

Cabinet

8 July 2020

**Discharge of Transport Functions by
Durham County Council 2020**

Ordinary Decision



Report of Corporate Management Team

**Report of Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration,
Economy and Growth**

**Councillor Carl Marshall, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic
Regeneration**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update Cabinet on the transport activity carried out by the Council under delegation originally from the North East Combined Authority (NECA) which has continued under the North East Joint Transport Committee.

Executive summary

- 2 The Council is required to report to the North East Joint Transport Committee annually on the discharge of the functions delegated to the Council. Appendix 2 to this report contains the information which will be reported in respect of the last year.

Recommendations

- 3 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of this report.

Background

- 4 When NECA approved its constitution in April 2014, it delegated to Durham County Council transport functions contained in Parts 4 and 5 of the Transport Act 1985 and Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000. These primarily relate to securing socially necessary bus services, concessionary travel, and ticketing on local passenger transport services. Durham's Cabinet approved the delegation of these functions at its meeting of 16 April 2014 to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder, Economic Regeneration.
- 5 During 2018, responsibility for transport functions became vested in a statutory Joint Committee comprising of representatives of the new North of Tyne Combined Authority and the North East Combined Authority. It was agreed in a Deed of Cooperation entered into by the seven constituent councils, that the transport functions delegated to the two counties would remain the same pending any decision by the new Joint Committee. No changes to the delegations have been proposed.
- 6 Attached in Appendix 2 is an account of the discharge of transport functions for 2019 agreed by the Corporate Director for Regeneration, Economy & Growth and Transport Portfolio Holder, Economic Regeneration. Appendix 2 is also scheduled to be reported for information to the North East Joint Transport Committee meeting on 15 September 2020.

Background papers

- The North East Combined Authority Constitution
<http://northeastca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Constitution-Version-8-June-2019-1.pdf>
- The North East Combined Authority Deed of Operation dated 29 April 2014
- The North East Combined Authority Deed of Cooperation dated 4 July 2018 <https://northeastca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Appendix-1-Deed-of-Cooperation-4-July-2018.pdf>

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

It has been agreed that the Council would provide an annual report on the exercise of its delegated functions to the North East Joint Transport Committee.

DCC Legal services have been consulted on this matter.

Finance

Transport functions carried out by or on behalf of the Combined Authority are funded by a levy raised by the Combined Authority. The funding for transport functions in Durham is transferred into the Combined Authority, and the Combined Authority in turn transfers the funding back to the Council to cover the discharge of its transport functions.

Consultation

None specific in this report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None specific in this report.

Climate Change

All of the areas of transport detailed in Appendix 2 (The JTC Report) contribute to many of the aims of the Climate Emergency by maintaining, and encouraging the public to use, a comprehensive passenger transport network across County Durham and beyond.

Human Rights

None specific in this report.

Crime and Disorder

None specific in this report.

Staffing

None specific in this report.

Accommodation

None specific in this report.

Risk

None specific in this report.

Procurement

None specific in this report.

Appendix 2: JTC Report

Date: 15 September 2020

Subject: Discharge of Transport Functions by Durham County Council

Report of: Portfolio Responsibility for Transport for Durham County Council

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of how Durham County Council has discharged the transport functions delegated to it by NECA for the 2019/20 year.

Recommendations

The North East Joint Transport Committee is recommended to note this report.

1. Background Information

- 1.1 When NECA approved its constitution in April 2014, it delegated to Durham County Council transport functions contained in Parts 4 and 5 of the Transport Act 1985 and Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000. These primarily relate to securing socially necessary bus services, concessionary travel, and ticketing on local passenger transport services. Durham's Cabinet approved the delegation of these functions at its meeting of 16 April 2014 to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder, Economic Regeneration.
- 1.2 Attached at Appendix A is an account of the discharge of transport functions for 2019 agreed by the Corporate Director for Regeneration, Economy & Growth and Transport Portfolio Holder, Economic Regeneration. Appendix A has been reported for information to the County Council's Cabinet meeting on 8 July 2020.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the report.

3. Reasons for the Proposals

- 3.1 The NECA operating agreement requires that the relevant Portfolio holder provides reports when required to the North East Joint Transport Committee advising on how the delegated functions have been exercised.

4. Next Steps and Timetable for Implementation

- 4.1 These are identified as far as practicable in Appendix A.

5. Potential Impact on Objectives

- 5.1 The report describes how Durham County Council is discharging transport functions delegated by NECA.

6. Financial and Other Resources Implications

- 6.1 The transport functions will be funded by the levy issued by NECA to Durham County Council.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 This report is submitted in accordance with obligations contained in the Deed of Operation entered into by the constituent authorities on formation of the Combined Authority.

8. Key Risks

8.1 None specific in this report.

9. Equality and Diversity

9.1 None specific in this report.

10. Crime and Disorder

10.1 None specific in this report.

11. Consultation/Engagement

11.1 None specific in this report.

12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix A – North East Combined Authority (NECA) – Durham County Council Transport Activity Report 2019/20

13. Background Papers

13.1 The North East Combined Authority Constitution
The North East Combined Authority Deed of Operation dated 29 April 2014
The North East Combined Authority Deed of Cooperation dated 4 July 2018

14. Contact Officers

14.1 Andy Leadbeater, Integrated Passenger Transport Manager, Durham County Council, andrew.leadbeater@durham.gov.uk, Tel: 03000 268512

15. Sign off

- The Proper Officer for Transport:
- Head of Paid Service:
- Monitoring Officer:
- Chief Finance Officer:

North East Combined Authority (NECA)

Durham County Council Transport Activity Report 2019/20

Introduction

1. The County Council operates an 'Integrated Passenger Transport Group' (IPTG) in line with Government's best practice guidance. The IPTG delivers public transport, home to school transport, Special Education Needs (SEN) transport and adult social care transport. It also has close links with health, clinical commissioning groups and the North East Ambulance Service.
2. Integrating transport in this way is especially important in more rural areas, enabling the authority to create packages of work across sectors to maximise the use of vehicles and staff, ensure full use is made of existing local bus services for education and social work purposes and deliver consistency of standards across different modes. The opportunities to integrate commissioning and delivery of local authority transport with non-emergency healthcare transport have also helped to deliver a simpler and more understandable service for the user.
3. The Council also values the benefits of the harmonisation of policy and delivery across the economic development, planning, housing and transport functions. This approach ensures that we can maximise transport's contribution to economic growth in the County.

Bus Service Network

Current State of Commercial and Subsidised Networks

4. The diverse geography of County Durham, including its many rural destinations, creates complex travel demands highlighting the importance of transport across our rural County. The local bus network plays a key role in our ambitions for County Durham and our wider plan for both transport and the economy.
5. A comprehensive network of bus services operates across almost all the county, although frequencies and coverage are reduced during later evenings and on Sundays, reflecting lower demands for travel. The majority of the bus network in County Durham has been essentially stable since October 2012 in terms of level of service and the service routes, although there have been periodic adjustments to details of timings reflecting better data now available from new tracking systems and an increasing impact of congestion on timetables.
6. Services operating without subsidy from DCC ("commercial services") provide a high proportion of the network in most of County Durham. Most of the main towns of County Durham have at least two operators providing locally significant services without subsidy. Go North East (53%) and Arriva (42%) provide the

majority of the services across the county. Three other firms also run locally significant bus services without subsidy.

7. Total bus boardings have reduced slightly from a total of 23.34m in 2018/19 to approximately 22.85m in 2019/20, a decrease of about 2.0%. This includes some allowance for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and reverses the increase recorded in the previous year.
8. There has been only limited further investment by operators in new and cascaded buses in the period. So far as Go North East is concerned this reflects the delivery delays caused by the collapse of the bus manufacturer Wright's; a large number of new buses for services in north-west Durham had been due in autumn 2019 but are now expected in Spring 2020.

Secured Service Retendering Activity

9. The council's general practice is that contracts for bus services are arranged on 4-year cycles, holding a right to extend to 5 years. Almost all of the Council's contracts expired in October 2017 (having started in 2012 or 2013) and were replaced by new contracts on largely unchanged specifications running to 2021. This has meant that 2019 has seen little change in bus contracts.

Concessionary Fares

10. Reimbursement payments under Durham's concessionary fare scheme for older and disabled people form the major element of the County Council's spending on public transport. Largely fixed price arrangements have been negotiated with the two major operators, with "cap and collar" provisions to handle deviations from expected volumes. Total concessionary boardings in 2019/20 are set to fall slightly compared with the previous year. It is anticipated a further slight fall in concessionary travel will continue in 2020/21, reflecting the final stage of the transition in the qualifying age.
11. A scheme to provide local concessionary bus travel for women born before 6 November 1954, who have not yet reached qualifying age for the English national scheme, was introduced in March 2020.

North East Smart Ticketing Initiative (NESTI)

12. Durham has continued to actively participate in the NESTI initiative. The Pop PAYG card was successfully rolled out on Durham Park and Ride in summer 2016. It is now the method of payment used by most regular users on Park and Ride. However, Pop PAYG has not achieved material levels of use across the wider bus network. The availability of contactless payment on all Arriva and Go North East services provides an alternative method of cash-less payment which is easier for many people.

Multi-Operator Ticketing Scheme

13. The Council is continuing to work with bus operators in County Durham to implement a scheme of multi-operator bus fares reflecting the bus market of County Durham. While the work has not progressed as fast as hoped, we continue to work with operators and anticipate the scheme will be introduced early in 2020.

Transport Focus Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey

14. DCC are working with Transport Focus, Arriva and Go North East to support the annual survey work carried out by Transport Focus, measuring passengers' satisfaction with their bus journeys. Previous years have shown generally high levels of satisfaction but with passengers' concerns regarding punctuality becoming a feature. This trend was seen in many areas in previous years' survey results. The 2019 results are shown in the table below.

2019 survey results - 2018 results in ()			
Category	Arriva	Go North East	Overall (including other operators)
Overall Satisfaction	88% (86%)	94% (93%)	92% (91%)
Value for money	66% (66%)	66% (69%)	67% (70%)
Punctuality	65% (67%)	81% (79%)	76% (77%)
Journey time	84% (88%)	91% (88%)	88% (89%)

Park and Ride

15. The Durham Park and Ride has continued to perform very satisfactorily. The introduction of a Sunday service is currently under consideration.

Community Transport (CT)

16. The CT sector in County Durham predominantly concentrates on group hire, although Weardale Community Transport again operated its summer-only Sunday bus service in the dale in 2019. The Council's programme of offering capital grants from Local Transport Plan funding to assist Community Transport continues.
17. We are also continuing our use of Rural Sustainable Community Transport funding to support the CT sector to develop its capacity, with a particular focus on the recruitment of volunteers.
18. The evolving national guidance on the eligibility of organisations for operation under community minibus permits and community bus service permits has

caused understandable concern to the sector. The further guidance due following a Judicial Review is expected soon. However, the expected limitations on operation of contracts will have very little impact in County Durham as our school and public transport contracts have always required full Public Service or Taxi Operator licences. There remains a risk that the organisations that primarily exist in order to provide community transport may find it harder to qualify for the current exemptions from normal licence requirements.

Home to School/Social Care Transport

19. Home to school and social care transport forms the major part of Durham's operations, with a total spend of approximately £15 million pa and over 1100 contracts in operation. This includes school transport buses that are paid for by parents and or schools, supplementing the statutory free travel provided by the Council. In the 2019/20 school year, about 6,500 pupils receive free travel to school from Durham County Council, with a further 3,100 pupils travelling under the non-statutory concessionary schemes.
20. Our general practice is that contracts for Home to School Contract Hire services are awarded for a 4-year period, with the Council holding a right to extend to 5 years. Tendering is carried out over a rolling programme, with new contracts starting in September each year. Contract prices have shown a material increase in both the taxi /minibus and school bus sectors, with the latter significantly affected by application of the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations to this sector on buses where there is a charge for travel (which previously had been considered to be exempt in most circumstances).

Travel Response Centre

21. Durham operate a Travel Response Centre (TRC) for the booking of non-emergency patient transport to health appointments as well as the council's Link2 demand responsive transport service and Access Bus. The TRC handles over 65,000 calls on an annual basis. Referrals from social workers and other care staff for client travel to day care are also processed.
22. The Health Booking Service is delivered on behalf of the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups in Durham. Following an eligibility assessment, patients are booked on to North East Ambulance Patient Transport Services. Patients and visitors who are ineligible for NHS patient transport are advised of alternative services providing access to hospitals or how to make their journey by public transport.

Public Transport Information

23. Durham County Council has continued to process, validate and submit public transport data for the national and regional data sets on behalf of Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, Durham and the Tees Valley local authorities. This data is required for national and regional journey planning, NextBus, electronic displays at bus stops as well as being used by third party applications.

24. The Council act as the regional contact for National data issues and represent the region at national working groups and meetings. This includes taking an active role in working groups for the DfT Open Data Initiative that will make changes to the way that bus operators provide information about their registered services and make it easier for bus passengers to plan their journeys through access to routes and timetables data, fares and tickets data and real time information.
25. The new regulations require bus operators to publish route, fares and vehicle location data to a central web service called the Bus Open Data Digital Service (BODDS) from January 2021 with requirements being phased in until 2023.
26. The Council provides a comprehensive range of passenger information on local bus services operating within the County. This includes maintaining printed timetable displays at over 2,800 bus stops, providing 130 electronic information displays at bus stations and on-street stops, printed county public transport maps, printed timetable leaflets and a web based interactive bus map. The interactive bus map shows bus routes and individual timetables for all registered services in downloadable format.

Real Time Passenger Information

27. Durham County Council also provides the data management role for the North East Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) project in partnership with Nexus, Northumberland County Council and the Tees Valley Combined Authority. This involves processing, validating and submitting public transport data to the regional data broker.

DfT Access Fund 2017-2020

28. Durham were part of the successful Living Streets bid to the Department for Transport Access Fund. This project, entitled 'Walk To', was awarded £7.5m for the period 2017-2020 and is being delivered by Living Streets in partnership with 10 local authorities. The project supports economic, health and environmental development in targeted areas through active travel to schools and workplaces. This externally funded project has continued the Council's successful work with Living Streets since 2012.
29. In February 2020, the DfT announced to extend the Access Fund grant to the 'Walk To' project. A total of £2.5 million has been allocated to continue the existing project for 2020/21.

Wheels to Work County Durham

30. The successful County Durham Wheels to Work (W2W) scheme has continued to develop and has now expanded to cover the whole of the County. This scheme, established in 2016, provides people who are experiencing difficulties in accessing employment or training with the loan of a scooter until a longer-term

transport solution can be found. The scheme is managed by Wheels to Work County Durham Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

31. To date, the scheme has helped 168 people access work or training using a fleet of 50 scooters available for hire. The scheme is currently funded by Durham County Council from the Poverty Action Steering Group, Area Action Partnerships and the Local Transport Plan. External grant funding has also been successfully secured. Additional funding opportunities will continue to be explored.

New Horden Rail Station

32. In July 2017, Durham County Council was awarded £4.4 million in funding from the Department for Transport New Stations Fund as contribution towards a new rail station at Horden. The remainder of the scheme's £10.55 million cost is being provided by Durham County Council and the North East LEP.
33. In January 2019 the rail station received planning approval. Construction of the station started in December 2019 and, subject to Office of Rail and Road sign-off on 26th June, the station will open on June 29th.
34. The scheme sees the creation of two 100 metre platforms connected by an accessible footbridge, shelters, seating, lighting, help points, CCTV, a car park and bus stops. A new access road, footpath and cycleway has also been created and a local bus service is to be diverted to serve the station.