

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	10 August 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2266
TITLE:	Quality partnership scheme for Corridor 3 of the Greater Bristol Bus Network	
WARD:	Keynsham North, Keynsham East, Keynsham South, Saltford, Bathavon West, Farmborough, Newbridge, Kingsmead, Abbey.	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: Draft quality partnership scheme for Corridor 3 of the Greater Bristol Bus Network.		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) major scheme includes the establishment of quality partnership schemes on ten bus route corridors in the West of England area. This scheme will cover the corridor between Bath and Bristol. It will set quality standards for bus operators who wish to use the new infrastructure and facilities.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 A quality partnership scheme be made covering the bus route corridor between Bath and Bristol via Keynsham.

2.2 Delegated powers be given to the Divisional Director for Planning & Transport Development to determine the appropriate standard of services in the quality partnership scheme.

2.3 Delegated powers be given to the Divisional Director for Planning & Transport Development to decide in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport on any revisions to the standard of services in the quality partnership scheme arising from the formal review process.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the implementation of the recommendations but the delivery of the GBBN scheme gives rise to some additional revenue commitments.
- 3.2 Costs associated with the new real time information system and cleaning and maintenance of the new shelters are estimated to be £30,000 per annum. Provision has been made for this amount in the base budget.
- 3.3 It is possible that there may be additional revenue support costs related to contracted bus services on the corridor. Such costs would reflect the higher quality of service that contractors would be required to provide over and above that for which they tendered originally. It is envisaged that any such costs would be met from the current bus revenue support budget. In the event that the contractors are unwilling or unable to agree to an upgrade in quality, the relevant contracts may be terminated with three months' notice and put out to competitive tender.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- Building communities where people feel safe and secure
- Promoting the independence of older people
- Improving life chances of disadvantaged teenagers and young people
- Sustainable growth
- Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change
- Improving transport and the public realm

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 The GBBN major scheme was a key component of the former Joint Local Transport Plan 2006/07 - 2010/11. The government approved the major scheme bid in 2007 and delivery is programmed to be completed by the end of March 2012. The complete scheme covers ten bus service corridors across the West of England area, of which Corridor 3 is the route between Bath and Bristol via the A4 and Keynsham.
- 5.2 The £70m capital cost of the complete GBBN scheme has been funded partly by a £42m government contribution for new infrastructure, bus priority measures and a real-time information system. First, the main bus operator in the area, is a partner in GBBN and has contributed over £20m of investment through the purchase of new vehicles. Additional contributions have been obtained from developers through Section 106 agreements.
- 5.3 To support the investment, the scheme requires that the councils make quality partnership schemes and supporting voluntary partnership agreements with bus operators on the GBBN corridors.
- 5.4 A quality partnership scheme is a statutory arrangement under which local transport authorities provide and maintain specific facilities (such as shelters, raised kerbs, traffic regulation orders and a real-time information system). Bus operators are permitted to use those facilities if they meet specific standards (such as vehicle quality, minimum frequency, maximum fares and customer service).

- 5.5 Bus operators may object to certain specific standards at the formal consultation stage if they consider that it would not be commercially viable for them, acting in a competent and efficient manner, to meet those standards. If such an objection is discounted, operators have a right of appeal to the Traffic Commissioner.
- 5.6 The Transport Act 2000 gave powers to make quality partnership schemes to local transport authorities and the Local Transport Act 2008 widened the scope of service standards. The latter also widened the scope of exemptions from competition legislation for bus operators to encourage co-operation between them.
- 5.7 Alongside the quality partnership scheme, the Council intends to enter into voluntary partnership agreements with bus operators on the corridor to create a framework for making further enhancements to bus services.
- 5.8 The quality partnership scheme document has evolved through the consultation process in the light of comments from bus operators and stakeholders. Informal consultation is continuing over matters of detail and it may be necessary to make some changes to the draft document in Appendix 1 prior to the formal process of making the scheme.
- 5.9 The quality partnership scheme requires that the standard of services must be reviewed in the event that there is a material change in market conditions or if requested by a proportion of the relevant bus operators. If maximum fare levels are specified, they must be reviewed at least annually.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet Member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.
- 6.2 This quality partnership scheme will be made under fairly recent legislation. The legal process has been followed but the content of the scheme document has been developed in the course of consultation with partners, bus operators and stakeholders. Changes have been made to address many of the concerns raised by stakeholders but there is, nevertheless, a possibility that operators may challenge some of the provisions.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 A proportionate equalities impact assessment has been carried out using corporate guidelines.
- 7.2 With regard to the Equality Duty now placed on public bodies, it is envisaged that the recommended decision will advance equality of opportunity for persons with the protected characteristics of age and disability by requiring bus operators to provide fully accessible vehicles on the corridor. Data obtained for satisfaction surveys in 2007 indicated that 27% of passengers on the corridor were using a concessionary pass and were, therefore, either aged over 60 or disabled.
- 7.3 It is envisaged that the recommended decision will have a neutral impact in respect of the other aspects of the Equality Duty and that the benefits will apply to all bus users.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The recommended actions are a key part of the delivery of the GBBN major scheme.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 Consideration has been given to removing some of the standards of services from the quality partnership scheme and negotiating them for inclusion in the voluntary partnership agreement that will support it. This matter is still under discussion with operators and some changes may be made in the final document. The fundamental principle will remain that the substantial investment by the public sector in infrastructure should be matched by a requirement on bus operators to provide a high-quality bus service on a commercial basis with a reasonable rate of return.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer

10.2 Consultation was carried out electronically and also through meetings with relevant bus operators, the Traffic Commissioner for the Western Area, the Department for Transport and the West of England Partnership.

10.3 No admissible objections were received from relevant bus operators during the formal consultation period.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Young People.

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	Andy Strong, Public Transport Team Leader – 01225 394201
Sponsoring Cabinet Member	Councillor Roger Symonds, Cabinet Member for Transport
Background papers	1 West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026. 2 – Quality partnership schemes: Statutory guidance to English local transport authorities and metropolitan district councils (published by the Department for Transport, March 2009)
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	