

ITEM: 10

REPORT TO: WECA SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 21 MARCH 2018

REPORT TITLE: JOINT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN – BUS STRATEGY

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Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on the West of England's Bus Strategy.

Background

- 2.1 The West of England Combined Authority, as part of the February 2017 order under which it was established, is now responsible for certain local transport functions specified in the 2000 Transport Act, including the production of a Bus Strategy, to support the new Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) 2018 to 2036.
- 2.2 Initially it is intended that a Bus Strategy Overview Document will be produced, to support the consultation on the draft JLTP from June 2018, followed by the production of a full Bus Strategy from the end of 2018. The Bus Strategy forms an integral part of the JLTP and the delivery horizons of the two documents to 2036 will be aligned.
- 2.3 The full Bus Strategy will consider options to improve performance of the bus network and set out in more detail how further growth in bus patronage will be encouraged, including specific proposals and frameworks intended to encourage better, faster, more reliable and more accessible services. It will consider service quality criteria, responsibilities and funding provided by local authorities, as well as possible complementary policies around traffic management.
- 2.4 A Working Group of key public transport officers from the local authorities and the West of England Combined Authority has been set up and will be supported by external consultants providing technical expertise. Whilst North Somerset Council sits outside the WECA area it will be a partner in the production of the Bus Strategy.
- 2.5 It is the intention that progress on the Bus Strategy is reported back to Joint Scrutiny and the West of England Joint Committee.

Key components of the Bus Strategy

3.1 The Bus Strategy will include the following:

- Overview Document to establish principles and objectives, set out forthcoming work areas for network review, bus network operating frameworks, bus information and ticketing and stops (see below).
- Network Review – clarify the coverage of the existing network in terms of routes, frequencies, stops and interchanges and suggest where potential changes could be made and the financial impact of them.
- Bus network operating frameworks available to the Combined Authority under its statutory powers including Advanced Quality Partnership Schemes, Enhanced Partnership Schemes and Franchising. Delivery options will be appraised and compared. Objectives for all options will need to be robust and clearly set out, along with funding implications
- Supported services – a framework to assess the performance of existing and potential supported services will be formulated to support the Bus Strategy, including consideration of estimated patronage, links to deprived areas, links to employment and enterprise areas and contribution to tackling traffic congestion. Proposals for interim and future funding arrangements will be reported to the WECA Committee in July 2018.
- Bus Information – review the existing provision of information and produce a new Information Strategy to establish future requirements and arrangements for who provides what information and how.
- Smart and Integrated Ticketing – further develop integrated and smart ticketing initiatives and consider the need for further, statutory ticketing schemes and their revenue cost implications.

3.2 A key output of the Bus Strategy will be a set of policies that will provide direction on how it will be delivered during the implementation phase. These policies are likely to recommend actions in areas that go beyond public transport.

Timescales

4.1 Key milestones for the Bus Strategy are:

- Bus Strategy Overview and completion of network review – June 2018.
- Proposals for the interim and future funding of supported bus services – July 2018.
- Full Bus Strategy document, including completion of assessment and outline recommendations on preferred network framework- end 2018.
- Consultation on preferred network framework early 2019.
- Implementation of recommended network framework end 2019.

Consultation:

5.1 The Bus Strategy will be included in the Joint Local Transport Plan consultation planned for late spring/early summer 2018. Additional consultation will be undertaken with bus operators through the West of England Bus Operators Association and with passenger groups.

Other Options Considered:

6.1 Producing a Bus Strategy is a devolution requirement of the West of England Combined Authority.

Risk Management/Assessment:

- 7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Risk management/assessment will be part of the evaluation of future bus network operating frameworks and funding arrangements for supported bus services.

Public Sector Equality Duties:

- 8.1 Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Joint Local Transport Plan. This is a statutory requirement and will ensure equality issues are fully taken on board.

Economic Impact Assessment:

- 9.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Future bus network operating frameworks, which will be explored as part of the Bus Strategy, will need to include an economic impact assessment as part of their evaluation.

Finance implications:

- 10.1 A virement of up to £85,000 from Retained Business Rates and Treasury Investment Income for consultant support for the Bus Strategy was agreed by the West of England Committee on 7 December 2017. Spend will be in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and for the latter will be subject to approval of a carry forward.

Legal Implications:

- 11.1 Producing a Bus Strategy is a devolution requirement of the West of England Combined Authority. The West of England Combined Authority has Integrated Transport Authority functions for Concessionary Travel, Supported Bus Services (jointly with the constituent councils), Community Transport Grants and Local Bus information including Real Time Information.

Land/Property Implications:

- 12.1 None arising from this report.

Human Resource Implications:

- 13.1 The Bus Strategy and Joint Local Transport Plan is a joint project with resources provided by all four local authorities and WECA, supported by external consultants providing technical expertise.

Chief Executive Comments:

- 14.1 Paper approved by Chief Executive.

Recommendation:

- 15.1 To note progress on producing the Bus Strategy.

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Background Papers

None