

## **EXECUTIVE – 15 SEPTEMBER 2009**

### **Minute Supported Local Bus Services – Budget Pressures 2009/10 No. E/09/60**

The Executive considered a report from Councillor David McVicar, Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities outlining a strategy to avoid overspending on supported local bus services in the current financial year.

The report provided background on the reasons for supporting various local bus services as set out in The Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/11 (LTP 2). Also detailed was the vision statement of the Bedfordshire Bus Strategy. It was noted that the Strategy, inherited from the County Council, was based on a larger geographical boundary and was one of the reasons contributing to an analysis that had already started of existing service provision. It was noted that the review was a large piece of work and was not expected to be completed until summer 2010.

Also set out in the report were details of the projected overspend and the implications of failing to cut services that would lead to an overspend of at least £100,000 by the end of 2009/10.

The Executive's attention was drawn to the comments of the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee where it considered proposals at its meeting on 1 September 2009. Whilst the Overview & Scrutiny Committee broadly supported the withdrawal of poor performing services it asked that a full review of all supported bus services be carried out and that this be done prior to cutting any services.

During consideration of the report a non Executive member, whilst welcoming the review referred to in the report, was sceptical about its outcome. The member referred to difficulties encountered by the County Council in reviewing its Public Transport Plan. Changes in circumstances and demands such as Stagecoach threatening to withdraw services without subsidies impacted on that Council's ability to carry out a thorough review of its public transport policy.

In response to a question the Executive was informed that there had been some discussion with neighbouring authorities also providing subsidy on the proposed withdrawal of funding and some concern had been expressed.

Some members whilst supportive of the withdrawal of poor performing services based on an objective criteria (Option D –urgent action required) were concerned about the impact on the community from the withdrawal of all supported bus services (Option C – plan for improvement) and for this reason recommended only supported services categorised as Option D should be withdrawn, including the third service listed at the bottom of page 69 of the

submitted report being categorised as 'D' not 'C'. This recommendation on being put to the vote was lost.

The Executive in discussing the review suggested that the impact on the rural community needed to be looked at which led to a further recommendation being put forward that if cases of significant financial hardship are encountered as a result its actions that the Rural Transport Partnership, and other related bodies, should be asked to assist, where possible, with alternative modes of transport.

The Executive noted that any withdrawal of subsidised services would not take effect until 1 December 2009 as two months notice had to be given to the bus companies.

Reason for decisions: To agree a strategy for addressing an overspend on the supported public transport budget.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That support be withdrawn from a selected number of poorer performing bus services as set out on pages 69 to 71 of the submitted report in order to bring spending in line with the budget.
2. That the above services be cut with effect from 1 December 2009. (A saving of £60,000 in 2009/10 and a further saving of £120,000 in 2010/11).
3. That the outcome of the already started full review of existing service provision be reported to the Executive at the earliest opportunity.
4. If cases of significant financial hardship are identified as a result of these actions, that the Rural Transport Partnership, and other related bodies, be requested to assist, where possible, with alternative means of transport.