



LEICESTERSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET – 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

REVIEW PANEL'S FINAL REPORT

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND ACTING
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

PART A

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the final report of the Review Panel established to consider the County Council's Public Transport Services and to ask the Cabinet to consider a response to the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Cabinet consider its response to the various findings and recommendations of the Public Transport Best Value Review Panel.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Review Panel established to oversee the Best Value Review of Public Transport Services has now concluded its work and is making a number of recommendations in order to take the service forward and ensure continuous service improvement.

TIMETABLE FOR DECISIONS INCLUDING SCRUTINY

4. The Review Panel is making a number of specific recommendations on changes to policy and practice, many of which will need to be phased in. The Panel is of the view that these should be developed into a detailed implementation plan, specifying how the targets for service improvement will be met. However before this happens the Panel is recommending that a further round of consultation be held to test out the views of stakeholders on the improvement recommendations.
5. The Best Value Inspectorate has indicated that it intends to undertake a full inspection of this service. The original on-site inspection date was scheduled for 10 December. However the Inspectorate has agreed to a request by the County Council to delay the inspection to a start date between January and March 2002 to allow time for proper consultation on the Review Panel's findings/recommendations and the agreement of an implementation plan.

6. The Scrutiny Commission has indicated that it is likely to want to submit views as part of any consultation process, as well as respond to the Cabinet's decisions on the report. It is suggested that, in view of the likely member interest in the Panel's report, a presentation on the findings and recommendations of the Panel be arranged during mid-September to which all members of the Council are invited.
7. The proposed timescale for the remaining stages of the Review is therefore as follows: -

| ACTIVITY | DATE |
|--|-----------------------|
| | |
| Cabinet consider final report | 11 September |
| Presentation to all Members of Council/Scrutiny Commission. Commencement of Consultation Process | Mid September (17th?) |
| Stakeholder Consultation Day | 21 September |
| Close of Consultation | 10 October |
| Results of Consultation to Executive Briefing | 16 October |
| Cabinet Agrees Response/Draft Action Plan | 23 October |
| Scrutiny Commission Considers Cabinet Decision | Late October |
| Cabinet considers views of Scrutiny | 6 November |
| Final Report and Draft Action Plan to Council | 28 November |
| Cabinet Finalises Implementation/Action Plan | December |
| Best Value Inspection | January 2002+ |

POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS DECISIONS

8. The review of this service has been undertaken in accordance with the Government's Best Value Guidance and the County Council's own Best Value Review Process and procedures. Details of the service, current policy and previous decisions are set out in detail in the Panel's final report.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9. The Panel's recommendations would result in expenditure for the service broadly in line with existing budgets and known sources of external funding except for three areas:-
 - Bus Passenger Information - where an increase in annual expenditure from £60,000 to around £100,000 is envisaged;
 - Provision of accessible transport services, where to secure adequate countywide coverage an increase in expenditure from £165,000 a year to around £355,000 a year is envisaged; and
 - Support to the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service, where the Panel is recommending action to ensure that support for the service is passed to the Strategic Rail Authority. This, if agreed, would release savings of £255,000 (2001/02 predicted outturn) for the County Council to utilise elsewhere.

10. Resource implications, and the phasing of any extra expenditure would be considered in more detail in the implementation action plan. The financial implications of this report have been prepared in conjunction with the County Treasurer.

MEMBERS ADVISED UNDER SENSITIVE ISSUES PROCEDURE

None.

OFFICERS TO CONTACT

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| General | - Mr J Holden | (Tel. 265 7244) |
| Review Process | - Mr A.T. Brown | (Tel. 265 6096) |
| Resource Issues | - Mr P.R Sartoris | (Tel. 265 7642)) |

REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

PART B

BACKGROUND

THE SERVICES

11. The services covered by the review are managed by the Public Transport Group of the Planning and Transportation Department. They are:
 - Support for local bus services, including provision of subsidised services, provision of bus passenger information, support for Quality Bus Partnerships and support for community-based transport.
 - Support for local rail services.
 - Provision of public transport services for people with mobility impairments (accessible transport).
12. The Council originally intended to include concessionary travel within the review. However, the Leicestershire District Councils, who took on a legal responsibility for funding a minimum concessionary travel service in June 2001, have requested that no Best Value review should be carried out until a new or revised scheme is in place. A pre-Best Value review of mainstream home to school transport, the other main service managed by the Public Transport Group, was carried out in 1999/2000.
13. The services in this review contribute to most of the Council's corporate objectives but have particular relevance to the objectives of improving economic wellbeing and protecting and enhancing the environment. They do this by helping to provide access to jobs and facilities for those without a car available and by providing an attractive alternative to the car and hence reducing damage to the environment. They form part of a wide range of services provided by the Council to meet these corporate objectives, and there are particularly direct cross-links with the Council's other transportation services.
14. In supporting bus services the Council: -
 - Uses subsidy to buy in bus services to fill gaps in the network of commercially run bus routes, thereby achieving overall levels of access;
 - Works with people in rural communities to develop community-based solutions to rural access needs;
 - Works with the bus companies and others in joint investment programmes in the larger urban areas to secure improvements to commercially run bus services and thus make them more attractive as an alternative to the car; and
 - Works jointly with the bus companies to provide comprehensive bus passenger information in support of the objectives above

15. In supporting rail services the Council works to help enhance the role of trains in providing a more sustainable alternative to the car. In particular, the Council: -
 - Directly supports the Ivanhoe rail service between Leicester and Loughborough.
 - Plans for the further development of the local rail network, including investment in new stations.
 - Lobbies for nationally funded improvements.
16. In supporting accessible transport the Council works to make it easier for people with mobility impairments to meet their access needs. In particular, the Council: -
 - Funds minibus and car schemes for mobility-impaired people run by voluntary sector bodies.
 - Funds 'Access' and dial-a-ride services in Central Leicestershire.
 - Works with bus companies to help increase the usefulness of low-floor buses to mobility-impaired passengers.

REVIEW OBJECTIVES

17. The review was initially established as a 'year 1' review because of concerns about rapidly increasing service costs and the difficulty of maintaining adequate bus service links in these circumstances. However, there is now increased funding available from central government, and an increased emphasis on public transport in national policy, particularly through the Local Transport Plans system. There has thus been an opportunity to use the review to examine how the Council can best respond to this new context.
18. The Terms of Reference (Appendix A bound separately) expand the central concerns into a full examination of the service.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

19. Analysis for the review has been carried out by staff of the Public Transport Group in the Planning and Transportation Department. All staff in the teams affected by the review have been involved in this work, which has been led by the group manager. A project assistant has been employed on a temporary basis, mainly to deal with data collection and analysis. An external company was engaged to carry out one element of the consultation through focus groups. An external consultancy (IdeA) was employed to give an initial appraisal and challenge to the review findings.
20. An extensive programme of consultation with customers and other stakeholders included full consultation with staff and trade unions. Details of the consultation approach are set out in Appendix E to the Panel's final report.
21. The review has been overseen by a Member Steering Group of five members - Mr D.R. Parsons (Chairman), Mr N.J. Brown, Mr J.B. Rhodes, Mr P. Mayfield and Mrs M.S. Cowles. Following the County

Council elections in June 2001, the last two Members were replaced by Mr O.D. Lucas and Mr A.M. Kershaw for the final meeting of the Panel.

22. An officer steering group has provided overall guidance and challenge to the review. The group comprises Andy Brown (Chief Executive's), Pat Sartoris (Senior Assistant County Treasurer), Mary Hufford (Education Officer), Jim Cowley (Financial Controller, Planning and Transportation) and James Holden (Public Transport Co-ordinator).
23. The outline process adopted for the review is set out in the table below.

| <i>Stage</i> | <i>Timing</i> |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Review preparation and approval of terms of reference by Cabinet | Summer 2000 |
| First Member meeting, to approve Position Audit and Project Plan | 30 th October 2000 |
| Investigation of policy issues, culminating in second Member meeting | 19 th February 2001 |
| Investigation of cost and quality issues, culminating in third Member meeting | 9 th April 2001 |
| Investigation of remaining issues and preparation of draft final report, culminating in fourth Member meeting | 19 July 2001 |

24. The process for the remaining stages of the review is dealt with in paragraph 7 above.

REVIEW FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

25. A copy of a summary of the findings and recommendations of the Panel is attached to this report (buff paper). The analysis of services conducted during the review covered the large number of questions and issues laid out in the position audit (attached as a separate document), grouped into summary papers for presentation to the member panel covering firstly policy issues and secondly cost and quality issues. The Panel's full final report is also attached to this report and draws those together into two main elements:
- Section 3: - A description of the policy context, including the fundamental challenge as to whether the Council should be involved in providing this service.
 - Sections 4-7: Investigation of the service, intended to provide a full picture of the service as it now is, including the views of customers and comparison with other authorities. This leads to analysis of options for improvement in key areas, with recommendations to go forward to the improvement plan.
26. Supporting analysis for the main improvement issues is given in Appendices D1 to D15 of the Panel's full report. The answers to other questions and issues raised in the position audit but not having a significant bearing on the review outcome are contained in the member panel papers.

27. Appendix F summarises the benchmarking work that has gone to inform the analysis, much of it carried out specifically for this review. Benchmarking has been a particular concern: despite work over an extended period, pre-dating the review by over a year, it has been possible to produce little performance benchmarking data. This reflects the national picture and is an issue to be addressed in the improvement plan.

NEXT STAGE

28. The Review Panel has agreed and set out a number of detailed recommendations (attached as the last 5 pages to the buff paper) for consideration by the Cabinet. The Panel is of the view that these should be developed into a detailed implementation plan, specifying how the targets for service improvement will be met. Before this happens, however, the Panel recommends a further round of consultation to test out the views of stakeholders on the improvement recommendations. This might best take the form of a 'consultation day', with different stakeholders invited to appropriate different elements of it and the wide circulation of a summary of the report. Suggested proposals for the consultation process are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

29. Section 6 of the Panel's final report sets out a number of findings and recommendations aimed at improving public transport provision for people with mobility impairments. Special Educational Needs Transport Service is subject to a separate review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Notes of Review Consultation Meetings.