

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 16 February 2016
Report Subject	Review of the Council's Subsidised Bus Services.
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cabinet approval was given in May 2015 for the Council to review the County's subsidised bus services as part of the business planning proposals for 2015/2016, 2016/2017 and 2017/2018.

Under the proposals, it was intended that eventually only a core network of bus routes would be maintained in the County, largely made up of commercial bus services, with minimal support provided to ensure that essential regular connections are retained at key hubs along the routes. Other commercially operated routes would/could also operate in the County, but these would not be within the control of the Council and may not receive any subsidy.

Workshops were subsequently held in June 2015 with Elected Members and Town and Community Councils invited to assist with identifying the proposed core network and to determine the minimum standard required for the core network, in terms of days/hours of operation and frequency of services along each route. Additionally, the workshops sought to identify the potential locations of transport hubs and the standard of facilities required at each hub.

This report provides Cabinet with details of the proposed core bus network, developed following the workshops and the next steps the Council will take to engage with communities to develop a local community transport arrangement in the area affected.

As the reduction of bus subsidies proposed by the Business Planning proposals will be staggered over the next two financial years (2016/2017 and 2017/2018) this report concentrates on the approach to be taken for withdrawing existing subsidised journeys and routes that are poorly used and no longer sustainable or affordable in the current financial climate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet approves the proposed core network of bus routes.
2	That Cabinet approves the withdrawal of the existing subsidised journeys and routes that are poorly used and no longer sustainable or affordable and the mitigating actions that are intended to reduce the impact of the proposals in the community currently services by each route

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES
1.01	There is no statutory duty upon the Council to provide local bus services or any other form of public transport, but the Authority does have a statutory duty under the 1985 and 2000 Transport Acts to keep the bus network under review, and intervene where it feels appropriate.
1.02	The Council currently spends £1,046,180 on subsidised bus services, providing support for around 30 bus routes either through stand-alone contracts or through agreements with public transport operators to provide subsidies for services that would not be commercially viable. These are usually rural, early morning, evening, Sunday, Bank Holiday and some school transport services or for operating services via certain villages, housing estates or employment sites that would not otherwise run. A summary of all the Council's subsidised services and other types of bus services is provided in Appendix 1 .
1.03	In May 2015, Cabinet approved a proposed review of subsidised bus services and subsequently two all member and Community Council representative workshops were held in June 2015 to assist in identifying the core bus routes across the County and the required frequency and standard of service each route should provide.
1.04	Feedback received at the workshops was generally positive, and accordingly, a list of the proposed core network of bus routes has been produced. A map of the core routes is shown in Appendix 2 . The proposed core network will predominantly be made up of commercial bus services; however, some support may continue to be provided to ensure that regular and high quality services link the key 'end destinations' with transport hubs along the core routes.
1.05	The next step for the review of service in order to deliver the 2016-17 savings involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working closely with bus operators to develop the core network.• Exploring options to ensure that the core network operates commercially and without subsidy.• Withdrawing funding for those journeys or routes that are poorly

	<p>used and no longer cost effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring options to improve local community transport arrangements to improve the links to the local “hub” where passengers can change onto a more frequent bus or train service to complete their journey. • Working with the existing two local community transport providers in Flintshire to explore options to extend their operations to the affected areas or work with communities to develop their own community transport arrangements <p>The final stage of the review will involve extending the arrangements to all other subsidised routes in order to deliver the required saving for 2017-18. This work will be subjected to further report once the effectiveness of the 2016-17 consultation work has been assessed</p>
1.06	<p>In order to assess which routes are no longer sustainable, a review of the existing subsidised services, including utilisation and passenger numbers per journey, has been carried out. This has identified a number of routes or sections of routes that are poorly used and not sustainable in the current climate. It is recommended therefore that the subsidy for these routes or individual sections of the routes is withdrawn from 1st April 2016.</p> <p>A list of these routes or sections of routes are shown in Appendix 3.</p>
1.07	<p>Before the subsidy is withdrawn, the next step in respect of developing local community transport arrangements is for Transportation officers to visit affected Town and Community Councils to secure commitment and/or expressions of interest to take forward the development of community based transport schemes that will eventually feed into the core network of bus routes.</p> <p>At the meetings, information on the current subsidised routes, passenger numbers and costs per passenger will be provided. This will allow the impact of future reductions in subsidised routes to be discussed and the residual service levels required within each community to be assessed.</p> <p>Details of the proposed core bus routes and key hubs will also be presented following the feedback obtained from the June 2015 workshops, together with the proposed timescales for the project.</p>
1.08	<p>A second T&CC workshop will then be held to share details of good practice elsewhere in the County, introduce existing community transport suppliers and to encourage the Town and Community Councils to work together over larger geographical areas to meet the needs of a wider group of residents. This will ensure the development of a sustainable community transport system, given that transport is not limited by geographical boundaries and that service changes in one area can often impact on other neighbouring areas.</p>
1.09	<p>The workshop will also confirm details of a series of ‘drop in’ events, sponsored by the Transportation team, across the County which will be held to engage with the wider community and stakeholders, to explain how people can get involved in the project and what support may be required in</p>

	setting up the new initiatives. The workshop will also highlight funding opportunities (through grants and loans etc.) that are available to support such schemes.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The changes to subsidised bus services will deliver the three year financial savings detailed in the Portfolio Business Planning proposals. Savings achieved in Year 1 (2015/16) - £50k Savings required in Year 2 (2016/2017) - £250k Savings required in Year 3 (2017/2018) - £350k

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	With Cabinet Member (Environment).
3.02	Member and Town/Community Council Workshops held in June 2015 and drop-in sessions held with bus operators in July 2015.
3.03	Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in April 2015 on proposal to introduce core routes
3.05	Town and Community Councils in areas covered by the unsustainable routes detailed in Appendix 3 will be consulted during February and March 2016 to explore options to introduce local community based services to replace the existing subsidised routes.
3.06	Consultation with bus operators
3.07	Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2016 who recommended to Cabinet that the core routes were approved and that the routes detailed in Appendix 3 should cease

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Key current risks include: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-delivery of proposed savings – regular reports to the Programme Board and Scrutiny and Cabinet aim to ensure that progress is tracked and monitored closely. • Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG) – In addition to the Councils own subsidy currently, Flintshire receives £546,661 per annum through BSSG from Welsh Government to support bus services in the County. The level of funding for 2016-2017 has not yet been confirmed and it is not known whether the funding will be reduced in future years. • Withdrawal of commercial bus services – Any bus operator can register to run commercial services as long as they have the appropriate licence. Around 60% of the current bus network is operated by commercial services. Operators of commercial services are free to alter

	or withdraw such services without consultation and can make changes to their services by giving eight weeks' notice to the Traffic Commissioner and the County Council has no direct influence or control over such services.
4.02	Bus services facilitate access to essential services such as health, employment, education and training. The withdrawal of journeys and changes to routes could impact on people who do not have access to a car or other modes of transport. Additionally, there could be an impact on people with disabilities, who may not be able to access a bus route or who may not have access to car travel, as well as an impact on Race (Migrant Workers) and Religion and Belief who may be employed on low wages or unable to drive, or who may have no alternative choice of travel. Where practicable, the proposals seek to minimise the impact on key groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly, young people and those on low income and develop alternative options such as Community Transport.
4.03	The development of more sustainable transport services will have a positive impact on the environment and the use of a modern and more 'green' transport fleet will reduce carbon emissions and environmental pollution.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Summary of existing subsidised bus services in Flintshire Appendix 2 – Map of proposed core bus network Appendix 3 – Outcome of utilisation survey and list of routes which are considered to be un-sustainable

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Not applicable. Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Commercial bus services are bus services that are provided without any subsidy and are funded by the fares revenue collected on the service. The bus company decides which type of vehicle to provide, which route to follow and which stops to serve, how frequent the service will run and how much to charge in fares, and the County Council has no direct influence or control over such services. Subsidised bus services are services where an operator is not prepared to operate and run a service commercially. Subsidised services usually operate either under contract or by agreement with the Local Authority and operators receive a subsidy for running the service.

A **transport hub** is a location or interchange point where passengers can change onto other bus services, or other types of transport such as rail, ferry or air.

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