

PASSENGER TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND POLICIES CONSULTATION

SUMMARY OF AREA COMMITTEE COMMENTS

BANFF AND BUCHAN

Ref	Comment	Proposed Response/Action
1	Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (Policy 7.1 refers) findings to be made available to Members via the Area Committee Bulletin.	Bulletin reports have been submitted to all 6 Area Committees and will be submitted on an annual basis in future.
2	Bulletin to be issued with regard to the assessment criteria used in the determination of free home-to-school transport for pupils and, in particular, in relation to the use of the term "discretion". (Policies 12.4 and 12.5 refer)	<p>Policies 12.4 and 12.5 have been revised in light of this comment, as follows:</p> <p>Policy 12.4: The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to pupils with additional support needs provided this has been authorised by the appropriate Head of Service based on objective assessment criteria.</p> <p>Policy 12.5: The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to pupils on educational and/or medical grounds provided this has been authorised by the appropriate Head of Service based on objective assessment criteria.</p>
3	Increased local bus service provision required between Fraserburgh and Banff, for students, workers and hospital visits.	<p>On 14 November 2013, The Policy and Resources Committee approved the award of a contract, providing for an improved service between Fraserburgh and Banff, on a trial basis, with effect from 27 January 2014.</p> <p>The performance of this trial service will be assessed as part of the forthcoming Passenger Transport Network Review.</p>
4	Consideration to be given to the provision of a bus service waiting room in central Banff. (Policy 9.1 refers)	Improvements to key public transport infrastructure will be considered as part of a future year's Capital Plan.

5	New bus services/routes to be well publicised in order to generate usage. (Policy 8.1 refers)	Agreed. This is a key element of the approved Bus Information Strategy.
6	Banff and Buchan Area Forum is operating successfully. (Policy 7.3 refers)	Acknowledged.

BUCHAN

Ref	Comment	Proposed Response/Action
1	New Passenger Transport Policies, listed in Appendix B to the report, should be highlighted in bold, italics, or larger font size. (Policies 6.1 ,7.4, 14.3 and 15.1 refer)	Acknowledged.
2	Ensure that, through working in partnership with local transport operators, that the passenger transport network can be improved in respect of reliability, punctuality and availability. (Policies 6.1 and 14.1 refer)	Agreed.
3	Discount fares should be made available to the unemployed (Policy 4.7 refers)	Jobseekers are entitled to half-price single and return fares on the majority of bus services. This will be included as a Condition of Contract of supported passenger transport services from August 2015.

FORMARTINE

Ref	Comment	Proposed Response/Action
1	Look at wholly subsidised corridors differently when deciding on fares, as some corridors (e.g. Service 290/291: Methlick - Aberdeen) could benefit from a reduction, especially in adult fares, to encourage greater commuter growth. (Policies 4.2 and 4.5 refer)	On wholly supported services the Council specifies return fares at a higher level of discount than commercial Stagecoach prices. Consideration will be given to the provision of more attractive tickets for commuters. It is not considered necessary to amend any individual policy.
2	Co-ordinate further with Aberdeen City Council on initiatives such as priority lanes and informal car sharing arrangements, including the use of bus lanes. (Policy 6.1 refers)	These matters will be raised through the Local Authorities / Bus Operators Forum (LABOF) and in joint working with Aberdeen City and Nestrans on wider travel issues.

3	Welcome implementation of the Real Time Passenger Information System and request that this include Services 35/35A (Inverness/Elgin - Aberdeen) and 290/291 (Methlick - Aberdeen) as a matter of urgency, as well as the pre-dominantly commercial Buchan corridor, as commuters need to know if, and when, a bus is likely to arrive. (Policy 8.5 refers)	Acknowledged. Real Time Passenger Information is scheduled to be implemented on the Buchan Corridor in spring 2014 and on all other routes across Aberdeenshire in summer 2014.
4	Members do not currently get regular feedback from Service on transport, especially rural transport issues, and Area Committee would welcome the opportunity to receive regular updates and monitoring information to engage more with the delivery of the service.	Members are invited to attend Area Bus Forums and are informed, via Ward Pages, on rural transport matters such as service revisions, or specific projects relating to information or infrastructure. Officers will report and publish appropriate passenger transport performance indicators on an annual basis. (Policy 15.1 refers)
5	Need to give further consideration to implementation and outcomes of policies. The Area Committee could be kept informed of the implementation process and outcomes of the Passenger Transport Review.	The service revision proposals, arising from the forthcoming Passenger Transport Network Review, will be reported to Area Committees
6	Concern that capacity issues on Services 35/35A (Inverness /Elgin - Aberdeen) remain unresolved, and a regular comment is that northbound buses are full by the time they reach Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Request that this be explored further with the operator.	This matter continues to be raised with Stagecoach Bluebird, and whilst the operator has already increased capacity, the situation requires regular monitoring. Stagecoach Bluebird has advised that the corridor is currently being reviewed.
7	Commend the Public Transport Unit for assistance given to the revisions to Buchan corridor journeys to provide safe travel home for Ellon Academy pupils to Balmedie.	Acknowledged.

GARIOCH

It should be noted that the following notes are the comments of individual members of Garioch Area Committee. They are not the comments of the whole Committee.

Ref	Comment	Proposed Response/Action
1	Regarding bus priority measures, it was suggested that the wording be amended to "the Council will seek to introduce bus priority and other traffic.....etc". (Policy 6.1 refers)	Policy 6.1 has been revised in light of this comment, as follows: The Council will seek to introduce bus priority and other traffic management measures which assist the reliability and punctuality of local bus services.
2	Regarding bus fares, it was requested that fares on supported bus services be set "no higher than commercial pricing in the area". (Policy 4.2 refers)	Policy 4.2 has been revised in light of this comment, as follows: Adult single fares on Council supported passenger transport services will normally be set to accord with, and will be no higher than, commercial pricing in the area.
3	Regarding school transport, concern expressed regarding the maximum journey times for primary and secondary pupils, coupled with a request that this subject be raised with E, L & L. (Policy 12.3 refers)	The maximum journey times have been established to take account of the longer journeys to school from the more rural areas of Aberdeenshire. The current average maximum journey times in Aberdeenshire are 21 minutes for primary school pupils and 35 minutes for secondary pupils. Reducing the policy maximum journey times would result in inconsistencies in service delivery and it would not be possible to ensure that some journeys to school were below the maximum thresholds. In addition, there would be significant cost implications of reducing the maximum journey time on school transport services, as this would necessitate a reduction in the number of pupils on each vehicle and require significantly more vehicles to provide the service.

4	Regarding school transport, suggestion that the E, L & L Committee re-consider the wording used with regard to the provision of home-to-school transport to pupils on safety grounds. (Policy 12.7 refers)	<p>The safety of a walking route is assessed by the Council's Road Safety Engineering Unit (RSEU) using robust assessment criteria and is based on a child being accompanied by a responsible adult. This also applies to the walk route to/from the Pick-up/Drop-off (PUDO) point. Such assessments are only undertaken where no safe alternative exists, for example, paid-for privilege school transport and/or fare paying public transport.</p> <p>Policy 12.7 has been revised in light of this comment, as follows:</p> <p>The Council will provide home-to-school transport on safety grounds to pupils attending their zoned school, where the walk route is deemed unsafe for a child accompanied by a responsible adult and there is no safe alternative to walking, such as paid-for privilege transport or fare paying public transport.</p>
5	Regarding Quality Partnerships, suggestion that Policy 14.3 be strengthened to read: "To achieve the most effective collaborative working, the Council should seek to introduce Statutory Quality Bus Partnerships".	<p>Policy 14.3 has been revised in light of this comment, as follows:</p> <p>To achieve the most effective collaborative working, informal and formal voluntary partnership working arrangements will be entered into with operators and other relevant partners, including Statutory Quality Bus Partnerships where appropriate.</p>
6	Regarding the award of contracts, it was suggested that the quality of service should always be taken into account and that the words "where appropriate" be deleted from the last sentence of Policy 14.5.	<p>In the case of all Passenger Transport Service contracts, including School Transport and Social Work Transport, minimum quality standards are included in all service specifications. Consideration will be given to the option of adopting quality and cost criteria in contract award of School Transport and Social Work Transport services, as is currently the case with Local Bus and DRT services, as part of the forthcoming review of Passenger Transport procurement.</p>

7	Confirmation sought that the draft Passenger Transport Strategy sits under the umbrella of the Council's Local Transport Strategy (LTS), which covers rail transport.	This interpretation is correct. The passenger transport policies seek to integrate bus services with the rail network (Policy 10.2 refers), although the Council can only look to influence rail transport as we have no direct control.
8	Regarding demand responsive transport (DRT) services, a number of operational and promotional comments were made. (Policy 3.3 refers).	These comments have been noted.

KINCARDINE AND MEARN'S

Ref	Comment	Proposed Response/Action
1	There is a need to ensure that road public transport links are co-ordinated with other road, and with rail, services	Agreed. Section 4.10 of the draft Passenger Transport Strategy and Policy 10.2 refer.
2	Give consideration, as a priority, to disabled people	Acknowledged. The proposed service revisions will take into account the needs of disabled people, in line with current Council Policies and legal requirements. The Policy Review and the forthcoming Passenger Transport Network Review have been and will be subject to Equality Impact Assessments.
3	In addressing integrated transportation, consider what people want/need to access, and offer a joined up approach. (Policy 10 refers)	Agreed. Policy Section 10 is aimed at achieving integrated transport service delivery. Consideration to be given in the forthcoming Passenger Transport Network Review to determining the most appropriate methods of identifying unmet travel demand / needs.
4	Truly take account of fare pricing for young people and families with the provision of discounted fares.	Agreed. Policies 4.7 and 5.4 refer.

5	Consideration to be given to the inclusiveness of school transportation, to take account of employment issues and the need to travel for childcare facilities (Policy 12 refers)	Current Council practice allows parents to apply for paid-for privilege transport to childcare facilities, where seats are available on the appropriate School Transport service. It is not proposed to amend the policies relating to home-to-school transport to accommodate travel to/from childcare facilities.
6	It was considered that, under self directed support funding, which a service user has to allocate to transport, may vary, or could not be sufficient to cover the costs for Social Work transport, and this should be reflected in Policy 13.2.	Comment noted. The implementation of self directed support funding will have implications across many aspects of Social Work service delivery, which are not clear at present. It is not therefore proposed to amend Policy 13.2 at this time, but to review this passenger transport policy when reviewing the overall impact of self directed support funding.
7	There is a need to encourage major operators to include as many links as possible on their timetables, for onward travel. (Policy 8.2 refers)	Agreed. The matter will continue to be raised with operators. The increasing use of mobile applications to access national public transport timetable databases will assist in this regard.
8	Request for integrated ticketing to be progressed as quickly as possible (Policy 10.5 refers).	Agreed.
9	Consideration to be given to imaginative solutions to demand responsive travel in rural communities. (Policy section 3 refers)	Agreed. As set out in Section 4.2 of the Passenger Transport Strategy, it is intended to tailor solutions to local needs and circumstances. In doing so imaginative solutions and best practice will be adopted.
10	Request for more emphasis to be placed on services such as dial-a-trip. (Policy section 3 refers)	Accepted. The network typology included in the Passenger Transport Strategy (Section 4.2, refers) places greater emphasis on the role of such demand responsive transport (DRT).
11	Comment that the more attractive the transport package, the more successful it would be, and, in this regard, community feedback is considered essential.	Agreed. The Area Bus Forums will continue to be a crucial part of our approach to community engagement on service provision.

MARR

Ref	Comment	Proposed Response/Action
1	Regarding the provision of home to school transport on safety grounds, clarification sought on the definition of "deemed unsafe". (Policy 12.7 refers)	The safety of a walking route is assessed by the Council's Road Safety Engineering Unit (RSEU) using robust assessment criteria and is based on a child being accompanied by a responsible adult. This also applies to the walk route to/from the Pick-up/Drop-off (PUDO) point. Such assessments are only undertaken where no safe alternative exists, for example, paid-for privilege school transport and/or fare paying public transport.
2	Confirmation sought on the time-scales with regard to tendering of the contracted element of the Braemar - Aberdeen service. (Services 201-202)	Tendering of the supported passenger transport network is scheduled to take place in late 2014/early 2015, with implementation in August 2015.
3	Regarding the lack of operator competition on major bus routes, enquiry as to the scope for bus companies to enter the market and how to benchmark where there is no competition. (Policy 14.4 refers)	<p>Lack of competition in the local bus market is acknowledged.</p> <p>The Council encourages bus operators to enter the market for supported services, by providing smaller operators with back-office electronic ticket machines (ETM) support and assistance with the service registration process and timetable publicity.</p> <p>In assessing tender returns, prices are scrutinised and benchmarked against existing rates and operating costs across the industry. Contracts are re-tendered where appropriate.</p>
4	Suggestion that research into unmet demand for bus services be undertaken through inclusion of questions in the Residents Survey. (Policies 7.1 to 7.4 refer)	<p>Consideration to be given in the forthcoming Passenger Transport Network Review to determining the most appropriate methods of identifying unmet demand / needs.</p> <p>Recent work with Roads colleagues on public perception surveys has given an indication, but this would be a key area of work for the Quality Partnership</p>

5	Clarification sought on how to allay fears in relation to rural isolation and limited public transport provision, and also how to generate public confidence.	Such concerns/issues will be taken into consideration in the forthcoming Passenger Transport Network Review. The public is able to engage with the Council and operators at Area Bus Forums, at which time they will also be kept informed of developments.
6	The importance of emerging e-ticketing technology, real time passenger information, and multi-operator integrated ticketing arrangements was highlighted. (Policies 4.8, 8.5 and 10.5 refer)	Agreed.