

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Community, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	11 th March 2019	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
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TITLE:	Getting from A to B Strategic Review	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The presentation updates panel members of the progress within the Getting from A to B Strategic Review.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel members are asked to;

- 2.1 Note the update as set out within the report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Getting from A to B Strategic Review Programme looks at options for moving people differently by reassessing the mode of travel used and what additional capacity is available within other elements of the overall fleet movements.
- 3.2 The focus of the programme is on people rather than modes of transport to coordinate and cross support all transport modes.
- 3.3 The overarching aim is to remove dependence on Council or subsidised transport – leading to empowerment for communities with sustainable transport for all users and all needs whilst removing duplication.

4 SUCCESSES INCLUDING FINANCIAL SAVINGS

- 4.1 To date the project has realised cashable savings of £1.1m against the 4 year stretch target of £1.938m.
- 4.2 We have also saved in excess of £300k in growth avoidance – for example where we have changed the way we transport children from the point of transport allocation. Rather than under the historic processes which would have been costly the new processes have significantly reduced the cost of the transport from first allocation.

- 4.3 A number of supported services have been moved from support to a fully commercial offer or alternative funding streams such as section 106 funding with no drop in service/
- 4.4 We have also accessed funding from WECA to help support the remaining subsidised bus routes showing cross regional working is improving. It is also recognised that the public see bus routes as critical and that any further removal is challenging as services that will be affected are those in rural areas.
- 4.5 We have moved a number of children onto scheduled bus services rather than dedicated home to school services. This provides greater flexibility, increased independence and helps to secure the scheduled service for the wider community.
- 4.6 We have embedded a process of offering Personal Travel Budgets to parents and carers to help them provide the correct travel options for their children. This in turn reduces the overall costs to the council.
- 4.7 We have reduced the non-core services delivered by the internal fleet that were not cost effective such as the internal courier route. This allows them to focus on the main role and reduces the number of vehicles and drivers needed within the council.

5 BARRIERS

- 5.1 The project has been successful in delivery of a number of the key outcomes as set out within the critical success measures. However changes to the responsibilities of certain areas of transport provision with the formation of West of England Combined Authority removed and delayed some of the opportunities first identified. This includes community transport and concessionary fares.
- 5.2 Communication of the project aims to both internal staff and stakeholders is difficult (unpacking everything is complex) and trying to get this understood was hard. We had 37 separate pieces of work being undertaken, many that had interdependencies with other streams of work and this was challenging to explain.
- 5.3 Timing changes on the financial and school year timelines causes both delay and further communication challenges. Cross cutting workflows require cooperation as the message needs to be the same in all teams with different contexts in which people work. Lastly, the change in approach needs to be embedded with internal teams to make it stick and this is ongoing.
- 5.4 We still have issues with expectations of users, be that parents who want services to continue as they have previously, to challenges around what we are allowed to consider when assessing safe routes to school, for example wanting us to consider if a route is pushchair friendly when assessing the route for siblings. This does show that we still have much work to do around selling the changes better to ensure that service delivery is in line with expectations.
- 5.5 Capacity is difficult, giving it the priority needed. We have a number of high profile projects being delivered at the same time and project management resource has been redirected.

6 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

- 6.1 Due to procurement regulations we have to retender all routes for changes to occur in April 2019. We have added in requirements to increase the use of pass scanning to try and better understand users, trip usage and flows for time of year. This will help to develop the data on occupancy of the vehicles - allocating spaces for people who never use the vehicle is wasting resource – despite their right of access through the statutory criteria.
- 6.2 We also continue to work on the software trial to move more children onto scheduled buses to support the rural bus network and make sure that the limited resources is

reinvested for the benefit of the whole community. However, this does bring challenges for pupils and parents who may have to get used to different transport provision.

7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND RURAL TRANSPORT PROVISION

- 7.1 The provision of public transport (bus and rail) for rural communities has declined steadily since its zenith in the 1950s and it has reflected wider social and demographic changes. There has been a “vicious circle” of higher car ownership and use, decline in local facilities, demand for travel to a wider variety of destinations and falling demand for established public transport services.
- 7.2 Characteristics of rural areas are diverse but usually include some if not all of the factors below.
- Dispersed settlements
 - Ageing population
 - High levels of car ownership and dependency on car
 - Pockets of deprivation masked by apparent prosperity
 - Social exclusion more difficult to identify and tackle than in urban areas
 - Decline in local facilities (shops, Post Offices etc)
 - Centralisation of essential facilities (education, health etc)
 - Spread of travel demand to a variety of destinations
 - High average trip length
 - Tourist areas suffer from the environmental impacts of car-borne visitors
 - Rural economy dependent to some degree on visitors
 - Greater impact of severe weather conditions
 - Many narrow roads with lengthy diversionary routes if closed for road works etc
- 7.3 In 2001, 16% of the population of the West of England lived in the 177 rural parishes in the area and 72% of those living in the West of England’s rural areas used their car to travel to work, compared with 60% in urban areas.
- 7.4 In 2015, 10% of households in rural areas had no access to a car or van compared with 28% in urban areas. People living in the most rural areas travelled almost 50% further per year than those in the most urban areas and in the most rural areas, 88% of travel was made using a car (as a driver or passenger) compared with 69% in the most urban areas.
- 7.5 Bus operations in rural areas have a number of challenges. This includes low levels of commercial provision – except on inter-urban corridors and a general lack of stability of commercial network (characteristic of all bus services). This has historically left services heavily reliant on revenue support from local authorities – which are under great pressure in the challenging financial climate. A limited supply of operators further compounds any market forces with small operators reluctant to participate in multi-operator ticket schemes. Operators are unwilling to cross-subsidise rural operations from viable urban operations for fear of breaching competition law. This has left a majority of the supply focussed on statutory home-to-school transport.
- 7.6 Patronage levels are further affected by longer journey times to urban centres than by car as each service has to cover a larger area. Operating costs are also generally higher with vehicles generally older and meeting lower emission standards. The lack of interchange facilities to/from commercial route network prevents a joined up approach to more commercially robust services.
- 7.7 Rural services also have a high proportion of concessionary travel pass holders which reduces the income available to bus operators. Lack of accessible bus stops and limited space on highway for bus stops and interchange points further reduce the overall service offer for customers which in turn leads to fewer opportunities to get income from advertising or sponsorship to fund maintenance of infrastructure. Lack of promotion of wider network and the lack of real-time information units – in many cases because of

lack of power supply prevents customers from having a wider understanding on how to use services in the most efficient way.

7.8 The Getting from A to B transport strategic review is engaged with WECA to consider the future of bus services under the joint powers held between WECA and the constituent authorities. Possible ways forward that will be explored under the joint working arrangements (including the Joint Local Transport Plan 4, the Bus Strategy and development of a joint Integrated Transport Authority approach) include:

- Encourage local enterprise to reduce need to travel
- Encourage de-centralisation of public services to reduce need to travel
- Develop and encourage online access to services to reduce need to travel
- Promote Bus Checker apps to give real-time information (RTI)
- Incentivise all bus operators to participate in the WoE RTI system
- Challenge bus operators' unwillingness to cross-subsidise services
- Assist operators to offer m-ticketing and contactless payment to speed boarding times
- Assist communities to set up community bus schemes to operate bus services at lower costs under Section 22 permits
- Establish two-tier integrated bus network with self-sustaining services operating along core inter-urban corridors and complementary services feeding into them at key interchanges – either on a fixed-route or demand-responsive basis
- App-based demand-responsive taxis feeding onto core inter-urban routes
- More involvement by communities, e.g. in survey and research of demand, promotion, provision of information and cleaning shelters
- Local branding / identity to give sense of “ownership” by communities
- Provide good waiting facilities and accessible kerbs at bus stops, with good walking routes to them
- Local communities to take on cleaning of bus shelters and timetable displays
- Maximise use of developer contributions to improve or maintain bus services and infrastructure
- Seek contributions from visitor attractions to support sustainable modes of travel to such places and encourage cross-promotion
- Promote car sharing in rural areas
- Encourage and assist development of community car schemes – particularly for access to health facilities
- Investigate use of solar power for shelter lighting and RTI displays

8 NEXT STEPS

8.1 Further work will be undertaken within financial years 2019/20 and 2020/21 with WECA to ensure that bus services within the rural areas are developed in line with both WECA and BANES policies, including the development of an Integrated Transport Authority. This includes significant engagement with bus operators across the area to ensure that the outcomes can be delivered. Additional work will be undertaken with stakeholders to ensure that we engage with WECA to protect the vital services community transport groups provide and ensure they are fully integrated with the long term transport solutions and outcomes.

8.2 Continue working closely with services delivering the new integrated system for all health, social care and admissions (Eyes by a company called Liquid Logic). This has a number of benefits for all services but requires significant resource to ensure that they can be realised. In the short term staff resource has been tasked with managing the changeover rather than progressing the project.

8.3 Further reviewing the hazardous routes policy in light of feedback from appeals received. This will then allow future decisions to be taken under a new and revised policy.

8.4 A further review of the internal fleet will commence in financial year 2020/21 to ensure that we are still achieving best value – recognising that the market has historically not been able to provide the specialist resource necessary to deliver the service.

- 8.5 A continuation of the new approach to move more parents onto personal transport budgets – but only where it is both agreed and in the best interests of the child/children being transported.

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Background papers	<i>None</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	