

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

3 March 2015

Joint Report of the Strategic Director - Economy, Transport and Environment,
the Acting Strategic Director - Children and Younger Adults, and the Strategic
Director for Adult Care

**UPDATE OF THE REVIEW OF COUNTY COUNCIL PASSENGER
TRANSPORT PROVISION**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To note progress to date and endorse the work programme of the Review of County Council Passenger Transport Provision and to seek the Cabinet Member's approval for re-structuring the three Specialised Transport teams (Special Needs Transport, Adult Care Transport and Home to School Transport).

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

The County Council provides a number of different passenger transport services funded by Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE), Children and Younger Adults (CAYA) and Adult Care. In 2013-14, the combined cost of these services amounted to some £33.9 million.

At the meeting of the Cabinet Member – Strategic Policy and Budget on 28 May 2014, approval was granted to review passenger transport services and identify efficiencies and cost savings (Minute No. 11/14 refers).

A cross-departmental review was set up with support, as necessary, from specialist consultants. Up to £50,000 from the Challenge Fund was awarded to support the delivery of the project.

It should be noted that there are a number of related initiatives taking place concurrently with the transport review. These include:

- Smarter Travel Programme – which is seeking better co-ordination of the Council's fleet and grey fleet (staff car usage).
- Community Transport – proposed cuts in funding have been subject to public engagement and the Authority is reviewing the way in which it

supports people unable to use or who do not have public transport available.

- Local bus (public transport) – recent budget decisions offer continued support for socially necessary services in 2015/16 and 2016/17. This provides an opportunity for the Authority to review and develop a public transport strategy that reflects the County Council's overall priorities and ensures the most effective and efficient use of the available resources.
- Adult Care Transport Policy – recent changes in policy have yet to be fully implemented, including the introduction of charging for transport for day services attendance.

Progress to Date

A Review Working Group was established from the three departments with the then Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure appointed as Chair. The aims of the Group were to review the current services, benchmark Derbyshire against other authorities, and consider where additional efficiencies and savings could be made.

The Group initially focused on developing its knowledge and understanding of different transport services, including Special Needs (high dependency children/young adults), Support Centres, Mainstream School Bus, and the Smarter Travel programme. The Group moved on to consider what could be learned from other authorities and to develop a programme of initiatives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

As specialist consultant, Integrated Transport Planning Ltd (ITP) was appointed to provide technical advice and support. The consultant has spent much of his time working alongside the delivery teams and this has given him a good insight into the work of the teams, and the strengths and weaknesses of the current working arrangements.

ITP has assisted the Working Group by:

- Benchmarking comparisons with other authorities comparing spend per pupil/service user/passenger. Derbyshire compares reasonably well with both neighbouring authorities in the East Midlands and authorities of similar population density. For example, in comparing Derbyshire with Warwickshire, Suffolk and Buckinghamshire, Derbyshire has the lowest mainstream school cost per pupil travelling. However, in the same comparison set, the County Council has the highest Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport cost per pupil travelling.
- Identifying good practice in other authorities and undertaking case studies of how they are structured and deliver transport services.
- Facilitating meetings with Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils to exchange experiences with a view to exploring cross border efficiencies.

- Carrying out a pilot review of two areas of travel destination (Alfreton and Ashbourne), to investigate potential integration of routes and identify barriers to sharing transport between special needs children and vulnerable adults.
- Establishing links with the National Health Service (NHS) (particularly non-emergency Patient Transport Services) to consider opportunities for closer co-operation and integration.

In addition, data has been collected on the County Council's own passenger fleet and its utilisation in Adult Care, ETE and CAYA. A Task and Finish Group has been set up to further explore options for this fleet.

Emerging Themes and Issues

The emerging themes and issues can be summarised as follows:

a) Policy and Entitlement

- Adherence to policy by all staff including decision makers on the front line.
- The 'gatekeeping' role of the transport teams.
- Support Centres (which provide support to excluded students) – growth in number of alternative providers and multiple nature of journey requirements.

b) Budgets/Cuts

- Budget cuts and their likely impact on accessibility, including services currently provided by Community Transport.

c) New or Better Ways of Working

- *Planning and Review* - in most authorities, including Derbyshire, the majority of transport is provided by the private sector (taxis and small/large bus operators). One of the key areas of efficiency lies with effective planning and regular review of contracts, for example to identify areas where a number of contracts can be packaged together to provide a more efficient service. This is an area which has been identified for improvement and has the potential to deliver early savings.
- *Integration* - better integration of services from different groups, such as investigating the scope for special needs children and disabled adults/older people to travel together, where it would be appropriate and safe to do so.
- *Information provision/timeframes about school and college admissions* – to enable better planning for routes rather than reactive last minute procurement.
- *Review vehicle utilisation* – the under-utilisation of the passenger carrying fleet.

- *Independent Travel Training* - how current service users can be supported and encouraged to make better use of public transport through Independent Travel Training (ITT).

Other opportunities identified in the initial review include the investigation of opportunities for shared transport with health services, area based tendering opportunities and developing a wider transport strategy for the Authority.

Proposals

From the emerging themes, ITP and officers from the Working Group have agreed a work programme which has identified several priority areas. These have been developed into the following proposals:

- a) **Improved planning, procurement and review** Giving time and greater emphasis to *important* (but not necessarily *urgent*) tasks, such as review, planning and procurement. On-going review and planning of the network is critical in maximising cost effectiveness and considering innovative ways of packaging services together. Likewise, effective procurement working in tandem with review can deliver savings.

There is a need to change the current operating model to create dedicated staff resources that are focused on review rather than day-to-day issues.

- b) **Revised staffing structures** In order to provide dedicated resources to support the separate functions of review and procurement, it is recommended that the current staffing structures should be reviewed. This staffing review will include the three transport teams of Special Needs, Adult Care, and mainstream Home to School Transport. There are currently 14 full time and 7 part time staff in these teams (17.5 FTEs), including ETE drivers. In addition, consideration will be given to reviewing the procurement requirements of Local Bus services with the aim of making this area of work more effective.

As part of the 'good practice' research that ITP completed during the initial phase, it has completed high level reviews of neighbouring authorities to look at their models of delivery, which will inform the design of the most cost effective and efficient structures.

All changes considered would be the subject of detailed consultation with staff and relevant trade unions.

- c) **Area based reviews of Special Needs and Adult Care services** ITP is conducting a review of all Special Educational Needs and Adult Care Transport in two pilot areas (rural and urban in Derbyshire). The aim is to identify where opportunities for co-ordination can be identified (if at all) and the scale of savings that could come from this. If this produces a positive

outcome, it is likely that the concept will be adopted as a model and replicated in other suitable areas.

- d) **Vehicle utilisation** There is a need to analyse the findings from the utilisation review and consider the options for the future of the fleet use particularly in ETE and Adult Care.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The work undertaken to date confirms the initial view that there is potential for considerable efficiency savings to be achieved whilst maintaining a good level of service for Derbyshire residents. It should be possible to achieve some savings at an early date, but evidence from other authorities suggests that some of the more far-reaching proposals will take longer to develop and implement as they involve other agencies, such as the local NHS, or are linked to contract life cycles.

A review of the staffing structure would consider the most efficient use of the available staff resources. Opportunities for reducing overall staffing costs would be identified where possible.

The first phase of work undertaken by ITP (September to October 2014) cost £9,975. The second phase of work (October 2014 to February 2015) cost of £15,950.

(4) **Legal Considerations** Under the Education Act 1996, the Authority is required to make suitable home to school travel arrangements for eligible children of compulsory school age, including children who live beyond walking distance from school, and children with special educational needs, disabilities and mobility problems who live within walking distance but cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school. The Authority must also make such transport arrangements for persons of sixth form age and adult learners as it considers necessary, and having regard to the Authority's duties to secure education and training opportunities for young adults, subject to learning difficulty assessment.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 requires local authorities in certain circumstances to provide access to services for prescribed groups of disabled people.

Any proposals to change the way transport services are delivered by the Council to these groups of users will be the subject of separate consultation.

(5) **Equality and Diversity Considerations** If approved, the staffing review will cover the three teams who fulfil the Authority's duty to provide statutory services. An Equality Analysis will be undertaken to identify and assess the impact of the proposals on service users, staff and other affected parties.

(6) **Human Resources Considerations** There will be a short term increase in workload to undertake the review that can be met from existing resources.

Any changes proposed to staffing will be within the Authority's agreed policies and procedures.

Full consultation with staff and trade unions will also take place on an on-going basis.

Other Considerations

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

(7) **Key Decision** No.

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

(9) **Background Papers** Held within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department. Officer contact details – Deborah Oddy, extension 36743.

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

- 10.1 Notes the progress made by the Working Group in reviewing the County Council's passenger transport provision.
- 10.2 Endorses the work programme as outlined in the report.
- 10.3 Approves the proposed review of the staffing structure of the specialist transport teams, which would be subject to staff and trade union consultation.

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