
Meeting: Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 27 October 2009

Subject: Passenger Transport Review

Report of: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities

Summary: This report provides Members with the Project Mandate for a review of passenger transport services in Central Bedfordshire and outlines a potential role for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the governance of the project. This transformation project has the support of the Transformation Programme Board and is at an early stage of development. Confirmation of members' role in the governance of the project is a critical step in the project initiation process. The report provides some background to the project, which is followed by a project update. The Project Mandate, providing a more detailed overview, is attached in Appendix A.

Contact Officer: Louise Miller, Interim Programme Manager, Sustainable Communities

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council and partner agencies

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

A review of passenger transport will clarify the current status of policies and service provision that transferred to Central Bedfordshire Council on 1 April 2009. The project will develop and implement policy and operational changes to improve the efficiency and quality of transport services provided to all residents, taking a 'Total Place' approach through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Financial:

The Transformation Programme Board awarded the project £250,000 from the 'Invest to Save' Fund. A condition of the funding is that a 2:1 return is achieved on the investment within a five year period. The experience of other local authorities suggests that the savings would exceed the 2:1 ratio. The cost of the consultant services will be confirmed by the procurement process and is expected to be recouped from the efficiencies achieved.

Legal:

The review will address the plethora of legal issues affecting the services included in the project scope (in Appendix A).

Risk Management:

Project risks will be managed in compliance with the Council's corporate approach to risk management and with its project management framework PRINCE2.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

The review is expected to make recommendations on a range of activities which may have implications on business processes. These will be reported upon completion of the first review stage of the project, prior to the implementation phase.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Mobility and access to goods and services are fundamental requirements for everyone. The review will incorporate equalities and human rights issues linked to transport.

Community Safety:

The provision of safe and accessible transport is the focus of this review. Recommendations arising from the review will be considered in the light of any probable negative and positive impact on community safety (road safety, anti-social behaviour, social isolation/exclusion.)

Sustainability:

This project embraces the Council's policy and practices with respect to sustainability (carbon reduction commitments, local development frameworks, transport policies).

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. that the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
 - (a) agrees to act as a reference group for the project. In this role the Committee will engage with the project at key stages (such as reviewing the draft consultants report) (see paragraphs nine to eleven).
 - (b) notes the attached Project Mandate and that the project scope now includes a more in-depth review of subsidised bus routes than set out in the mandate (paragraph 8);
 - (c) notes that service-specific policy areas will be addressed by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (e.g. entitlement to school transport policies will be addressed by the Children's Families and Learning Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

Background

2. As a new unitary authority Central Bedfordshire Council has an opportunity to begin afresh by reviewing the range of transport services which transferred to the authority on 1 April 2009. Across the country local authorities are reviewing passenger transport to ensure these services are up-to-date and efficient with respect to equality and human rights, meeting the needs of an aging population, managing growth, climate change and more.

3. Transport systems are complex and interwoven with several services and agencies providing transport to their customers. Therefore any transport review requires a broad scope and the input of transport specialists who can provide the following:
 - (a) information and analysis, using their own specialist computer applications & staff e.g. environmental and equality impact assessments, local market analysis, traffic modelling, population trends etc;
 - (b) experience that brings a quicker and more robust outcome;
 - (c) practical knowledge of how other local authorities have modernised and improved their passenger transport services;
 - (d) external validation of good practice and external challenge to areas requiring change.
4. The consultants will work alongside council staff who will provide the required information and support to ensure efficient management of time and resources throughout the course of the review.
5. The Transformation Programme Board is responsible for the Council's Business Transformation Programme and comprises the Central Bedfordshire Management Team. On 19 August the Transformation Programme Board gave its full support to this cross-cutting review and allocated £250,000 from the 'Invest to Save' Fund to the project. The project is required to achieve a 2:1 return over five years on this investment but could achieve a much higher return in the light of similar reviews carried out by other local authorities.

Project Highlight Report

Purpose

6. To develop and implement policy and operational changes that will improve the efficiency and quality of transport services provided to all residents, taking a Total Place approach through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Project Objectives

7. These have not changed since the Project Mandate was approved. It is worth noting that the timing of the improvement programme will be confirmed once the first phase of the review has been completed.
 - (a) Deliver a robust Business Case and Improvement Programme for a more efficient passenger transport service equal to or better than comparable services of other local authorities and their partners (February 2010).
 - (b) Implement certain improvements and savings quickly (before 10 May 2010) to show the review is underway and delivering.
 - (c) To be positioned for the delivery of a comprehensive, longer term, improvement programme starting in May 2010 (Phase 2).

Scope

8. Since the Transformation Programme Board agreed the Project Mandate (Appendix A) members have requested an in-depth review of subsidised bus routes. This is now included in the project scope, the cost of which will be confirmed by the procurement process. Informal soundings suggest that the project budget is sufficient.

Governance

9. Effective and inclusive project governance is being developed and is expected to comprise:
 - (a) Overview and Scrutiny;
 - (b) the Adult Social Care, Health and Housing Thematic Group of the Local Strategic Partnership, from which a partners reference group could be established; and
 - (c) the Children's Trust Joint Commissioning Group.

The day to day management of the project will be steered by an operational project board comprising council staff and colleagues from partner organisations.

10. Given the breadth of the review, the Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel (2 Oct 09) considered that a report and briefing should be submitted to the next available Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee who could consider how best to engage in the review. The Coordination Panel also agreed that issues pertaining to service-specific policies will be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. For example, policies relating to transport to adult day care would go to the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
11. The Committee may wish to consider taking the role of a reference group for the project in which it would engage with the project at key stages, such as considering the scope and reviewing the consultants draft report and recommendations.
12. The project will also provide updates and seek comments and advice from the Children's Trust and the LSP thematic group.

Time Frame

13. The estimated timeframe for the project will be refined through the procurement process and detailed discussions with the consultants. Although the bulk of improvements will be implemented after the review stage, there are likely to be simple improvements that can be made earlier in the project.

Children Families and Learning are aiming to have proposed policy changes considered by the Executive in May 2010.

Implementation of the Improvement Plan will depend on legal constraints and following due process, e.g. consultation, contract termination, tendering for

new services, customers' "legitimate expectation" etc.

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| (a) | Project initiation including Procurement | September - November |
| (b) | Review and Recommendations | November - February |
| (c) | Implementation of the Improvement Plan
(Subject to approval and legal constraints
on the different service areas.) | March – onwards |

Project Initiation

14. Since the Project Mandate was agreed last August the project has made steady progress and a project structure with controls should be in place by late October/early November.
- (a) Members of and advisers to the Operational Project Board have been identified and will start meeting regularly in late October;
 - (b) Links to partners and key stakeholders are developing and controls will be agreed to ensure communication is clear and co-ordinated using existing networks;
 - (c) Project governance is being developed;
 - Overview and Scrutiny Coordination Panel agreed that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have a role in the project;
 - The Project Sponsor is the Director of Sustainable Communities
 - The Executive/Project Director is the Assistant Director of Policy in Children's Policy and Learning
 - The Project Manager is from the Sustainable Communities Service Development Team
 - (d) The project has the approval from the Department for Transport to use one of its procurement frameworks which should help to save some time in identifying the appropriate consultants.

Conclusion and Next Steps

15. This is a broad and complex review involving a range of services and providers. Clear, streamlined, yet effective project governance and accountability is critical to the success of the project. The Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been identified as having a role in the Overview and Scrutiny of this project. The Committee is asked to consider the most appropriate stages of the project at which it would like to engage and receive further reports.

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Project Mandate, 14 August 09)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department for Transport, The National Youth Agency, **Transport Guidance: Supporting Access to Positive Activities**, 2009

Central Bedfordshire, **Draft Procurement Policy** 2009

Department for Education and Skills, **Home to School Travel Guidance**, 2007

Bedfordshire County Council, **School and College Transport Policies**, September 2005

Audit Commission, **Going Places: taking people to and from education, social services and health care**, 2001

Audit Commission, Improving **Mainstream Home-to-School Transport: Practical Handbook for Managers**, 2001

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands or for an electronic copy contact louise.miller@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk