

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**25 October 2016**

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

**TOTAL TRANSPORT PROJECT: DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT  
PILOT SCHEME**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To seek agreement to undertake a pilot Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) scheme in the Ashbourne area as part of the Council's Department for Transport funding Total Transport Project, the results of which would inform the future development of passenger transport services in rural Derbyshire from late 2017 onwards

(2) **Information and Analysis** On 26 January 2016, Cabinet agreed to consult on proposals to withdraw all County Council funding for subsidised local bus services (supported services) and Dial-a-Bus (DAB) services. Cabinet also approved an initial two and a half years funding programme to provide DRT from October 2017 (Minute No. 118/16 refers) to help mitigate the impact of withdrawing supported and DAB services.

The consultation process ended on 24 April 2016 and over 4,200 responses were received. Feedback from the consultation is currently being assessed and will form part of a report to Cabinet later in the autumn, along with detailed proposals for passenger transport arrangements from October 2017.

Whilst no final decision has yet been taken on what form passenger transport services should take in the future, it is thought that DRT may have a role in rural areas of the County where demand on existing supported and DAB services is low. The potential benefits of DRT could be further increased if it is operated as part of a wider 'Total Transport' solution linking in with existing health and school transport. Officers are, however, conscious that there is limited experience of this type of service in Derbyshire. To get a better understanding of how such a service might operate, and identify where it may be appropriate, it is considered that there would be benefits in running a trial scheme for a period of 6-12 months. This proposal does not seek to pre-empt any decision Cabinet may take later, on the future of Council supported local bus and Dial-a-Bus services.

Given the short period of time available before the possible introduction of new services in October 2017 and the need to maximise the potential opportunities to learn lessons from the pilot, there would be benefits in the scheme being undertaken by a bus operator with experience of providing this type of service in the local area. Discussions with neighbouring authorities have identified a similar DRT type service currently being operated for Staffordshire County Council by Ashbourne Community Transport. This service operates in the Staffordshire Moorlands area adjacent to Derbyshire with some journeys already starting and finishing in Ashbourne.

The County Council currently funds a number of supported DAB and aCTive travel services in the Ashbourne area. A recent review of these services has revealed that some of them are carrying very small numbers of passengers. Officers consider that this set of circumstances provides a unique opportunity to pilot DRT in the Ashbourne area to see if it would better meet the needs of users of existing bus and DAB services.

As part of the pilot, it is proposed that services 101 and 102 currently provide up to four journeys a day and services 103 and 104, which provide school journeys, would be withdrawn once the current contract expires in March 2017. Transport in this area would instead be provided by DRT which would operate as a bookable service from 07:00 hours to 18:00 hours Monday to Friday and from 08:00 hours to 18:00 hours on Saturdays. Spare capacity on the vehicle would provide a replacement for some of the DAB and aCTive travel services currently run in the proposed pilot area by Ashbourne Community Transport. The existing DAB and aCTive travel resources released by this would be used in other parts of the Ashbourne Community Transport area where there is a higher demand for these services.

A map showing the proposed DRT operating area is shown in Appendix A. Whilst the service will predominantly serve Derbyshire residents, it will be seen that a small area of Staffordshire has been included to ensure a 'joined up' approach with similar schemes operating in adjacent areas. It is also envisaged that, subject to agreement with the Clinical Commissioning Group and the East Midlands Ambulance Service, some, or all, of the non-emergency patient transport journeys to St Oswald's Hospital, Ashbourne could be incorporated into the trial. The Total Transport Project has identified co-operation with the health sector and neighbouring authorities as an area where there may be scope to provide more efficient and effective services. The proposed pilot scheme offers an opportunity to gain some practical experience of adopting a more integrated approach and, if successful, may provide the impetus for collaborative working in other areas of the County.

The pilot DRT would work alongside and complement the existing Staffordshire County Council service operating in the adjacent area. To ensure continuity and consistency, it is proposed that it would adopt the same operating conditions as the Staffordshire service. This would include charging

the same fares which are currently £2 for adult single journeys and £3.80 for adult return. Child fares of £1.20 single would also be available. Gold Card holders would travel for free on the DRT after 09:30 hours Monday to Friday and anytime on Saturday as with a conventional bus service.

Officers met colleagues from Staffordshire County Council on 1 August 2016 to discuss opportunities to integrate the service and work together, and they are fully supportive of the pilot. Ashbourne Community Transport has also confirmed that it would be interested in providing a pilot service in Derbyshire if asked to do so, and that it has the capacity to meet all contractual needs and to accommodate additional bookings.

The operator will be responsible for providing a vehicle in accordance with set specifications and for processing and scheduling all booking requests. The operator will also be required to submit detailed information at the end of each month so bookings, passengers and journey information can be comprehensively analysed.

Subject to approval for Ashbourne Community Transport to carry out the pilot scheme, the operator will provide a suitable accessible vehicle using an 'O' licence, staff resources and access to its established transport booking facility for the duration of the proposed pilot. As the trial will be operated under 'O' licence regulations, the results of the trial will be equally applicable to conventional bus operators should the Authority decide to introduce similar services elsewhere in Derbyshire.

**(3) Financial Consideration** The cost of a pilot DRT service for six months will be £29,996 and this will be met from the Rural Sustainable Transport grant which was made available to the County Council by the Department of Transport. The cost includes all mileage undertaken up to 10,000 miles, as well as provision of the vehicle, maintenance, insurance and staff resources. The fares collected on the service would be retained by the Council and would partly off-set the cost of provision.

If, following thorough evaluation, the pilot is extended beyond six months, for example, to allow for alternative options to be considered or introduced, the additional cost would be in the region of £5,000 per month. It should be noted that a saving will be made by the County Council as the contract with High Peak Buses will not be extended. However, the extent of the saving cannot be confirmed until contractual negotiations are concluded.

Funding to help publicise the pilot, and to provide a County Council livery for the service, will be met by the Total Transport Project. This will be in the region of £3,000 to £5,000.

**(4) Legal Considerations** An Agreement is currently in place between the Council and Ashbourne Community Transport for the provision of community transport services.

As the proposal is for a pilot project for a limited time, it is considered that Ashbourne Community Transport can undertake the scheme within the scope of the current agreement. Should this service continue beyond the trial period or a similar service be introduced elsewhere across the County, the services will need to be procured via an open tender process.

Whilst the service could be operated by Ashbourne Community Transport under the provisions of Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985 ("Section 19 permits"), it is proposed that the service should be operated under an O-licence, which is regarded by many as a more demanding regulatory regime. This should give the Authority a better understanding of the implications of providing this type of service irrespective of the operator or regulatory regime.

(5) **Social Value Considerations** The proposed service would be operated by a local organisation that employs drivers and other staff, most of whom live locally. The proposed service provides transport for people who may otherwise have difficulty getting to work, school, to the shops or other essential services.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(6) **Key Decision** No.

(7) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

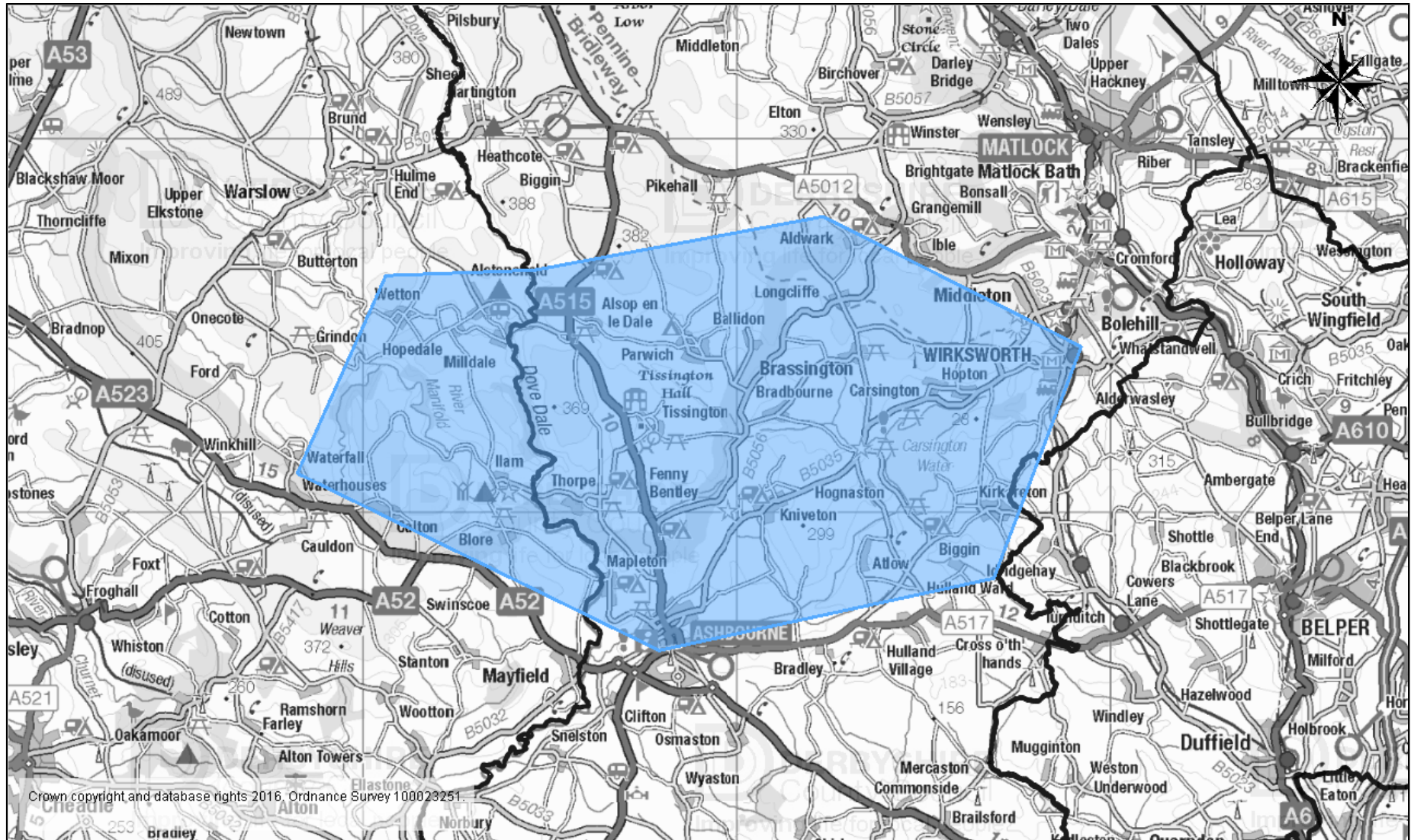
(8) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details - Steve Cannon, extension 38148.

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That the Cabinet Member:

- 9.1 Approves the proposals for a pilot Demand Responsive Transport service in the north Ashbourne area for a period of six months, with the option to extend for a period of up to 12 months.
- 9.2 Notes that the service will be monitored and evaluated to help shape other Demand Responsive Transport services that may be provided across the County.
- 9.3 Agrees to receive a further report in due course.

**Mike Ashworth**  
**Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities**

## Appendix A - Operating Area



Crown copyright and database rights 2016. Ordnance Survey 100023251.

0 km 4.5 km 9 km

07-Sep-2016

Scale 1 : 154147