

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 December 2018

Transport policy and activity - Overview



Report of Ian Thompson, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of transport policy at different geographical scales and how that impacts on the transport functions of Durham County Council.
- 2 The presentation also addresses ongoing and future transport activities within Durham and sets out some of the challenges and opportunities that currently exist within the transport agenda.

Executive summary

- 3 The presentation will help members understand the various governance layers that set out transport policy and how this fits within the overarching UK Industrial Strategy. Members should also have a greater understanding of the relationship between the transport functions delivered by DCC and the transport policy objectives set at the different geographical scales including Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan.

Recommendations

- 4 Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided in the report and during the presentation.
- 5 That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the refresh of the committee's work programme for 2019/20 receives a further progress report on transport policy and activity.

Background

- 6 Members will recall that as part of the previous work programme for the committee in 2017-18 you received separate reports in relation to NECA transport activity and the Local Transport Plan. When discussing the committee's work programme for 2018-19 with the Chair and Vice-chair it was suggested that we have a special meeting focusing which would include identifying any sustainable transport initiatives within the county. In addition, as elements of transport falls within the remit of the Environment and Sustainable Communities OSC it was suggested that members of this committee are invited to attend the special meeting once a date is confirmed.
- 7 Arrangements have been made for Adrian White, Head of Transport and Contract Services, Regeneration and Local Services to attend the meeting on the 7 December and provide a presentation focusing on:
- Overview of transport policy at national, sub-national, regional and local level
 - Governance of regional transport and funding streams
 - DCC delivering infrastructure – now and in the future
 - Local Transport Plan 3, ongoing delivery
 - Challenges and opportunities relating to bus accessibility and affordability and electric vehicles
- A copy of the presentation is attached as appendix 2.

Overview of Transport Policy

- 8 Transport policy operates at different geographical scales. The UK Industrial Strategy focuses on transport delivering growth and increasing productivity alongside the grand challenges of clean growth and future mobility. Delivering growth is also a key objective of sub-national policy and the creation of the first sub-national statutory transport body, Transport for the North (TfN). TfN's Strategic Transport Plan aims to use transport as a tool to re-balance the economy of the UK by joining up areas of economic activity in the North of England.
- 9 At every geographical level, the importance of transport as a means to deliver the end of goal of economic growth is obvious. At the regional level, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership's 'Strategic Economic Plan' (SEP) aims to deliver more and better jobs and will be integrated with a new North East Transport Plan (NETP) owned by the newly created Joint Transport Committee (JTC). The NETP will replace this councils existing Local Transport Plan 3.

- 10 In addition to economic growth, transport safety, accessibility and the environment continue to be strong policy drivers.

Governance of regional transport and funding

- 11 The formation of the new North of the Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) has added complexity to the regional governance. However, as a requirement of the devolution agreement and the changes to the North East Combined Authority (NECA), government insisted that transport should continue to be joined up across the seven local authority areas; and therefore the statutory Orders setting up the NTCA also created a new Joint Transport Committee (JTC) to provide strategic leadership on transport issues for both combined authorities.
- 12 NECA continues to be the statutory transport authority for County Durham, although many of the passenger transport functions are delegated back to the County Council.
- 13 Most of the transport funding opportunities are directed through either the LEP or via the Combined Authority. It is important that we continue to play our part in influencing the regional, sub national and national transport agenda to ensure that the transport needs of the county are recognised and appropriate levels of funding secured.

DCC - Delivering transport infrastructure

- 14 Whilst the statutory role of setting strategic transport policy sits outside the council, the delivery of most of the transport functions and local capital schemes remains the responsibility of this council. The second half of the presentation focuses on both capital and revenue-based work that address transport challenges in County Durham.
- 15 The Council have had a policy in Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP 3) of opening up access to employment opportunities along economic corridors and this has been successful. The members are given examples of recent, ongoing and future infrastructure work in the county including at Forrest Park, Integra 61 and Hawthorne Enterprise Zone where the council are at various stages of delivery.
- 16 The council are also opening up access to employment opportunities for residents in East Durham with the construction of Horden Rail Station; while the Aykley Heads employment site is supported by transport improvements across Durham City in the Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan.
- 17 Beyond the large-scale capital investment, LTP3 set the policy for a multitude of revenue-based transport functions including improving public transport information, travel behaviour programmes, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, parking management and casualty reduction activities.

- 18 The council officers are always looking at innovative ways to improve the transport offer across the County and to improve the sustainable transport links in and around our main towns. The presentation provides a very brief overview of some examples of recent investment in the County and it may be that members would like more detailed presentations on individual areas of transport work at a later date.

Current challenges

- 19 Bus travel is by far the most used form of public transport in County Durham. A dispersed settlement pattern, low car ownership and a demographically ageing population are just some of the reasons why the bus network is so important. Bus services in rural areas are often a lifeline to smaller communities and the council continue to invest around £2.7 million each year in enhancing the network offered by the commercial operators. Smart ticketing, promotions and real time information also have a major role to play in making public transport more attractive.
- 20 However, the affordability and accessibility of the bus service is often cited as a key barrier for young people accessing educational and employment opportunities. The presentation notes previous work done by NECA to co-ordinate a consistent approach for youth ticketing across NECA to reduce the cost and complexity of bus tickets for young people across the region.
- 21 As part of the grand challenges in the UK Industrial Strategy for 'Clean Growth' and the 'Future of Mobility', the government has pledged in their 'Road to Zero' Strategy to ban the sale of conventional combustion engines by 2040 in order to encourage the uptake of low emissions vehicles.
- 22 In response to national policy we are reviewing our work around supporting electric vehicles (EV's) including; revised parking standards with relation to EV's in new development, investigating vehicle to grid charging as part of an Innovative UK working group, hosted a low emission vehicle event and have contributed towards a regional bid to install rapid charging points for Taxi's.

Main implications

- 23 The key message for members to note are:
- Policy at all geographical scales advocating transport as an enabler of economic growth alongside clean growth and future mobility
 - The council have capitalised on funding opportunities to enable infrastructure delivery

- The council have a wide range of responsibilities to deliver sustainable transport
- Challenges and opportunities around bus accessibility and the uptake of electric vehicles

Conclusion

24 Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided in the report and presentation.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

This report is for information only.

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable