

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Service Delivery		
DECISION DATE:	On or after 29 January 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		E	2192
TITLE:	Quality partnership scheme for Corridor 10 of the Greater Bristol Bus Network		
WARDS:	Abbey, Widcombe, Lyncombe, Odd Down, Bathavon West, Bathavon South, Peasedown, Radstock, Westfield, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Midsomer Norton North.		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1: Draft quality partnership scheme for Corridor 10 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 Partnership area. The first such scheme will cover the corridor between Bath and Midsomer Norton. This will set quality standards for bus operators who wish to use the new infrastructure and facilities.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet member is asked to agree that:

2.1 A quality partnership scheme be made covering the bus route corridor between Bath and Midsomer Norton.

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 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 will be additional revenue commitments associated with the new real time information system and shelters, specifically the costs of energy and reconfigurations, estimated to be £20,000 per annum. Provision has been made for this amount within the budget.
- 3.2 There will be additional revenue commitments associated with cleaning and maintenance of new shelters, estimated to be £10,000 per annum. Provision has been made for this amount within the 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 could 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 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 is a key component of the Joint Local Transport Plan 2006/07 - 2010/11. The government approved the major scheme bid in 2007. The complete scheme covers ten bus service corridors across the West of England Partnership area, of which Corridor 10 is the route between Bath and Midsomer Norton via the A367 and Radstock.
- 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 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 the first in England to make full use of the current powers. 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.

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, the West of England Partnership and the Government Office for the South West.

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
Background papers	1 – Final Joint Local Transport Plan for the West of England Partnership area 2006/07 – 2010/11. 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	