

## **REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL ON THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S 95% BUS COVERAGE POLICY**

### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the interim findings of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the County Council's 95% Bus Coverage Policy and to seek agreement to consult on proposed changes to this Policy.

### **Context of the Review.**

2. The Transport Act (1985) states that it is the "Duty of the County Council to secure bus services it considers appropriate, which would not otherwise be provided".
3. The current policy is to provide, in conjunction with the commercial bus network, a day time (Monday to Saturday) bus service of an hourly frequency or better, within an 800 metre walk, for 95% of the residents of the County. These services would operate to local towns and centres where essential facilities were located. Less frequent bus services or Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) (see paragraph 11 below) is provided where required for the 5% not on the hourly network. This policy was introduced in 2002 and since its introduction, the bus market has matured and the local demography and economy has changed. This, together with the Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and the revised strategic objectives contained therein suggests that now is the appropriate time to undertake a review of the impact and efficacy of the existing policy, particularly given the significant budget involved.
4. An added impetus for undertaking the review has been the difficult financial situation now facing all public authorities. The impact on the County Council is that it is facing an overall reduction of 40% in cash terms. This equates to £74m

reduction in resources between 2012/13 and 2015/16 on top of savings of some £25million already achieved in 2010/11 - 2011/12.

5. The County Council has therefore been forced to review the services it provides. Whilst the majority of savings required will be achieved through efficiency measures (£49m) it is clear that efficiency savings alone can not deliver the savings requirement. The County Council is therefore required to make further service reductions in order to achieve the remaining £25m.
6. With regard to the budget for supporting the bus network current expenditure is £4.67m (gross), £3.07m (net). The proposed reduction agreed in the budget for the supported bus network is £1m; £500,000 in 2012/13 and £500,000 in 2013/14 (*Note: This was subsequently reduced to £750,000; see paragraphs 18 and 19 below*).
7. To get a better understanding of the impact of such a saving the County Council's Scrutiny Commission established a Review Panel to consider the current policy and its affordability and how it might be adapted in view of the above financial context.
8. The Panel comprised the following members who met from September 2011 to March 2012: Mr S L Bray; Mr G A Boulter; Mr D Jennings; Mr G Jones; Mrs R Page; Mr P A Roffey; and Mr D Slater (Chairman). During its deliberations the Panel received evidence from representatives of:
  - Bus Users
  - Rural Businesses
  - Rural Communities Operators
  - Other Local Authorities
  - Community Transport Providers
  - Transport Academia
  - Commercial Bus

A Brief outline of the conduct of the review and a summary of the key themes emerging from discussions with these expert witnesses is set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

## **Findings of the Panel**

9. In conducting this review the Panel was aware that the scope was limited to the supported bus network. The supported network complements the commercial network which is significant in the County market towns and on key strategic routes leading into Leicester City and large settlements outside the County. In addition to the commercial network there are some strategic services e.g. Park and Ride, Hospital Hopper etc. which make a significant contribution to the transport infrastructure of the County. However the commercial services and strategic bus services are out with the scope of this review.

### A. Review of existing policy

10. As stated above, the current policy is designed to provide a day time (Monday to Saturday) bus service of an hourly frequency or better, within 800 metre walk, for 95% of the residents of the County. These services operate to local towns and centres where essential facilities are located. Less frequent or Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is provided where required for the 5% not on the hourly network.

11. In the report reference is made to Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) as an alternative for those areas where usage is low and continued provision of scheduled bus services do not provide value for money. DRT is a public transport system which utilises minibuses (taxi buses), taxis, and community transport vehicles. It is targeted to areas of low population density or areas of low bus usage and aims to link residents to key facilities such as nearby towns, shopping centres, health facilities etc. These services would need to be pre-booked (at least the day before) and the cost would be equivalent of normal commercial bus fares. These services generally run at off-peak times. Further information with regard to DRT services is given in **Appendix B**.

12. Recent changes in Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) and the Concessionary Travel reimbursement methodology, together with increased fuel, insurance and maintenance costs, has placed a strain on commercial operators. The

impact of this has seen four locally based operators and one multinational company ceasing scheduled bus operations in the last year and hence has reduced competition.

13. In the short term this has put pressure on the Council to provide additional emergency subsidies to ensure the continuation of key services and is likely to lead to an increase in tender prices in the longer term. These pressures are likely to continue and the Panel was mindful of this in its review, and is recommending how the County Council's response to commercial changes might be reviewed (see paragraph 33 below).
14. The review highlighted that a number of bus services currently supported by subsidies are not well used. The current policy of an hourly service means there is little flexibility in tailoring services to demand and, as a consequence, the County Council is paying a larger subsidy than can be justified by usage patterns on some services. The case study below of an existing service, Service 148, highlights the point and the significant cost savings that could be realised while still maintaining a service, although not hourly, throughout the day.

Case Study

*The current service operates to an hourly frequency, Monday to Saturday, between 6.30 am to 6.30 pm. The net cost of the service per annum is £111,994.*

*The following minor tweeks could be applied to the service to reduce its overall cost:*

- *Reduce off peak hourly service to two hourly*
- *Provide mid-shift driver break to improve driver scheduling efficiency*
- *Withdraw last journey*
- *Where possible, integrate school transport services*

*The net cost of the remodelled service is estimated at £63,157 per anum.*

15. The review also highlighted large variances in the level of subsidies provided. Whilst this is to be expected when

comparing rural and urban areas, these variances are also observed when comparing services in areas which are predominantly rural. The example below, which relates to the Melton area, illustrates this point.

Example of Melton District

*The total cost of provision of transport in this largely rural area of Leicestershire is £630,000 per annum. 497,406 passenger journeys were made on this transport in 2010 and this equates to an average subsidy of £1.26 per passenger journey (ppj). The best performing of the transport services in the area receives a subsidy of £0.21 ppj and the worst performing service receives a subsidy of £12.79 ppj.*

*The subsidies paid by the County Council to continue provision of the worst performing service does not, in the view of the Panel, represent good value for money for the people*

16. Another major concern raised with the Panel is that, whilst the current policy is clearly expressed, it does not necessarily mean that people are able to travel to the destination of their choice. The policy provides transport from rural areas to the main towns or settlements which may not always accord with the wishes and needs of the residents of the area in terms of their work, health and leisure needs.
17. **The Panel concludes that the existing policy, whilst having clarity of purpose, lacks the flexibility to reflect the changing needs of communities and in the current economic climate cannot be justified. The 'one size fits all' policy and the over reliance on scheduled bus services cannot be sustained. The Panel believes the focus should be on the retention of the current commercial routes and some key supported routes which should be augmented by alternatives such as Demand Responsive Transport (a description of DRT is set out in detail in Appendix B). The proposed revised policy set out later in this report seeks to do that.**

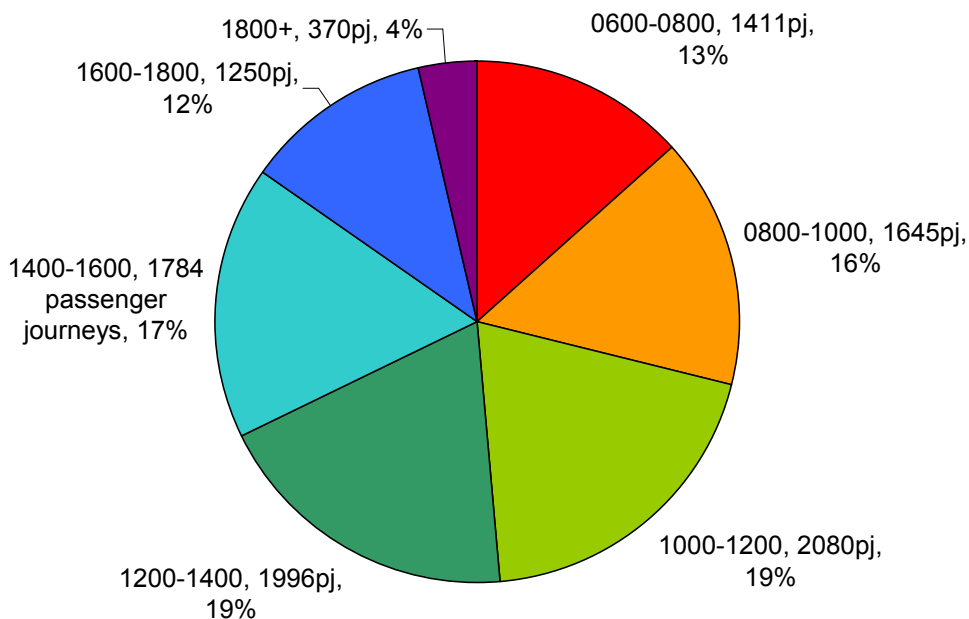
- B. Achievement of Savings Target of £1 million

18. The Panel noted that the budget for supporting the bus network current expenditure was £4.67m (gross) £3.07m (net). The proposed reduction in the supported bus network was £1m; £500,000 in 2012/13 and a further £500,000 in 2013/14. The Panel was keen to understand the impact of this on the current network and to that end explored 3 scenarios:
- Scenario 1 – Saving = £500,000 - subsidy at a high level (approximately £4) per passenger journey (ppj) in rural areas and a low level (approximately £1) ppj in urban areas.
  - Scenario 2 – Saving = £900,000 - subsidy at a low level ppj in rural areas and a low level ppj in urban areas.
  - Scenario 3 – Saving = £750,000 - subsidy at a low level ppj in rural areas and low level ppj in urban areas. However, in rural areas where existing services are withdrawn the Council would explore alternatives such as Demand Responsive Transport services to endeavour to meet essential need.
19. **The Panel noted that Scenario 1 fell well short of the proposed savings requirement and was therefore discounted. The Panel having considered Scenario 2, which would deliver the required savings, concluded the impact would be such that it can not be achieved without having a serious detrimental effect on accessibility in some communities. Scenario 3 which would seek to provide alternative DRT services where existing services are withdrawn and which generates savings of £750,000 is a more realistic target. This view was reported to the Cabinet who, in January 2012, agreed to reduce the savings requirement to £750,000. This decision of the Cabinet, which is a significant concession, is to be welcomed. This reduction was confirmed at the County Council meeting in February 2012.**
- C. CircleLine 40
20. The Panel considered, as a discrete issue, the CircleLine (Number 40). The CircleLine is in large part a commercial operation and is subsidised jointly by the County and Leicester

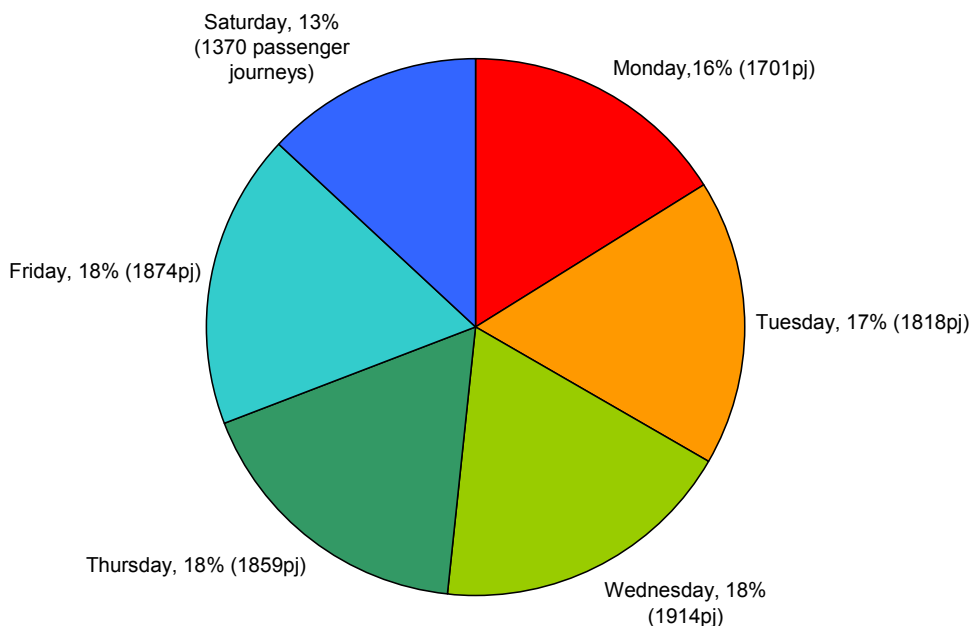
City Councils for certain parts of the route and certain times. The annual subsidy is £121,264 and the County Council meets 50% of the subsidy. The Panel was advised that the City Council was in the process of reviewing its support for bus services and it was expected that a decision on the CircleLine would be made soon.

21. The Panel was of the view that the CircleLine was unique and unlike all other bus services which went into the City. The Circle Line covers the route around the City and joins major shopping centres (Fosse Park, Hamilton and Beaumont Leys), the Leicester General and Glenfield Hospital as well as providing the only bus link between Oadby and Wigston Town Centres. Analysis of the service over a two week period showed that 10,500 passenger journeys were made and that usage was relatively even through the day and week as shown in the charts below.

**Passenger use by time**



**Passenger use by day**



22. The Panel was of the view that the support to the CircleLine should continue and it hoped that the City Council too would recognise its value and continue its support which was vital for the continuation of the service. The Panel noted that there may be some opportunity to consider options for reducing the subsidy by considering a slightly earlier finish time subject to



any such decision not jeopardising the commercial viability of the commercial morning peak operations.

## **Proposed New policy**

### A. Key Principles

23. In coming to a view on proposals for a new policy it was evident to the Panel that to successfully meet essential travel needs, the County Council and local communities needed to move their thinking away from the traditional bus network (which can be expensive to provide for a few passengers) and to think about new ways of delivering transport to users through an appropriate mix of solutions and providers (e.g. community transport, Demand Responsive Transport). It is also clear that not all needs can be met and expectations need to be realistic. The Panel, in developing the new policy, concluded that whilst desirable, in the current economic climate, it was unrealistic to expect the Council to be able to provide evening, Sunday and Bank Holiday (including Good Friday) services as these would be prohibitively expensive and therefore unaffordable. Where provision is demonstrated to be prohibitively expensive provision is no longer guaranteed. Such provision is subject to affordability and value for money tests e.g. peak travel to work/training. The economic position is such that the County Council needs to prioritise and target its resources upon meeting the essential needs of residents.
24. Set out below are the key principles the Panel believes should guide future policy in this area and a definition of essential needs:-

- a) The County Council will endeavour to meet the essential transport needs of Leicestershire residents through the provision of transport solutions;**
- b) The delivery of these transport solutions will be subject to periodic tests on levels of use and affordability and value for money;**
- c) Passenger transport will be provided by a mix of conventional bus services for higher demand areas, supplemented by provision of less frequent services by minibuses and taxi type vehicles;**

- d) **Fares on all services will be broadly comparable with the fares charged on commercial bus services (the Panel noted that on commercial services the child fare was 2/3 the cost of an adult fare);**
- e) **Bus services and the alternative services e.g. Demand Responsive Transport and Community Transport will be promoted through the internet, by paper copy, and by telephone.**

25. Essential transport needs of residents are defined as follows (all subject to a test around value for money):

- Shopping and Personal Business
- Healthcare
- Social Activity and Wellbeing
- Work

Other needs such as providing access to training and education, tackling congestion and reducing carbon emissions would not be classified as priorities but would be addressed through alternative campaigns such as 'Choose How You Move' which includes schemes such as the Wheels to Work initiative, etc. The type of transport solution provided would be on the basis of value for money and affordability in proportion to identified demand.

B. Proposed New policy – Categories

26. Attached as **Appendices 'D' to 'J'** are maps showing the impacts of the proposed policy for each District in the County and the various categories of service (in the interest of economy, colour copies of the maps are attached for members only; copies of the maps can be accessed at the following link <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/jelListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=3497&Ver=4>):-

Category 1 – Bus (**GREEN** routes on maps)

Service will normally be hourly but there will be no rigid time parameters. This will allow adjustments to be made to have regard to driver breaks and peak/off peak demand and school movements.

The maximum subsidy would be £1.50 per passenger journey (ppj)

Minimum passenger journeys per year would be 40,000

Net cost per vehicle resource would be <£65,000 per annum

#### Category 2 – Bus (**BLUE** routes on maps)

Service will normally be every 2 hours but could be less depending on demand.

The maximum subsidy would be £4.00 ppj

Minimum passenger journeys per year would be 15,000

Net cost per vehicle resource would be <£75,000 per annum

#### Category 3 – Bus (**RED** routes on maps)

These services either complement or underpin existing commercial provision.

Where the service complements the commercial provision, e.g. a subsidised Saturday service operates to support Monday to Friday commercial provision, then maximum subsidy payable should be £2.00 ppj (calculated across the subsidised journeys only). Minimum passenger journeys per year would be 5,000.

Where the service underpins the commercial provision, e.g. the commercial provision would be withdrawn without subsidy of some journeys, then the maximum subsidy should be £1.00 ppj (calculated across all service journeys)

#### Category 4 – Commercial School

These are Commercial school services (not shown on the attached maps). These services are provided on a commercial basis on which the County Council purchases a number of passes to accommodate students who are entitled to home to school transport. Any change in provision and support for the service would need to be tested against a tendered contract to ensure value for money.

Category 5 – Park and Ride Services are outwith the scope of this review as the provision of these services is deemed to be of strategic importance and determined through the LTP process.

C. Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Community Transport (CT) Solutions

27. Leading up to the consultation the maps (in appendices D to J) will be further refined to illustrate the potential DRT solutions and other alternatives that might be possible under the policy based on current usage information. The final design of services will be done within the policy and depend upon further analysis after consultation with service users and residents to identify their priorities for essential travel needs.
28. Due to the varied nature of existing DRT services the Panel noted that it is difficult to project costs and take up with any degree of accuracy. The Panel is therefore of the view that a full evaluation of costs should be undertaken once the programme is rolled out and the results used to set performance measures. These measures should have regard to the principles previously outlined namely, value for money and affordability.
29. The Panel was mindful that the transport mix must also consider the needs of mobility impaired elderly and disabled residents and Community Transport is an important part of this provision (a description is set out in detail in Appendix C). In particular these services can provide a more appropriate service that, by providing door to door and/or with fully accessible vehicles, caters for the most vulnerable residents. As CT is part of the mix of services they should be included in this policy review consultation.
30. The Panel has been informed that the Primary Care Trust had recently withdrawn £67,000 of funding previously provided to the County Council to support Community Transport to health services. The Panel was disappointed with this decision of the PCT. As a result of this, a reduction in service provision is required, in addition to any reductions as a consequence of the savings identified through the MTFs savings. The Panel is therefore of the view that CT should focus on the essential

travel needs for individual mobility impaired residents and on the basis of value for money and affordability. This would then mean that longer distance more costly transport to hospital appointments and group activities should no longer be supported by the County Council. In coming to this view the Panel noted that assistance was available to eligible residents through the NHS Patient Transport service and Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme.

31. The Panel noted that the CT operators were looking to jointly develop their capacity and were being supported in this by Voluntary Action Leicestershire and that access to the Department for Transport Rural Sustainable Community Transport fund should further assist this development.
32. The Panel noted that the DRT market is underdeveloped and that the success of this new strategy will depend on the DRT market being developed further. The Panel is of the view that the Department would need to meet with potential providers (e.g. taxi companies and Community Transport providers as well as existing bus companies) to explore how DRT services might look and the tendering opportunities it would offer.

### **Responding to changes in the commercial network**

33. As stated in paragraphs 12 and 13 the pressures on Commercial operators may result in services currently run on a commercial basis requiring some subsidy to continue at least in the short term. The Panel is of the view that once the supported network is rolled-out then any requirement for additional provision as a result of commercial withdrawals will be subject to the following systematic process as follows:-

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Step 1 | Data analysis to project expected performance  |
| Step 2 | Type of replacement provision determined by Category parameters (Bus 1,2,3, etc.). NB the decision could be that the Council will not replace the commercial withdrawal in any form. |

- Step 3      Affordability. Does the Council have the funds for additional provision within its existing budget or will existing supported services need further adjustment or withdrawal to accommodate this?

The underlying principle in all cases would be one of affordability.

34. Commercial services can be changed subject to an 8 week notification period; therefore steps 1-3 would be completed within this timescale.

### **On going contract management and review**

35. The Panel is keen to ensure that there are effective contract management processes put in place to ensure budgetary control and to aid decision making. To that end, the Panel suggests there should be a fixed point annual review of all contracts with re-categorisation or appropriate remedial measures being applied to underperforming services. Ranking provision in terms of performance would assist decision making if the Council finds itself needing to have to identify further savings.
36. Contracts would be reviewed annually (in autumn) of every year and changes would be made in line with the revised policy and on the grounds of available budget, value for money and usage of services.

### **Conclusions**

37. Continuing the existing policy is not appropriate or sustainable particularly in a time of financial constraint. The proposed new policy will have an impact on the current network in that regular scheduled contracted bus services that currently operate in some areas and which are underused will have their frequency reduced or, in some cases, will cease. Alternative methods of transport will be explored with local communities but it should be recognised that available resources are shrinking and, whilst the Council will endeavour to meet the essential needs of local people and communities, these may not always be delivered if the cost of so doing is

prohibitively high. The new policy will mean a reduction in the current level of services; however, there will be opportunities for local community groups to take responsibility for their localities and to work with the Council's Environment and Transport Department to develop locally tailored cost effective solutions.

### **Timetable for Decision/Consultation**

38. The proposed timetable for decision is set out below
- Scrutiny Commission                      28<sup>th</sup> March 2012
  - Cabinet    3<sup>rd</sup> April 2012
39. Subject to approval by the Scrutiny Commission and the Cabinet, the Panel is proposing an all members' briefing prior to consultation taking place. Public consultation is planned to commence on 16<sup>th</sup> April and conclude on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2012.
40. In addition, it is proposed that a consultation leaflet is prepared and circulated to all Parish Councils' Clerks and members of Community Forums. The consultation will also be available on the County Council's website.
41. The Panel was advised that in order to meet EU regulations, local bus services to be introduced on 1st November would need to be tendered for in early July. This would entail designing whilst consultation is still ongoing. The Panel was advised that the tenders sought will provide for options that are likely to emerge from the consultations and should the outcome of the consultation be contrary to the tender specifications then a new tendering process would take place.
42. The Panel will then meet to consider the outcome of consultation and report its final conclusions to the Commission and Cabinet.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

43. Reductions in funding of £750,000 during 2012/13 and 2013/14 will mean that some bus users will not have the choice of journeys that they have now.
44. Providing access for current users will reflect current travel patterns and where usage is low services will no longer be provided. Where services are not assessed as affordable or giving value for money then these will not be provided. The most likely lack of services will be at work times as this is generally the time of highest cost of provision and it is recognised that some passengers will have no alternative service.
45. Where commercial services providing evening, Sunday, Bank Holiday (including Good Friday) and school specials are withdrawn these will not be replaced but the Council will attempt to identify other commercial providers. If no alternative providers are found then these services will cease.
46. The report recognises that the transport mix should seek to address the needs of mobility impaired elderly and the disabled and recommends the Council to look for opportunities to further develop Community Transport.

A more detailed EIA will be prepared following the consultation period.

### **Resource Implications**

47. The MTFs Agreed by the County Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 requires savings of £750,000 to be made on the budget for supported bus services. The recommendations of the Panel, if adopted and implemented, would ensure the achievement of this.

### **Recommendations**

**That the Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet be advised that in relation to the supported bus network:-**



- a) **The existing policy and the inflexible 'one size fits all' approach and over reliance on scheduled bus services has not worked in all cases and has meant some services have low usage and represent poor value for money;**
- b) **Continuation of the existing policy is not deemed to be the best use of the available resources and is not sustainable in the current economic climate;**
- c) **That the decision of the County Council to reduce the original savings requirement in the MTFs by 25%, once it became evident that to achieve the full saving would have had a serious detrimental effect on the supported bus service network, is welcomed;**
- d) **The proposed new policy as outlined in paragraphs 23 to 26 of this report:**
  - i) **Provides a strategic fit with the objectives outlined in the Local Transport Plan 3;**
  - ii) **Seeks to meet, subject to the transport offer being affordable and demonstrating value for money, the 'essential travel needs' of Leicestershire residents as defined in paragraph 25 of the report;**
  - iii) **Sets out, in paragraph 26, the circumstances and conditions under which the Council would provide a bus solution or alternative forms of provision where the affordability test so determines;**
  - iv) **Ensures that the whole transport offer is underpinned by clear Value for Money criteria.**
- e) **The proposed new policy be put out for public consultation with the results being reported back to the Panel to enable the Panel to make final recommendations regarding the proposed new policy and its implementation;**
- f) **Subject to continued support from the City Council, support for the CircleLine should continue subject to discussions being held with the Operator to consider possible savings by changes to the timing of the last journey and frequencies of operation after 1600 hours;**
- g) **The proposed arrangements for responding to changes in the Commercial Network and for on going contract management and review as outlined in paragraphs 33 to 36 be approved;**
- h) **The County Council will continue work with voluntary and community sector groups to assist in developing their capacity to provide passenger transport services;**

- i) In the event of the new policy being agreed, the Commission should receive a report on progress, in the first instance two years after the implementation of the new policy and thereafter on a periodic basis, so as to assess the impact of the new policy and monitor its effectiveness in meeting the 'essential transport needs' of local communities.



**Mr. D. Slater CC  
Chairman of the Panel**

### **Background Papers**

File containing the reports submitted to the Scrutiny Review Panel  
Local Transport Plan 3  
Medium Term Financial Strategy  
Report to the Scrutiny Commission – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011 – Matters Arising  
from the Meeting of the Scrutiny Commissioners

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

A copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the County Council via the Members' Information Service.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A - Conduct of the Review and Summary of Witness Evidence  
Appendix B - Demand Responsive Transport  
Appendix C - Community Transport  
Appendix D - Proposal for Services in North West Leicestershire District  
Appendix E - Proposal for Services in Melton Borough  
Appendix F - Proposal for Services in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough

- Appendix G - Proposal for Services in Harborough District
- Appendix H - Proposal for Services in Charnwood Borough
- Appendix I - Proposal for Services in Blaby District
- Appendix J - Proposal for Services in Oadby and Wigston Borough

**Conduct of the Review**

The Panel has met on nine occasions between 1 September 2011 and 6 March 2012. The Panel, during the course of the Review:-

- (i) Received detailed information on the provision of public transport services in Leicestershire; including the costs associated with operating the County Council's supported transport network and its interdependency with commercial services operated throughout the County;
- (ii) Met with representatives from the following groups to discuss the purpose of the public transport network and what it might look like in the future:-
  - Bus Users
  - Rural Businesses
  - Rural Communities
  - Other Local Authorities
  - Community Transport Providers
  - Transport Academia
  - Commercial Bus Operators
- (iii) Explored, in detail, options with regard to how to adapt the County Council's current bus support policy in order to provide a sustainable and affordable bus network that is fit for purpose, and considered the implications of these various scenarios on Leicestershire residents;
- (iv) Considered the County Council's Accessibility Toolkit; used for assessing likely areas of demand for public transport services across the County;
- (v) Considered representations by members of the public regarding changes to a number of local bus services.

## Summary of Key Themes arising from discussions with Witnesses

### **Theme – Reliability and Frequency**

- There is a need for reliable scheduled services to allow people to access employment, recognising that shift work takes place.
- A local approach to providing services is required.
- Regular access to tourist locations helps to promote local economic growth.
- Public transport provides for the most vulnerable.
- At present dial-a-ride and community transport can be restricted to certain user groups – there is a need to provide for both younger and older generations.
- A different approach might be required to ensure young people receive the appropriate services.
- Good bus services are based on reliability and regularity.
- Roadworks can be detrimental to service reliability.
- Diversions of existing routes detrimentally impact on number of regular passengers.

### **Theme – Pressure on Commercial Services**

- The fuel duty rebate reduction would have significant impact on commercial operators.
- The Concessionary Travel Scheme should be reviewed with a view to providing only to the most vulnerable.
- Suggestion that free pass holders might be willing to pay fares to support services.
- Commercial pressures could reduce the commercial bus service network - gaps would appear which the County Council would need to fill.
- Partner organisations should play an active role in planning and financing passenger transport.
- Financial austerity often resulted in innovations and improved services.
- It was a significant achievement to encourage people to choose to use a bus rather than their private car.

### **Theme – Rural Access – Tailored/Flexible Solutions**

- Dial-a-ride and community transport services need to be flexible and provide for all passengers.
- Communities need services to be professionally provided.
- Parish Councils would be willing to contribute to local transport services.
- There is general scepticism about 'community' schemes led by local authorities.
- Core funding for Community Transport is provided by the County Council.
- Community Transport is provided by a small number of paid staff and a large number of volunteers.
- Community Transport services allow customers to be collected from home.
- In its most recent consultation exercise the Community Transport services

- network had received customer satisfaction feedback of 99%.
- 'Smart Community Mobility' is a place based approach which considers demand from the bottom up by asking communities to identify their own needs and ideal solutions.

**Theme – Connections/Hubs – Linking flexible and scheduled services**

- 'InterConnect' is a core inter-urban network of commercial bus services and which is supplemented by a connected demand responsive rural feeder network called 'CallConnect'
- 'Call Connect' links with scheduled services via local interchanges.
- 'CallConnect' is comprised of a semi-fixed route minibus service which could be re-routed to pick up passengers on route and a fully flexible routing service; both are bookable 7 days in advance of a journey by phone, web or text message.
- Services were coordinated by the 'MATRIX'; a central administration office with use of scheduling technology which could be instantly communicated to drivers.
- Call Connect feeder services with guaranteed connections, through ticketing and interchanges with real-time information updates.
- Call Connect services were not introduced to reduce costs; therefore the services had not resulted in reduced expenditure.

**Theme – Real Time Information and Ticketing**

- Real time scheduling updates are more useful in isolated rural locations.
- Increased passenger numbers could be achieved by offering good deals to customers.
- Commercial operators offer discounts to regular travellers; one operator indicated that more than half of farepaying passengers purchased discounted tickets.
- New passengers could get special deals to travel at a particular time.
- Advertisement of bus schedules to County residents could be improved.
- Focus groups run by one operator had identified dedicated bus lanes as a powerful advertising technique.
- One of the best ways to market a bus service is to provide reliable services, friendly and professional drivers and thoroughly cleaned buses.
- Through ticketing on services is important for users.
- Through ticketing is better coordinated by a single operator managing multiple routes; if this is not the case operators have less incentive to follow a timetable to meet other providers' services.
- Community Transport small vehicle bookings are based on fixed rate zonal fares within the County, minibuses can be hired for a fee depending on the destination and number of passengers.

**Theme – More Flexible Policy – Meeting the differing Community**

**Needs**

- The current policy is inflexible – consideration needs to be given to evening, Sundays and local circumstance.
- The County is split into a more rural South and East and more urbanised North and West; more rural areas might need more tailored access compared to more urban areas.
- The current policy is too restrictive and not appropriate everywhere.
- Policy delivery has, to some extent, departed from demand. It is therefore necessary to identify more closely local demand.
- Review Park and Ride across the County
- The passenger transport network should not be confined to the provision of bus services; it should account for other arrangements such as taxis, community transport, shared vehicles, car clubs.

## **Demand Responsive Transport**

There are over 30 off-peak Demand Responsive Transport services running across the County at the moment, and feedback from residents who use them is good. These type of services have different names such as taxi-bus and flexible transport which can make it difficult to know what is on offer. The following question and answer note should help to explain how such services work.

### **What is Demand Responsive Transport?**

It is a form of pre-booked transport using small vehicles rather than buses, such as taxis or minibuses. They have some things in common with bus services such as the fares charged but with differences such as only running when booked.

### **Where do they go to?**

You can travel to local services and facilities in nearby towns or villages, such as a health centre, shopping centre or market. You may also have a choice of destinations offered on different days and you can make longer journeys by connecting with a local bus service at one of the nearby towns. There is flexibility with these services so for example a drop off at the health centre will only be made if it is requested.

### **When do they run?**

Your services will run when booked based on an approximate timetable. For example there may be a collection from your village and a number of others that start at 10:00 am but the time you will be picked up will depend on who else has booked and the route that will be taken. So you will be given an approximate time for collection at the time you book. There will be a fixed return time from the destination.

When the service is set up consideration is given as to when people want to travel, so if one day is more popular than others, e.g. a market day then more runs can be offered on that day instead of another day that is less popular.

### **Do I use bus stops?**

You will be collected and dropped off at agreed points in your village and to the places at the destination as specified. There



is some flexibility within this so for example it may be possible, if time allows, to be dropped off in one place in town and picked up at another or for people with shopping to be dropped off at home rather than in the village centre. Because these services are booked in advance these tailored arrangements can be offered at no extra cost to you.

### **How do I get onto this type of service?**

You phone and book your seat with the operator any time during the day (usually 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday). To book you need to call by 5:00 pm the day before you travel and at the earliest up to 1 week in advance.

### **Will I pay for the cost of the telephone calls to the taxi service?**

Yes, but the phone number will normally be local and so you will pay low-call rates, or the call may even be free. Often once the operator gets to know you the calls are very quick.

### **What if I can't travel on the day?**

If you need to cancel your journey, for example because you are unwell, all you need to do is ring and inform the operator as soon as you can. As you will only need to do this in an emergency then it will not be often and will not stop you being able to travel again. However, if you make repeated short notice cancellations you may not be allowed to travel as this can cause problems for the routing and prevent others from travelling.

### **What do I have to pay?**

You pay an individual fare, just like you would when using a local bus service and at a similar rate regardless of how many people are in the vehicle. These fares are set by the County Council and are reviewed periodically so that they remain as similar to local bus services as possible, like fares they vary depending on your journey, but at present the average adult return fare is £3.50.

### **If I have a bus pass, can I use it?**

Yes you can, just as you would on a bus. Passengers are required to present this to the driver when using the service.

## Community Transport

Community Transport is the term used by the County Council to describe services provided by the voluntary sector to offer transport to older, disabled and rurally isolated residents.

These type of services have different names such as social car scheme, dial-a-ride, door to door, community bus, shopper bus which can make it difficult to know which type of transport service is being offered. The following questions and answers should help to explain how such services work.

### **What is Community Transport?**

As the name suggests these are community based services run by a voluntary organisation in your local area, involving volunteer drivers as well as paid drivers. They offer a home to destination service for older and disabled residents with mobility difficulties and those rurally isolated. So if you are no longer able to get out using buses and don't have transport of your own then the community transport in your area should be able to help.

### **Where do they go to?**

*Community Bus* services use wheelchair accessible minibuses and run when booked on an approximate timetable, specified days of the week and to named destinations. For example there may be a service to your local town centre where a range of facilities are provided such as shopping, local health appointments, and banks and/or to a supermarket where you can do your shopping easily. They collect and return you to your door.

*Social Car Schemes* are more flexible as they are tailored towards the needs of individuals. These services are provided by volunteers who use their own cars. As there are no timetables you will have a wider range of local destinations that you can go to for example to a dentist or podiatry appointment or to visit a relative. You request your destination when you book and provided there is a volunteer available to take you then this can be arranged. Sometimes community cars that offer wheelchair accessible vehicles are available for these types of services if you need a specialist vehicle.

### **When do they run?**

Community minibuses run from designated areas or villages to an approximate timetable. An example of such a journey would be that you book for the 10:00 am departure and you will get picked up between 10:00 am and 10:30 am from your home. You then have just under two hours in the town centre with the return at 12:30 pm. Times vary and you may have a service one day a week or more depending on demand and vehicle availability.

Social car schemes run when arranged between the passenger and the travel co-ordinator at the transport provider. The most use of these services is made Monday to Friday and during the day. Occasionally volunteers are able to help on an evening or at the weekend.

### **How do I get onto this type of service?**

The first call you make will be a little bit longer than the following calls as the operator's travel co-ordinator will need to ask you some questions about your mobility problems and what help you will need to travel. Some of the operators ask you to fill out a simple registration form before your first journey.

You then make a quick telephone call to book the services in advance so that the driver knows where you live to collect you and you know there is a seat for you on the minibus or so that a volunteer can be arranged. The request is that you allow 2 to 3 working days at least for this.

### **Will I pay for the cost of the telephone calls?**

Yes, but the phone number will normally be local and so you will pay a low-call rate, or the call may even be free. Once the community transport operator gets to know you the calls are very quick.

### **What if I can't travel on the day?**

If you need to cancel your journey at short notice, for example because you are unwell, all you need to do is ring and inform the operator as soon as you can. As you will only need to do this in an emergency it will not be often and will not stop you travelling again. However, if you make repeated short notice

cancellations you may not be allowed to travel as this can cause problems for volunteers and prevent others travelling.

**Do I have to pay taxi rates?**

On Community minibus services you pay an individual fare, just like you would when using a local bus service and at a similar level regardless of how many people are in the vehicle. The community transport operator will review the fares annually to link them to similar bus fares charged locally.

On Social Car Schemes you will pay an individual fare based on a zonal fare table. These are more expensive than local bus service fares because these services offer a bespoke door to door facility but they are not as costly as taxi fares. These are also reviewed annually in this case by the County Council to ensure they remain reasonable.

**If I have a bus pass, can I use it?**

As part of the financial savings the County Council is having to make the proposal to cease offering the half fare concessions that are presently available on Community Transport services .



**APPENDIX 'D to J'**

**Maps of Districts**