

Agenda Item No. 8(e)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

31 January 2017

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

**PROPOSALS FOR THE NEW DERBYSHIRE CONNECT TRANSPORT SERVICE FROM OCTOBER 2017 (HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To inform Cabinet of the proposals for the new Derbyshire Connect service and to seek approval to invite tenders for the delivery of the service.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

**Background**

At its meeting on 22 November 2016, Cabinet agreed, in principle, to introduce a new Derbyshire Connect service from October 2017 to help meet travel demands not met through conventional bus services and to receive a further report setting out further details (Minute No. 368/16 refers). This report outlines proposals for the service.

Derbyshire Connect will provide people who are unable to use conventional buses due to age, disability or because of a lack of bus services in their area, with access to essential services such as food shopping or health care. Currently, the County Council makes grants to Community Transport organisations to provide a weekly Dial-a-Bus service from every community in the County to a local town centre or supermarket, and an Active Travel service which provides access to health care. This arrangement will cease on 30 September 2017, as previously agreed by Cabinet (Minute No. 19/16 refers).

Derbyshire Connect will draw together these two elements and initially provide a broadly similar “gate to gate” service with a weekly bus from every community in the County to the local town centre or supermarket, as well as an Active Travel service allowing people to access health related appointments at doctor’s surgeries, hospitals, dentists, opticians, clinics, physiotherapists or other locations where health services are offered. These services will be provided under a contractual arrangement following a competitive tendering process.

It is envisaged that the Derbyshire Connect contract will be tendered for a period of two and a half years, starting in October 2017, with an option to extend for a further year. Tenders for the bus service element will be invited for two areas: one covering the west and south Derbyshire (High Peak, Derbyshire Dales, and South Derbyshire) and the other covering the east of the County (Bolsover, North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield, Amber Valley and Erewash). This division is thought to combine operational efficiency with the potential to attract interest from a range of potential service providers.

Tenders can bid to operate services in more than one area if they consider that they are in a position to do so.

For a period of five months the proposed service will run concurrently with the Total Transport pilot scheme in the area north of Ashbourne (see below). During this time users' needs will be met by the pilot scheme so it will not be necessary to provide the proposed "Derbyshire Connect" service. Demand from this area constitutes around 7% of total demand in the west area of the County and potential operators will be advised accordingly.

Passengers would need to pre-book their journey, so operators will need to provide a telephone and email booking service. The bus element would be operated under O-licence (operator's licence) regulations using wheelchair-accessible vehicles with at least 15 passenger seats. It is anticipated that the service would operate from approximately 9.30am until 4.00pm Monday to Friday, with passengers getting between 1 hour 45 minutes and 2 hours 30 minutes at their destination. As the service would be registered with the Traffic Commissioners, Gold Card holders would be entitled to travel free of charge.

The health transport element could be operated in a variety of ways, including a volunteer car scheme or taxi companies. Passengers who need to travel in a wheelchair would also be accommodated. In view of the local nature and scale of this service, it is proposed that the areas should be further sub-divided, each into two areas. The west and south area would be divided into High Peak/north Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire/south Derbyshire Dales. The east area would be similarly divided into Bolsover/North East Derbyshire/Chesterfield and Amber Valley/Erewash. It is anticipated that this health transport service would operate from approximately 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. All passengers would be charged a fare based on the distance travelled, however, if they require a carer to accompany them, this person would travel for free. It is envisaged that charges would be competitive compared to taxi fares for journeys of a similar distance.

A report on the outcome of the tender process will be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

In the longer term, the way the service operates may evolve. As agreed by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure at the meeting on 25 October 2016, a pilot Total Transport service will be introduced into an area north of Ashbourne from February 2017 (Minute No. 119/16 refers). This will replace the current Dial-a-Bus and aCTive travel service in the area, along with two very lightly used conventional supported bus services and two school services. Working with Ashbourne Hospital and East Midlands Ambulance Service, it is intended to incorporate elements of non-emergency patient transfers in the area.

This pilot project will run for up to a year and will help to establish whether this type of service would be appropriate in other areas of Derbyshire where the current model of public transport provision is not meeting customer requirements. A report on the outcome of this pilot scheme will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure (Minute No 119/16 refers) and it should be noted that the Derbyshire Connect service may be adapted in the light of the lessons learned from the pilot scheme.

**(3) Financial Considerations** Cabinet has previously agreed spending totalling £155,000 a year on a tendered Active Travel service (£110,000 a year) and the Wheels to Work project (£45,000 a year) (Minute No 19/16 refers).

The estimated cost of the bus element of the proposed Derbyshire Connect service is £350,000 a year, although the actual cost will not be known until after the contracts have been awarded. This estimate is based on the costs of providing the current Community Transport Dial-a-Bus service, officers' assessment of the numbers of vehicles that would be required and knowledge of recent tender prices for providing Adult Care transport and transport for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The tendered Active Travel and proposed "Derbyshire Connect" services will come into effect when the current grant funding for Community Transport ends on 30 September 2017. The proposed new services will therefore operate for only half of the year and spending in 2017-18 will be reduced proportionately. Both contracts will be let for an initial period of two and a half years with an option to extend for a further year, the aim being to bring the end date into line with related local bus contracts.

**(4) Legal Considerations** In considering these proposals, Cabinet will need to be satisfied that the changes would continue to permit the Council to meet its statutory obligations. Section 63(1) of the Transport Act 1985 places a duty on the Authority to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the Council considers it appropriate to secure to meet

any public transport requirements within the County which would not, in its view, be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose.

Under Section 63(8) of the Act, the Council also has a duty to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled when exercising the Section 63(1) duty referred to above.

The Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities is satisfied that the proposals outlined in this report meet these statutory duties.

(5) **Human Resources Considerations** The proposed Derbyshire Connect service can be managed using existing staff resources.

(6) **Social Value Considerations** It is expected that the service would be operated by local operators that employ drivers and other staff, most of whom live locally. The proposed service provides transport for people who may otherwise have difficulty getting to the shops, health care or other essential services and by providing transport for potential customers it helps to support local shops and businesses. Consideration is currently being given to a means of assessing social value more formally in the evaluation of tenders for the provision of passenger transport services.

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 Environment Department. Officer contact details – Chris Hegarty, extension 36721.

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

10.1 Authorises the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities to invite tenders for the delivery of the Derbyshire Connect services for two and a half years, starting in October 2017.

10.2 Agrees to receive a further report on the outcome of the tender process.

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