



REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE: 22 AUGUST 2013

REVIEW OF PASSENGER TRANSPORT POLICIES

1 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- 1.1 approve the proposed arrangements for the governance of a review of Passenger Transport policies as set out in the report;
- 1.2 consider the draft passenger transport policy framework at Appendix A; and,
- 1.3 agree to an operational review of the Council's passenger transport network.

2 Discussion

- 2.1 The Council is required under the Transport Act, 1985 to publish a public transport policy statement (PTPS) outlining the Council's policies with regard to securing supported local bus services. Aberdeenshire Council's PTPS, which is available at <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/publictransport/policies/policystatement.asp>, has remained unchanged for several years, having been largely inherited from Grampian Regional Council.
- 2.2 This Committee, at its meeting on 18 March 2010, approved the introduction and use of a performance framework management model (PMFM) to assess the relative performance of supported local bus and demand responsive transport (DRT) services (Item 9 refers). In doing so, a number of de facto revised public transport policies were introduced. The need to review the current PTPS is set out in the Council's adopted Local Transport Strategy, which has this task as an explicit Action.
- 2.3 Aberdeenshire Council has always sought to take an integrated approach to passenger transport provision with the Council's public transport functions, demand responsive transport services, community transport liaison, school transport provision and the operation of the Council's 'in-house' fleet co-ordinated through the Public Transport Unit (PTU). Work to transfer responsibility for the procurement and delivery of the Council's Social Work transport functions to the PTU is also on-going. Such an integrated approach to passenger transport provision has been accepted as Best Practice for a number of years, with the concept of integrated passenger transport units and associated integrated service delivery highlighted more recently through the Audit Scotland Report on Transport for Health and Social Care (http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/health/2011/nr_110804_transport_health_bw.pdf, refers).

- 2.4 Given the desirability of delivering passenger transport services in an integrated manner, it is considered appropriate to extend any review of the PTPS to cover all of the Council's passenger transport policies. In doing so, it is proposed that the revised policy document places these policies within an overall framework of integrated service delivery for the Council, which would fall within the context of the Council's overarching Local Transport Strategy, the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy and will influence any revision to the current Nestrans Bus Action Plan.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the policy/strategy review and subsequent operational review will be project managed by a Project Steering Group whose remit is to give clear guidance and decisions to a Project Team who will be responsible for delivering the objectives set for it. It is suggested that the Project Steering Group will be made up of the Chair of ISC, Vice Chair of ISC, the Transport Spokesperson for each political group (or substitute), the Head of Transportation (as Project Sponsor), the Public Transport Manager and appropriate Officers from both the Education, Learning & Leisure and Housing & Social Work Services. In terms of the committee reporting of the project, it is intended that this is done via this Committee with briefings as appropriate.
- 2.6 The Project Team will be led by the Public Transport Manager and the team will be made up of operational experts from within the Transportation Service, as well as key officers from across Infrastructure Services, the Education Service and Social Work Service. Linkages will also be made with the Community Planning Partnership and Area Management Teams and procurement advice will be input, as appropriate, from the Corporate Services.
- 2.7 The Project Steering Group will, in the first instance, consider in detail a proposed passenger transport strategy which would set out the policy background, proposed strategy objectives and policy framework for service delivery, in addition to a suite of associated Council passenger transport policies which fulfils the authority's statutory obligation to publish a PTPS. An initial draft of the policy framework is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.8 Subject to the agreement of the Project Steering Group, a Statutory Draft PTPS will be made available for consultation with interested parties and, in particular, be the subject of consultation with the Council's Area Committees, with the Council's Community Planning Partnership partners, including Nestrans and through each of the Council's Area Bus Forums. Statutory consultees comprise neighbouring authorities, operators and/or operators' representative organisations
- 2.9 Following adoption of a passenger transport strategy and associated revised passenger transport policies, it is the intention to review the Council's existing passenger transport network, in line with Local Transport Strategy Action to "undertake a comprehensive review of how to develop an integrated passenger transport system". This operational review will also be overseen by the Project Steering Group. Having reviewed the current service delivery, it would then be the intention to commence procuring the agreed revised services/network, initially through the major public transport, DRT and school transport procurement exercise scheduled for late 2014 (linked to contracts

terminating in August 2015). The high level timetable for the project is set out at Appendix B.

- 2.10 The Directors of Education, Learning & Leisure and Housing & Social Work have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of the report.
- 2.11 The Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services have also been consulted and their comments have been incorporated in the report.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 3.1 It is proposed to undertake an equality impact assessment (EIA) of the proposed passenger transport strategy and associated revised policies. The EIA process will continue throughout the service/network review and procurement process, including an assessment of the impact of any revised passenger transport service delivery.
- 3.2 The report has no direct staffing or financial implications.
- 3.3 Whilst considerable staff time will be required to complete the review and procurement process it is envisaged that this can be accommodated from existing budget provision.
- 3.4 The aim is to achieve the most effective and efficient service delivery as practicable through adoption of an integrated approach to service delivery and application of the most appropriate procurement methods. However, the financial implications of implementing any revised passenger transport services/network will only become clear as the process unfolds and will be detailed in reports to the appropriate Committees.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Richard McKenzie
Date 5th July 2013

APPENDIX A

Draft Passenger Transport Policies

Network Hierarchy

- 1.1 The Council will work in partnership with the commercial and community transport operators to secure a hierarchy of strategic and local services that meet the passenger transport requirements of residents, businesses and visitors of Aberdeenshire, including the delivery of: mainline corridor services; feeder services; cross-country services; and, local rural and town services

Supported Service Provision

- 2.1 The Council will seek to secure the provision of passenger transport services to meet travel needs which are not otherwise met and, in doing so; services shall be specified in order to satisfy identified unmet social needs and/or strategic transportation objectives.
- 2.2 In securing the provision of supported passenger transport services the Council shall, taking into account the financial resources at its disposal and the performance of individual services, seek to achieve acceptable walking distance access to services coupled with minimum levels of service by settlement size.
- 2.3 The Council will employ a Performance Management Framework Model for ranking the relative performance of existing and potential supported passenger transport services, to assist in determining best value and ensure that investment of public money is made in the most cost-effective manner.
- 2.4 In securing the provision of supported passenger transport services the Council will adopt a service delivery solution that reflects local needs and available vehicles resources, taking into account legislative and operational constraints.

Flexible Services

- 3.1 The Council will encourage development of community based passenger transport services and, subject to the financial resources at its disposal, provide funding for community transport groups through the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Initiative or similar funding mechanisms.
- 3.2 To assist the community and voluntary sector, the Council will continue to administer the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum as a mechanism for sharing best practice.
- 3.2 The Council will, where appropriate, secure the provision of demand responsive transport (DRT) services to meet travel needs which are not otherwise met.

- 3.3 The Council will operate a travel despatch centre for booking and scheduling demand responsive transport (DRT) trips on supported and 'in-house' operated DRT services.
- 3.4 The Councils' travel despatch centre will be made available to community transport groups should they consider that this facility would assist their group in trip booking, scheduling and/or despatching.

Fares and Ticketing

- 4.1 The Council will work in partnership with operators in order to seek the provision of appropriate fare levels and methods of payment which encourage usage of public transport services.
- 4.2 Adult single fares on Council supported passenger transport services will normally be set to accord with commercial pricing in the area.
- 4.3 In the event that commercial fare levels are considered by the Council to exceed a level consistent with meeting public needs and/or strategic transportation objectives, the Council may exercise its powers to secure alternative service provision at appropriate fares.
- 4.4 The Council shall operate a policy of free travel for children under 5 years of age and half-fare for children aged 5 to 15 years inclusive on all supported passenger transport services.
- 4.5 On supported passenger transport services, the Council will aim to set attractive and simple levels of discounts for return and multi-journey tickets.
- 4.6 Fare levels on Council supported passenger transport services will be reviewed annually.
- 4.7 The Council will seek to encourage operators to provide discounted fares for young people and families.
- 4.8 The Council will work in partnership with operators, Transport Scotland, and neighbouring authorities to explore the opportunities of new and emerging e-ticketing technologies.

Concessionary Travel

- 5.1 The Council will operate a taxicard concessionary travel scheme providing discounted taxi and rail travel for those with a severe or complex disability or infirmity.
- 5.2 The Council will operate a concessionary travel scheme for scheduled community minibuses, for those eligible for the Scotland-wide free bus scheme.
- 5.3 The Council will participate in the Scottish Blind Persons Travel Scheme.
- 5.4 The Council will seek to work in partnership with operators to introduce discounted travel products for Young Persons aged 16 to 20 years, where these are not available through the Young Scot National Entitlement Card.

Service Reliability and Punctuality

- 6.1 The Council will investigate the opportunities for implementing bus priority and other traffic management measures which assist the reliability and punctuality of local bus services.
- 6.2 The Council will continue to participate in a Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership (BPIP), under the auspices of the *Quality Partnership for Public Transport*, and assist operators in meeting relevant BPIP targets regarding journey times, reliability and punctuality.
- 6.3 The Council will, where practicable, work with and assist the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and the Scottish Traffic Commissioner on ensuring bus service reliability and punctuality.

Customer Satisfaction and Communication

- 7.1 The Council will undertake a Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis to gauge customer satisfaction with all aspects of fixed route bus service delivery.
- 7.2 The Council will undertake a DRT Passenger Satisfaction Survey on a periodic basis to gauge customer satisfaction with Council provided demand responsive transport services.
- 7.3 The Council will consult with members of the public and the wider community about public transport matters through Area Bus Forums on a six-monthly basis in each of the Council's six Administrative Areas.
- 7.4 The Council will undertake annual school transport and social work transport customer satisfaction surveys.

Information and Publicity

- 8.1 The Council will work with all of its relevant partners to implement the actions set out in the Council's Bus Information Strategy and to ensure that the expected standards for bus information are adhered to by those responsible.
- 8.2 The Council will work with operators and other partners to deliver marketing and other publicity initiatives that enhance the image and experience of the public transport network and encourage patronage growth.
- 8.3 In partnership with operators and neighbouring authorities, the Council will endeavour to maintain a consistent and high standard of bus stop flags and information displays across north-east Scotland.
- 8.4 The Council will explore the opportunities afforded by new technology and means of communication to disseminate passenger information.
- 8.5 The Council will work in partnership with operators and neighbouring authorities to provide real time passenger information on all fixed route local bus services across Aberdeenshire.

Infrastructure

- 9.1 The Council will seek to work in partnership with operators and other appropriate agencies to secure the provision of high quality passenger infrastructure for the convenience of existing passengers and in the interests of encouraging greater usage of public and other passenger transport services.
- 9.2 The Council will ensure that bus stops and bus shelters are provided and maintained to the highest standard possible within the resources at its disposal.
- 9.3 Passenger transport infrastructure provided by the Council will be designed to meet the needs of elderly, disabled and other mobility impaired and encumbered passengers, taking due cognizance of Disability Discrimination legislation and relevant guidance.
- 9.4 The Council will maintain and operate bus stations and other off-street interchange sites in its ownership, either directly or through agency agreements with appropriate bodies, and will ensure that these facilities are available to all operators on an equitable basis.
- 9.5 The Council will encourage operators to deploy high quality, low emission vehicles that, in the case of public transport vehicles, meet the Public Service Accessibility Regulations 2000.
- 9.6 The Council will procure vehicles to operate 'in-house' passenger transport services that meet the needs of our customers, and will consult with clients and commissioning agencies as appropriate to ensure that these needs are catered as far as is practicable.

Integration

- 10.1 The Council will ensure that passenger transport issues are addressed within the Statutory Local Development Plan framework and associated procedures related to transport assessment and developer contributions.
- 10.2 The Council will work in partnership with operators to, wherever practicable, achieve convenient timetable connections between: passenger transport services; and, those passenger transport services that connect with rail services.
- 10.3 The Council will provide and support measures to provide ease of interchange with and between passenger transport services, including the provision and maintenance of appropriate passenger infrastructure and information.
- 10.4 The Council will explore the possibilities for Park and Choose facilities, including the development of 'mini-interchange hubs' on mainline public transport corridors, to provide dedicated interchange opportunities with walking, cycling, private transport and/or feeder fixed route and DRT passenger transport services.
- 10.5 The Council will work in partnership with operators to seek the provision of multi-operator integrated ticketing arrangements.

- 10.6 The Council will seek to maximise the utilisation of its own 'in-house' fleet of passenger transport vehicles through co-ordinated management of its 'in-house' passenger transport services.
- 10.7 The Council will, at its discretion, permit the hire of its 'in-house' passenger transport vehicles to community bodies.
- 10.8 The Council will seek to work in partnership with community, voluntary, health and other appropriate public and private sector organisations, with a view to achieving closer integration of the provision of passenger transport services in its area.
- 10.9 The Council will endeavour to achieve co-ordinated commissioning and procurement of passenger transport services within the Council and externally with other organisations, where such an approach can achieve more efficient and cost-effective service delivery

Safe Services

- 11.1 The Council will work with all relevant partners and agencies to provide passenger transport services and facilities with which people feel comfortable and safe.
- 11.2 The Council will work with and assist the Vehicle Operators Services Agency (VOSA) and the Scottish Police Service with regard to vehicle safety and provide any requested information or assistance to the Scottish Traffic Commissioner as the regulator of PCV vehicle quality.

School Transport

- 12.1 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to all primary pupils who live more than two miles from and attend their zoned school.
- 12.2 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to all secondary pupils who live more than three miles from and attend their zoned school.
- 12.2 The Council will, where practicable, not expect primary and secondary pupils to have to travel for more than 45 and 60 minutes on a school transport service, respectively, unless connecting transport is provided in which case the maximum journey time shall be 75 minutes.
- 12.3 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to pupils with additional support needs at the discretion of the Education, Leisure and Learning Service.
- 12.4 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to pupils on educational and/or medical grounds at the discretion of the Education, Leisure and Learning Service.
- 12.5 Seat belts will be provided on all Council 'in-house' operated and 'contracted-in' school transport services and no pupil will be expected to stand on any such service.
- 12.5 The Council will provide home-to-school transport on safety grounds to pupils attending their zoned school where the walk route to school is deemed unsafe for a child accompanied by a responsible adult and there is no safe alternative to walking such as a fare paying passenger transport service.

- 12.6 The Council will, at a charge, make available seats on school transport services on a privilege basis, to those pupils who are not eligible for free home-to-school transport where there is spare seating capacity on the vehicle.

Social Work Transport

- 13.1 The Council will provide free home-to-day services transport to Adult Care service users where: the distance involved is too long to walk independently without support; the service user is unable to access public transport; and, the service user has no or insufficient state benefits to support the cost of the transport required.
- 13.2 The Council will provide home-to-day services transport for Older People and Physical Disability service users at the discretion of the Housing and Social Work Service, where a comprehensive needs assessment has identified that the user requires assistance with transport to access day services.
- 13.3 The Council will provide appropriate transport for users of the Council's Childrens Services at the discretion of the Housing and Social Work Service, where a comprehensive needs assessment has identified the need for assistance with transport

Service Delivery and Procurement

- 14.1 The Council will endeavour to work in partnership with operators, local communities, Nestrans, neighbouring authorities and other Community Planning partners to achieve the best service delivery for Aberdeenshire.
- 14.2 The Council will continue to participate in the *Quality Partnership for Public Transport* as the principal framework for partnership working on local bus service matters across Aberdeen City and Shire.
- 14.3 To achieve the most effective collaborative working, informal and formal voluntary partnership working arrangements will be entered into with operators and other relevant partners and the potential benefits of Statutory Quality Bus Partnerships will be explored.
- 14.4 The Council will, within the resources and powers at its disposal, undertake measures to support operators who wish to enter or remain in the local bus service market.
- 14.5 In determining the award of contracts for the operation of Council funded passenger transport services the Council shall seek to achieve best value for money within the resources at its disposal and, in addition to price, will take account of the ability of prospective operators to deliver the services.
- 14.6 The Council will in order to achieve Best Value service delivery, consider all available service delivery and procurement options, including the option of 'in-house' operation of the passenger transport services.
- 14.7 The Council will, in supporting passenger transport activities provided by the third sector, enter into service level agreements with community transport groups.

Performance Monitoring

- 15.1 The Council will monitor passenger transport service delivery performance through the use of appropriate performance indicators, which shall be reported and published on an annual basis.
- 15.2 The Council will, within the resources at its disposal, monitor the day-to-day operational performance of the Council funded passenger transport network, and in the case of 'contracted-in' services, apply a penalty system for incidences of non-compliance.
- 15.3 The Council will participate in the annual Association of Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) Benchmarking and ATCO Price, Expenditure and Competition Surveys, and any other relevant cross-authority surveys, to permit high level comparison of the Council's service delivery performance.
- 15.4 The Council will benchmark satisfaction levels revealed in its annual Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (BPSS) with satisfaction data for comparable transport authorities collated through the Passenger Focus Bus Passenger Survey or similar surveys.

APPENDIX B : PTPS / PASSENGER TRANSPORT REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Task	Deadline	Comments/Notes
Begin EIA of revised policies	from Jun-13	Commence formal EIA : on-going process throughout project
Seek formation of MOWG MOWG Meeting	Aug-13 Aug/Sept 13	Report to ISC as lead Committee To agree revised policy and 'strategy' context for review of network, prior to formal consultation
Area Committee Reports Statutory PTPS Consultation CPP Consultation Area Bus Forum Consultation Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum Consultation	Sep-13 Oct-13 Oct-13 Oct-13 Oct-13	Commence Consultation with Area Committees on draft policies Statutory Consultation with bus users, operators, neighbouring authorities, etc. Workshop with key Community Planning partners Consultation with six Area Bus Forums Consultation with Community Transport sector
ISC Committee Report Feedback outcome to Consultees	Dec-13 Jan-14	To seek approval of revised passenger transport policies Part of Policy Review Consultation process
Series of Procurement Workshops Series of Network Review Workshops Consult on proposed Services/Network Clarification of Procurement Approach(es)	until Mar-14 until Mar-14 Apr-14 Apr-14	Series of meetings re available procurement options Complete Officer operational network review of Aberdeenshire on area by area basis Consultation with Area Bus Forums + Community Planning Partners + Operators Legal 'sign off' of procurement methods + revised Terms & Conditions, etc.
ISC Committee Report E,L&L Committee Report Specify services Tender contracts	Jun-14 Jun-14 Nov-14 Jan-15	To seek approval of revised local bus and DRT network/services + revised Terms & Conditions, etc. To seek approval of revised Terms & Conditions, etc. for School Transport Create service specifications for procurement exercise. EU Procurement process
P&R Committee Report Feedback outcome to Consultees Implement Revised Services/Network Monitor Services/Network	May-15 Jun-15 Aug-15 Nov-15	To seek award of Contracts, etc (2 Reports Public Transport + School Transport) Part of Network Review Consultation process Commence revised/new services Ongoing performance monitoring + lessons learnt