Adult Care and Well-Being Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Panel and the Economy and Environment O&S Panel.

3. A meeting was held with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways in March and subsequently the Chairman of the OSPB reported that, as a result of a delay in the proposed changes being made, there was no longer a need for urgency on this work and the scrutiny exercise may now take more time. OSPB heard that issues for further consideration included areas for future investment and the definition of a socially necessary service.

4. A scrutiny proposal is attached at Appendix 1.

5. The suggested Terms of Reference are to:

Socially Necessary Services Definition

- Investigate what can be included within this definition
- Investigate what other Local Authorities include in this definition
- Review what issues in Worcestershire need to be reflected within this definition

£1.6 Million Bus Subsidy

- Review whether the bus subsidy is being spent in the right areas
- Review whether or not the level of subsidy is currently able to meet the socially necessary needs of Worcestershire
- Identify what level of subsidy would be needed to meet the definition of Socially Necessary that the Task Group believes should be adopted
- Examine WCC's approach for providing services where there is a socially necessary reason and whether this is best through community services, corporate provision or any other form
- Could the subsidy be better spent on other forms of public travel?

Diamond Bus Service

- Q&A with Diamond to discuss service issues and how WCC can assist

Recent Bus Service Cuts

- Investigate accountability and communication from bus providers to determine if it is adequate or could be improved, including how local members are involved

Transport Strategy

- Review the public transport strategy role for the County Council and determine if it is adequate and fit for purpose
- Examine what powers/options WCC has if a Bus Provider is delivering a poor service
- Identify innovative public transport schemes that WCC can learn from

Issues Suitable for Scrutiny

6. The OSPB agreed to use a set of criteria (listed below) to help determine its scrutiny programme. A topic does not need to meet all of these criteria in order to be scrutinised, but they are intended as a guide for prioritisation.

- Is the issue a priority area for the Council?
- Is it a key issue for local people?
- Will it be practicable to implement the outcomes of the scrutiny?
- Are improvements for local people likely?
- Does it examine a poor performing service?
- Will it result in improvements to the way the Council operates?
- Is it related to new Government guidance or legislation?

Next Steps

7. Other points which need to be taken into account when considering whether to review a particular issue are:

- is the subject specific? – to ensure that task groups understand exactly what they are scrutinising; and
- is it achievable within a realistic timescale?

8. Members are asked to take into account issues raised in paragraphs above and determine whether they wish to set up a scrutiny task group on Bus Services, led by Cllr Richard Udall and if so, to consider, comment on and agree the terms of reference and scrutiny proposal.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Proposal: Bus Transport Review

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 24 February 2016, 17 March 2016 and 21 April 2016
- [All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)