

Agenda Item No. 8(f)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

31 January 2017

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DERBYSHIRE BUS STRATEGY (HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

(1) **Purpose of Report** To seek Cabinet endorsement to the emerging proposals for developing a Derbyshire Bus Strategy.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

At its meeting on 22 November 2016, Cabinet agreed to receive a report on proposals for developing a Derbyshire Bus Strategy (Minute No. 368/16 refers). This report sets out the background to the proposals and the suggested process to take the project forward.

Changes in the way bus services operate in Derbyshire are imminent. The review of Council supported bus services, agreed at the Cabinet meeting of 22 November 2016, will get underway and the existing Dial-a-Bus services will be replaced by a new Derbyshire Connect service from October 2017, the details of which are subject to a separate report on this agenda.

At a National level, the Bus Services Bill should become law in mid-2017, allowing local authorities the opportunity to play a bigger role in bus services in their area. This could take the form of either working with commercial bus operators to implement enhanced and quality partnership arrangements or, possibly, by introducing a franchising system which would see the end of the current free market. Commercially operated services carry approximately 85% of all bus passengers in Derbyshire so any change affecting these services would have a major impact.

Strategy Development

With these major changes on the horizon and the severe pressures on local authority funding likely to continue for the foreseeable future, leaving the current arrangements for public transport unchanged is unlikely to be a sustainable option in the longer term. What bus services in Derbyshire look like in the future is an issue that many different groups are likely to have views

about, including passengers, bus operators, local authorities, employers, retailers, education providers and the health service. Working alone, however, none of these organisations are able to set out the long term vision required to map the future path for services.

A Bus Strategy which combines the efforts and resources of all these groups to benefit not only the partner organisations but also the well-being and prosperity of those who live, work or visit Derbyshire may offer a longer term sustainable solution. Such a Strategy would need to be produced and jointly owned by a partnership of organisations and should not be seen as just a County Council document. A Strategy based on a whole system approach from a strategic level down and a community level up, which the various interested parties could sign up to and work together to implement is therefore proposed. This would be similar to the approach adopted for the current Derbyshire Cycling Plan. As such, the Strategy could form a key element of any future partnership arrangements which come about following the adoption of the Bus Services Bill.

Whilst the precise aims of the Strategy would need to be agreed by the partners, the fundamental goal would be to increase the use of bus services to ensure their long term sustainability and to support the wider economic and social development of Derbyshire. Developing a Strategy at this time is particularly important to ensure the Authority is well-placed to take advantage of any opportunities that emerge from the Bus Services Bill. Research at a national and regional level has shown that for bus services to attract and retain customers they must be easy to understand, reliable, punctual, affordable, accessible, integrated and safe. The Strategy would set out realistic and affordable ways these elements could be delivered. It would not be prescriptive, highly detailed or promise things which could not be achieved, but would provide a broad framework for developing services to meet realistic and achievable objectives.

Next steps

It is proposed that a small working group should be established with representatives from some of the bus operators, passenger groups and Council officers to develop an initial outline of the scope of the Strategy. At the same time, interested groups such as businesses, trade unions, health and education providers, voluntary and community groups, other bus operators and passenger groups would be contacted to get their views on what the Strategy should contain. These comments would be used to help develop a draft Strategy reflecting local issues and emerging trends. Subject to Cabinet approval on the draft, public consultation on the Strategy could then take place in Summer 2017.

(3) Financial Considerations There are only limited costs directly associated with the development of the Strategy document itself and these

can be managed using existing resources. Dependent on what the Strategy contains, it can be expected that there will be some costs incurred in its delivery which could be met from the Growth and Improvement Fund considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 22 November 2016 (Minute No. 368/16 refers). The aim of this funding being to facilitate partnership working and improve operating conditions for bus operators and their passengers.

(4) **Legal Considerations** The Council will ensure that the proposed Strategy takes account of the provisions of the Bus Services Bill when it passes on to the statute book.

(5) **Human Resources Considerations** The development of the Bus Strategy could be managed using existing staff resources.

(6) **Social Value Considerations** In developing the draft Strategy, consideration will be given to the wider social benefits of a local public transport service.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, 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 on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Chris Hegarty, extension 36721.

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

10.1 Endorses the development of a Derbyshire Bus Strategy in collaboration with other stakeholders, as outlined in the report.

10.2 Agrees to receive a further report on a draft strategy prior to public consultation.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities