

## **Cabinet**

**22 January 2009**



### **Durham County Council Bus Strategy Key Decision Env/EN/11/08**

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### **Report of John Richardson, Corporate Director, Environment Cabinet Portfolio Member for Environment – Councillor Bob Young**

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#### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To report back on the consultation exercise and seek approval to adopt the Bus Strategy.

#### **Background**

- 2 The Bus Strategy was considered by Cabinet on the 24 January 2008 and was approved to go out to consultation.
- 3 The consultation was carried out over the late spring and early summer and involved writing to many stakeholder organisations, an article in Countywide as well as web based feedback.
- 4 A total of 30 responses were received, mainly expressing concern about the specific operational issues of bus services as well as specific routes, places and times not being served. Some of the concerns raised are exactly why the Bus Strategy is in place and highlights the issues to be tackled.
- 5 An Equality and Diversity impact assessment was also completed in September to ensure that everyone in the County is treated fairly and with respect. The results of this have been embedded into the Environment Service Plan.
- 6 The opportunity has also been taken to update the Strategy and include changes that have taken place since the Strategy was first written. These include Local Government Review and new legislation, such as the Local Transport Act.
- 7 The Bus Strategy is a document where all policies and proposals regarding bus services are drawn together in the same place. The Bus Strategy therefore details how bus services are delivered so that:
  - they meet the transport requirements of people within the area that the authority consider should be met;
  - they are provided to an agreed standard;
  - the appropriate additional facilities and services required to support the bus network are provided.

- 8 The Bus Strategy takes into account the relevant national priorities and is aligned with the aims and timescale of the Local Transport Plan (LTP). Using the five shared priorities for transport (detailed in section 2.3.3 page 12) the aim of the Strategy is to play an important role in offering:
- Solutions to traffic congestion
  - An alternative journey to the private car
  - Increased social inclusion
  - Better accessibility to services
  - The creation of a safer and better environment.
- 9 The implementation of an effective bus strategy will clearly contribute to the achievement of these priorities, but will have the largest effect on reducing congestion and increasing social inclusion.

### **The Bus Strategy**

- 10 An executive summary of the Bus Strategy is attached at Appendix 2.
- 11 A risk assessment has been carried out and is attached at Appendix 3.

### **Recommendation and Reasons**

- 12 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Bus Strategy.

### **Background Papers**

DCC Bus Strategy – December 2008 (A copy has been placed in the Members' Resource Centre).

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Local Government Reorganisation**

#### **Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council?**

Bus service provision is a County Council function, however, concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled are District functions as well as the ownership of 3 of the 5 bus stations, which will be brought together under Local Government Review. In addition a large proportion of bus shelters are owned and maintained by District, Town or Parish Councils. Partnership working with all of these bodies is currently undertaken, with plans well underway to determine future working relationships under the New Authority.

### **Finance**

There are existing budgets in place to deliver most of this strategy. The partnership working element of the Bus Strategy is contained within the Local Transport Plan 2 major scheme bid called Transit 15 and is for £5.6m.

Policy S5 seeks additional funding for 'pump priming' Type 2 services through the one off capital purchase of low floor vehicles to operate contracted bus services along with service branding and marketing of services. The aim is to increase patronage and improve sustainability with the aim of returning the service to be commercially viable. This is estimated to cost in the region of £500,000.

Policy S5 also has an alternative option to use capital funding to purchase 9 minibuses to be operated as demand responsive bus services to tackle social inclusion of those people who are unable to use public transport through disability or lack of service provision. This capital requirement is for £300,000; additional revenue funding of £300,000 per annum would be required to maintain the provision of this service. (See page 49).

Since the policy was first written, progress has been made on policies such as the extension of concessionary fares to young people. Final details are being worked up by Bus Companies for implementation during the forthcoming financial year.

The Bus Strategy cannot be delivered in its entirety unless the additional funding identified is available and growth bids have been made for each of the identified initiatives.

### **Staffing**

None

### **Equality and Diversity**

Provision of low floor buses would improve the accessibility to bus services for a greater percentage of the population.

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

Within the infrastructure section policies are aimed at Crime and Fear of Crime at Bus Stations and Bus Stops.

**Sustainability**

The partnership working is seeking to grow patronage on Type 1 services whilst sustaining passenger numbers on Type 2 services.

**Human Rights**

None

**Localities and Rurality**

Many of the Type 2 and 3 services are vital in supporting the access to local services, particularly in rural areas.

**Young People**

There is a specific policy aimed at the extension of concessionary fares to young people up to the age of 19.

**Consultation**

Consultation has taken place with the Bus Operators, the Public and other local councils during 2008.

**Health**

It is acknowledged that bus services play an important part in the health of the population of the County, both in terms of social inclusion and also access to health services. The policy will help partnership initiatives currently ongoing between NHS Durham, The Acute Hospital Trust and North East Ambulance Service.

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## Appendix 2 – Executive Summary

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### Vision of the Bus Strategy

- 1 *Vision* - To develop a truly integrated transport system that when worked and managed together provides a strong framework that provides frequent services with improved journey speeds on trunk routes aiming to grow patronage on routes that have the highest density of population and contributing to a strong network. This network will be complemented by good links into and out of the 'trunk' network to provide local access. There will still be a need for other services to operate in low demand areas to complete the requirement for a good geographical coverage and access to a range of vital services.
- 2 *Co-ordination of Services* - The total bus network will require co-ordination between those planning bus routes and those planning the local services (such as retail, leisure and health). This will ensure that maximum interchange opportunities are available and to ensure that the provision of information to passengers can be done in a co-ordinated and accurate manner using both traditional and electronic means.
- 3 *Passenger experience* - The busiest services would be operated with modern vehicles with easy access and low emission engines, with the aim of improving the quality of all vehicles running on the network over the period of the plan. When taken in conjunction of high quality of infrastructure, driver training, excellent reliability and punctuality the passenger experience will provide a credible alternative to the private car.
- 4 *Affordability* – To complete the vision the services must be affordable and with few barriers to travel. The network will have a range of ticketing that will allow travel on all services throughout the County, which provide good discounts for regular travellers with fares on secured services pegged at affordable levels.

### Bus Strategy

- 5 The key aims of the Bus Strategy are to play an important role in offering:
  - Solutions to traffic congestion
  - An alternative journey to the private car
  - Increased social inclusion
  - Better accessibility to services
  - The creation of a safer and better environment.
- 6 Three different types of service have been identified currently running within the comprehensive bus network. No single type of service can deliver effectively against all these aims, but by tailoring strategies to each type of service a range of outcomes can be achieved. The three different types of services have been identified and are simply referred to as Type 1, 2 or 3.

## Type 1 Services

- 7 Type 1 services are fully described in 4.1.1 of the strategy but are typically running every 30 minutes or better, will probably already have low floor buses and be running between main service centres. There are about 45 of these services currently running carrying about 20m passengers per year.
- 8 The main strategy for these services is to work in partnership with the bus operators. Each partner will contribute as per the following table:

Action required	Operator	Durham County Council
Investment in vehicles	✓	
Reliability, punctuality and customer care	✓	
Route branding and marketing	✓	
High quality infrastructure including clean and safe bus stations		✓
Bus priority measures		✓
Real time information	✓	✓
Co-ordinated network of services to allow interchange	✓	✓
Fares and ticketing	✓	

The partnership arrangements would set service levels such as frequency, reliability, punctuality, route branding and marketing to be achieved by the operators. In return the County Council would commit to implementation of Bus Priority measures, high quality infrastructure, further investment in real time and other information systems as well as facilitation of network co-ordination and ticketing initiatives not possible because of competition legislation.

- 9 Whilst each aim of the five aims will be achieved, the partnership strategy for Type 1 services is aiming specifically at reducing traffic congestion and providing a real alternative to the car.

## Type 2 Services

- 10 These services are more fully described in 4.1.2 but are typically running hourly, probably not low floor and will operate around smaller towns and in rural areas. There are approximately 40 services with 5 million journeys made per year.
- 11 Again the main strategy is partnership working with operators but with emphasis on reliability, co-ordination with Type 1 services and geographical coverage. Type 2 services do not generally operate in areas that suffer traffic congestion or have a high dependency on infrastructure.
- 12 The aim of the strategies for Type 2 services would be to tackle social inclusion by ensuring the services are sustainable through improved information, quality of vehicles and coordination with Type 1 services.

### **Type 3 Services**

- 13 These services are again more fully described in 4.1.3 but are running less than two hourly, require advance booking, run with small accessible vehicles probably in rural areas. There are approximately 25 Type 3 services with roughly 100,000 journeys made per year. These services are generally supported through subsidy from Durham County Council.
- 14 The partnership arrangements would again be different with services standards set through contract conditions but requiring improved information.
- 15 The main aim of the strategy for Type 3 services is specifically to improve social inclusion.

### **Policies contained with the Bus Strategy**

- 16 As well as the main partnership strategy, there are 24 separate policies and proposals. These are contained in sections 4.1 to 4.12 of the bus strategy. A summary of each policy and which aim they will help deliver is contained on pages 39 and 40.
- 17 A brief overview of the areas covered include:

**4.2 Partnership Arrangements** – contains much more detail on the expected working arrangements outlined above. This includes details such as:

- a. Targets to introduce low floor vehicles such as all Type 1 services by 2009;
- b. Agreed standards on reliability, punctuality and customer service;
- c. Programme of infrastructure improvements and bus priority;
- d. Agreements on route branding, marketing, ticket initiatives, network planning and information.

**4.3 Community Transport** - details the contribution Community Transport can make in delivering Type 3 services.

**4.4 Transport Innovation Fund** – gives details of the TIF bid and how this could fit into the bus strategy.

**4.5 Revenue Funding** - details the problems caused by transport inflation running significantly higher than CPI. Transport inflation includes significant costs such as fuel/oil, wages and spare parts which have risen sharply. This is highlighted by the fact that transport inflation has risen by 30.8% since 2000, whilst CPI has risen by 10.5%. If core funding only rises by CPI, this will lead to significant cuts in bus services each year simply through inflation.

Current funding for 2008/9 has been set to include high levels of transport inflation, but this issue needs to be recognised for subsequent years.

Policy S5 seeks additional core funding and details of where this would be spent are included on page 49:

**Option 1** – Policy S5 seeks additional funding for ‘pump priming’ Type 2 services through the one off capital purchase of low floor vehicles to operate contracted bus services along with service branding and marketing of services. The aim is to increase patronage and improve sustainability with the aim of returning the service to be commercially viable. This is estimated to cost in the region of £500,000.

**Option 2** - To develop a Countywide Network of accessible minibuses provision, that will enable travel for those who are unable to access public transport. This would include the following groups:

- Those who do not have a bus service through geographical isolation;
- Those who cannot use conventional bus services through mobility disability.

The services would be Demand Responsive and registered as local bus services, ensuring that operators can reclaim the tax on fuel and that passengers can use the ‘free’ concessionary travel scheme. These services will be a Type 3 service description.

A similar concept is already being piloted in East Durham as a Hospital link service.

It is envisaged that this service would operate as follows:

- County Durham split into zoned areas that reflect the natural local transport needs;
- It is envisaged that a fleet of nine vehicles would be required to cover these areas;
- Vehicles would be small wheelchair accessible, though not necessarily the same for each area;
- Passengers can make trips within the zone of origin and to an adjacent zone in the county (one cross boundary permitted per trip);
- Trips secured by booking through existing booking centre (minimum 1 hour before travel);
- Connection available to low floor accessible bus services;
- Possible bookings to hospitals outside the county if appointments held (perhaps in conjunction with the Patient Transport Service).

The zoned areas are designed around the natural transport needs that already exist. The size of the zone will reflect natural and routine journeys being made within a single zone area or by crossing a single boundary to access shopping areas, doctors and ideally an outpatient hospital, although this will not be practicable in some areas.

The service would be operational from 0800 until 1800 Monday to Saturday. The service would be expected to operate school contracts/day centre/social care provision during peak periods. The estimated revenue cost of operation of this service is £300,000 per annum, with an initial capital funding of around £300,000.



**4.6 Other Funding** – looks at alternative sources, such as bodies creating demand in the bus network paying to meet that demand. Such an arrangement is in place for the East Durham Hospital Link service, which is funded by the PCT.

**4.7 Bus Information** – contains many of the policies that were in the Bus Information Strategy and includes Real Time Information, SMS text messaging, internet and traditional methods of providing timetable information. An article on this will be included in the February/March edition of Countywide.

It also includes publishing figures on punctuality and reliability to increase transparency and engender confidence in the operation of bus services.

**4.8 Bus Infrastructure and Accessibility** – looking at the provision of bus stops, shelters, stations and interchange facilities and safety and security at stops and on the bus.

Much of this programme is delivering Local Transport Plan 2 funded schemes. This includes:

- Bus Stop improvement schemes with well over half of bus stops now able to accept low floor buses.
- Interchange facilities – which include key interchange points in addition to the five bus stations within the County.
- Details on improvement of Safety and Security at Bus Stops and Bus Stations, such as security staff, CCTV at sites and on board vehicles.

**4.9 Fares and Ticketing** – provides details of the process of taking forward fares and ticketing initiatives including:

- a. multi-operator ticketing;
- b. further off bus ticketing to reduce the cash collected on bus from the current 37%;
- c. concessionary fares for young people. High bus fares have consistently been identified as a barrier to accessing leisure and other facilities by Young People.
- d. the new England wide free concessionary travel scheme due for introduction in April 2008 for the elderly and disabled.

**4.10 Air Quality** – details of initiatives of working with operators to improve air quality of their vehicles including reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels through the introduction of new vehicles and widespread use of B20 diesel fuel.

**4.11 Park and Ride** – contains details of how the Park and Ride is included as part of the strategy.

**4.12 Network Review Process** – looking at how to provide better coordination of services between operators, changes to services and tendering arrangements.

- 18 Table 4-5 summarises the strategies and indicates which of the shared priorities each policy will help deliver.

### **Current Barriers**

- 19 To implement a new strategy there will be barriers to be overcome. The main ones have been identified and are contained within section 5.

### **Delivery of the Strategy**

- 20 Many of the details contained in the Strategy are from ongoing delivery plans and are therefore already in the process of being delivered.
- 21 The main strategy of partnership working is currently being initiated under the framework of Transit 15, which was one of the major schemes from Local Transport Plan 2. Transit 15 has the potential funding of £5.6m to be invested in Bus Priority measures and is the County Council's contribution to the partnership arrangements with Bus Operators investing in vehicles, driver training and marketing.
- 22 Therefore the total investment by both partners could be in the region of double that of the initial Transit 15 funding. Go Ahead have already invested £7m in new buses many of which operate in the Derwentside area. Under a similar partnership arrangement in Tees Valley, Arriva are investing £8m in new buses and further new vehicles earmarked for introduction in County Durham.

<b>Risk of Bus Strategy</b>				
<b>Risk Ref</b>	<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Potential impact</b>	<b>Treatment (if not already in place, state implementation date)</b>	<b>Ownership of risk</b>
1	Partnership fails because DCC fail to implement bus priority measures	DCC will fail to secure £5.6m funding. Loss of partnership will lead to increased congestion and missing of key corporate objectives.	Work has commenced with partners using good practice techniques from other authorities who have succeeded.	Richard Startup
2	The partnership fails because the operator fails to deliver	The overall impact of the strategy will be reduced. Bus Priority funding will not be used as effectively as possible.	Service level agreements, work programmes and investment timetables must be agreed in advance of any agreement being entered into.	Richard Startup
3	Failure to provide information on reliability and punctuality of bus services	Could lead to reduction in bus travel making services unsustainable.	Monitoring of services must be maintained and information shared with operators.	Richard Startup
4	Failure to obtain additional revenue from those creating additional demand	Demands for services will exceed the resource for supply.	Accessibility officers already work with planning officers, health workers, employers and community groups to keep identifying potential generators of demand.	Richard Startup
5	Failure to develop ticketing initiatives	Possible reduction in bus travel. Missed opportunity to grow patronage.	Work needs to be done on engaging the operators and facilitating the schemes required.	Richard Startup
6	Failure to implement concessionary fares for all under 19's.	Will generate significant criticism from young people.	Significant work to be completed to enable this to happen with investment required in time effort and payments to operators.	Richard Startup
7	The operators won't enter into a partnership arrangement	It won't be possible to deliver some of the policy although the main elements can be delivered separately.	Continued dialogue.	Richard Startup
8	Failure to provide comprehensive bus service information	Could lead to reduction in bus travel making services unsustainable.	The current good practice and further development as per out operational plan must be sustained.	Richard Startup
9	Failure to maintain a safe waiting and travelling environment	Could lead to reduction in bus travel making services unsustainable.	Investment in CCTV on buses, at bus stations, and with other measures within bus stations.	Richard Startup