

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES
SUMMARY OF REPORT

BACKGROUND (SECTION 2)

1. The review covers the following services, managed by the Public Transport Group of the Planning and Transportation Department:-
 - 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; and
 - Provision of public transport services for people with mobility impairments (accessible transport).

2. The review was programmed as a year 1 review because of concerns over the rapid increase in the cost of supporting the bus services network and the difficulty of maintaining adequate bus service links in these circumstances. The member review panel originally comprised Mr D Parsons (Chairman), Mr J B Rhodes, Mr N Brown, Mr P Mayfield and Mrs Cowles. Following the County Council elections the last two members were replaced by Mr Lucas and Mr Kershaw, for the final Panel meeting. The review is due to be inspected by the Best Value Inspectorate. This was originally programmed for December, but now seems likely to take place early in the New Year.

THE POLICY CONTEXT (SECTION 3)

3. Public transport services contribute significantly to the corporate objectives of the Council. The County's Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the aim of the transport system and primary transport objectives. There are many cross-cutting links between public transport and other objectives of the Council including service accessibility, economic development, health, safety and environmental objectives. Overall, public transport has two key objectives:
 - To provide a means of access to jobs and facilities for those who do not have access to a car;
 - To provide an attractive alternative to the car as a contribution to improving overall transport sustainability.

4. The specific objectives for public transport set out the LTP are:-
 - Accessibility
 - Increase bus passenger journeys
 - Increase awareness of public transport travel opportunities
 - Make public transport interchange more effective
 - Increase rail passenger journeys
 - Improve social inclusion through the availability of public transport
 - Environment
 - Reduce car travel to school

5. Section 3.4 of the main report sets out how the Panel has challenged the existing service provision and concluded that neither of the two key objectives could be adequately met if the Council withdrew from this activity or if it attempted to provide the service wholly by other means. However specific findings/ recommendations are set out below.

Financial Context

6. The spend per head on public transport in Leicestershire in 1998/99 was £6.08 against an English counties average of £4.51. However Leicestershire was almost unique in solely funding concessionary travel in the County, a sum which is included in the £6.08. Without this the total would be approximately £3.30 per head.

MAIN SERVICE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BUS SERVICES (SECTION 4)

7. The Council works to try to maximise the effectiveness of the whole bus services network, commercial and subsidised. Despite the long term decline in public transport patronage, the bus service network remains strong, helped by the Council's bus subsidy and concessionary travel payments. Present characteristics and volumes of the network are set out in paragraphs 78 and 80 of the report.

Current Bus Support Policy (4.1.3)

8. The Council's current bus service support policy allows for:-
 - Subsidy for any service not provided commercially if it meets priority needs and costs less than 48p per passenger mile;
 - The same for services meeting other needs if cost is less than 24p per passenger mile;
 - Subsidy for experimental new services meeting priority needs or withdrawn commercial services if less than 48p per passenger mile after 6 months;
 - Guarantee of minimum service levels in rural areas
 - Weekly shopping bus for communities of 50+
 - Mon to Sat shopping bus for communities of 250+
 - Mon to Sat shopping bus with choice of time or destination plus Mon to Fri workers service for communities of 500+
 - Support for small scale community transport and other services in rural areas.
9. However, the market price for buying in contract bus services has been increasing rapidly for several years and there is a continued slow reduction in the network of commercially run services. The budget has had to increase at around £200,000 per year to cope. It will be some years more before the full effects work through as existing contracts become life-

expired. A number of service enhancements introduced with the Rural Bus Grant have produced significant growth in patronage, however many of the services introduced to guarantee minimum levels of service are very little used.

10. Consultation reveals that bus users support current priorities for types of service, want more evening services for leisure, work and learning and want higher frequency and more integrated services. People as a whole want more services, particularly in the evenings and at weekends.
11. The Panel is of the view that the existing bus support policy should be updated because:-
 - It appears not to be meeting customer expectations for scope, frequency and integration;
 - The pence per mile policy is largely reactive and over 10 years old;
 - National developments suggest a more proactive approach;
 - There is a need for a better fit with corporate objectives;
 - Action is required on a number of little-used services; and
 - There is a need to integrate substantial new funding into the policy.
12. The Panel has analysed alternative policies for supporting bus services (section 4.2.3) and concluded that to provide best access to defined activities for people without a car the Council should ensure that as many people as possible have available:-
 - A daytime hourly bus service to the preferred nearby main centre, usually a County town, Central Leicestershire or a similar centre in an adjacent County;
 - An evening and Sunday hourly bus service to the nearest main centre; and
 - For rural communities not served by hourly services, a flexible service, possibly community based, to meet the main access needs identified by the community, within funding limits.
13. The Panel also concluded that there is a sustainability case for funding home to school transport for those not statutorily entitled. This should be in partnership with schools engaged in travel plans.

New Bus Support Policy (4.3)

14. The Review Panel has evaluated operational aspects of a possible new bus support policy. The Panel's evaluation has resulted in the following proposals:-
 - Hourly services built up in three tiers:-
 1. A strategic network providing the key inter-urban links, both radial from Leicester and orbital round the County, including revised orbital services through Central Leicestershire;

2. Other hourly services linking strings of communities to main centres.
3. Local feeder services, often using small vehicles, linking in to the main services network.

- The hourly services built up in order of net cost per person served (Graph G3)

15. Detailed aspects of the proposed policy include:-

- The use of targets for the % of people provided access to each service type and then use of a value-for-money measure to buy in services to move to the target;
- The value-for-money measure to be 'the population served per £ subsidy' with the 'subsidy per passenger journey' criterion used as a management monitoring tool;
- An annual review process to adjust services to handle commercial service withdrawals, varying contract performance, changing patterns of movement and to ensure expenditure stays within budget;
- A re-evaluation of the orbital services serving Central Leicestershire to produce a single route which links the key communities with other facilities round the edge of Leicester; and
- The need for improved interchange.

16. The Panel has also considered the impact of the policy using a proposed notional level of service funding (section 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). With the increased external funding available it would be possible to provide a comprehensive network of daytime hourly bus services placing around 95% of Leicestershire People within a 10 minute walk of such a service. This would increase by over 40% the proportion of rural residents with an hourly or better bus service available, compared to the Government's target of a third by 2010. Improvements to the coverage of evening and Sunday hourly services could also be made.

- Map G2 (compared against G1) shows how the new policy would increase the coverage of hourly services
- Many more people would be linked into the hourly services network (the Leicestershire rural figure would increase from 27.3% to 38.4%)
- The change would leave around only 31,000 people (5.1%) without hourly services. The notional allocation for these communities is designed to be sufficient to ensure they can obtain service levels overall somewhat higher than at present.

- The increased use of transport solutions more appropriate to small demands should help ensure that the available funds do produce improved service levels overall.
 - On the hourly services network a number of communities will lose infrequent direct services, to alternative destinations – replaced by more frequent services and the ability to interchange. In the more rural areas it is likely that some poorly-used infrequent services will be lost, but replaced by new services to which the communities give higher priority.
17. The Panel concluded that the level of service tested (notional future spend in table on p37 of report) which requires broadly the current level of funding from the County Council is about right but recommends further consultation on the policy as well as detailed local consultation on individual services as part of a phased introduction programme.

Bus Service Quality (4.4.- 4.6)

18. Bus users have concerns about a variety of aspects of service quality including vehicle quality, cleanliness and driver behaviour. Surveys in autumn 2000 found 55% of people fairly or very satisfied with the service, compared with 65% for bus users.

Commercial Services (4.5)

19. The Panel has considered options for improving quality of commercial services including the use of quality bus partnerships (QBP) and other measures. The Panel has concluded that the ability to influence the scope and quality of commercially run bus services is likely to remain limited. Nevertheless there are cost effective steps that can be taken. The Panel is recommending:-
- Work to improve the effectiveness of QBPs including a more innovative approach to bus priorities, more attention to bus terminals and interchange and formal agreements between QBP partners;
 - A much improved QBP monitoring system;
 - Improved feedback to bus companies on customer views and investment in complementary measures; and
 - Lobbying to reinforce the Traffic Commissioner system.

Contracted Services (4.6)

20. The Panel has found no available comparative evidence of customer satisfaction for contract bus services in other areas. A survey of users of local contract buses in Leicestershire found 79% fairly or very satisfied overall – 87% fairly or very satisfied on reliability, 83% on cleanliness and 82% on driver attitude.

21. In relation to quality the Panel noted that at present the authority sets out quality requirements in contract conditions, uses a 'penalty points' system leading to possible loss of contract and uses two mobile inspectors and a vehicle inspector. The Panel has considered options for further improvement in quality around the areas of service design and specification, award of contract and inspection/enforcement.
22. The Panel is recommending action to:-
- Produce a tighter definition of quality requirements at the service specification stage;
 - Take steps before contract award to ensure tenderers meet quality standards including a possible 'two envelope' tender system;
 - Use the enhanced inspection and enforcement function to help bus operators to drive up their own standards; and
 - Measure customer satisfaction with quality in a more sophisticated way to better determine future quality standards and performance.

Bus Competitiveness and Alternative Supply (4.7)

23. The Panel has considered the competitiveness of existing bus provision and alternative supply. Key findings include:-
- 90% of local bus work is already tendered in the open market;
 - Inflation on contracts in Leicestershire may have been running at slightly above the national average but competition in the market is strong (average tenders per contract in Leicestershire are around 6.5 compared with the national average of 2.9).
 - The overall market price is at least below the regional average (£10,000 in Leicestershire compared with £11,225 in East Midlands plus Warwickshire – using school bus contracts as a proxy).
24. In view of the increased costs arising from price inflation the Panel has considered a number of options for controlling costs including:-
- Using different ways of interacting with the market (4.7.4) -*
25. There are a number of detailed steps which could be taken to improve interaction with the market and the Panel is recommending that these be supported.
- Buying and operating the Council's own vehicles (4.7.5)*
26. Initial evidence suggests that operating the Council's own vehicles would be more expensive than the market rate and is not supported, but the position should be kept under review. A related option of buying vehicles and placing them with the contractor should be tested in more detail linked with work in developing competition in the taxi and small minibus market.

Expanding voluntary sector transport (4.7.6)

27. In relation to voluntary sector provision of transport the Panel has concluded that such transport can bring quality of service benefits but is unlikely to have a significant impact on overall cost. However the expansion of voluntary sector operation of services should be supported, particularly in the context of rural transport.

Increasing the commercial network (considered in section 4.5 above)

Bus Passenger Information (4.8)

28. The Transport Act 2000 implies that though information should be provided in a co-ordinated way across the network:-
- Local authorities should fund provision of information for contract local bus services where they take the revenue risk; and
 - Bus companies should fund all other information.
29. The Council is required to produce a Bus Information Strategy jointly with operators to achieve this. Surveys found that whilst 69% of bus users were satisfied or very satisfied with local bus information provision only 47% of non users were. Consultation also shows that customers expect to be able to access information from a variety of sources.
30. The Panel has considered the mix of possible measures and the level of service to be provided. The Panel believe that a mix of measures including bus stop displays, Traveline telephone service, internet access, timetable and area timetable leaflets distributed door to door, a bus map guide for Central Leicestershire and real time information would move a considerable way towards meeting customer expectations. In order to achieve the improvements the Council's spend would need to be somewhat more than the £60,000 a year currently spent, perhaps up to £100,000.
31. The Panel is recommending that action be taken to take this forward in the context of a Bus Information Strategy.
32. The Panel has also considered the quality of bus passenger information and alternative options for provision (section 4.8.4). Customers concerns relate to the clarity of printed material and ensuring information is up to date. The present practice of using external printing but in-house design is considered to be justified, particularly now that the bus service database allows direct production of timetable leaflets. However printing should be subject to regular market testing as at present and specialist external publishers used for area timetable booklets.
33. The Panel also believe that the updating and maintenance of road side displays could be improved through a possible joint contract for maintenance using a worker with a mobile printing facility linked to the timetable database.

RAIL SERVICES (SECTION 5)

34. There is no statutory duty to support rail services but the Government expects local authorities to have a constructive relationship with the rail industry. Current County Council activities include:-
- Direct subsidy for the Ivanhoe Line Stage 1 service between Leicester and Loughborough;
 - Planning for further enhancements to the local rail network including construction of three new stations;
 - Planning the completion of the Ivanhoe Line Stage 2 from Leicester to Burton; and
 - Lobbying for the development of the rail network.
35. Around 18,000 passengers a day use train services in Leicestershire, of whom 800 use the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service. This service costs approximately £360,000 a year to subsidise (of which £210,000 is the County Council's share). Patronage on the service has slowly increased. Service cost increases have led to an increase of approximately £15,000 a year for the County Council and there will be a significant one-off increase in 2001/2.
36. Consultation shows that there is support for the development of the local rail network and for the completion of the Ivanhoe Line in particular. Benchmarking shows that the Council's activities are similar to those in other Counties but that the Council is unusual in supporting a whole local rail service.
37. The Review Panel has analysed the policy on direct subsidy of rail services and alternative options in terms of cost effectiveness and sustainability (section 5.2.3). The analysis concludes amongst other things that:-
- A patronage increase of around a third would be necessary before the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service started to bring benefits by reducing net pollution.
 - An equivalent bus service along the corridor could be provided far more cheaply.
38. The Panel conclude that continued support for this service does not represent best value and that steps should be taken to ensure that support for the service is passed to the Strategic Rail Authority. The future of the proposal for the Ivanhoe Stage 2 rail service is for consideration elsewhere.

39. The Panel has also considered an analysis of alternative options for supporting rail service development (section 5.2.4). The analysis leads to the conclusions that:-

- Continued lobbying for improved services is justified;
- Construction of a small number of new stations is probably justified subject to detailed examination of each case;
- Contributions to joint projects to improve interchange with buses and other transport at stations may be justified in specific circumstances; and
- There is no case for other contributions to station infrastructure but the Council should lobby for such improvements.

Rail Service Quality (5.3)

40. Customers of the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service believe that it is generally reliable and has good customer care standards and they perceive quality to be good. The Panel has considered comparative performance statistics which show reliability and punctuality to be better than the average. The Panel concludes that existing monitoring of quality should be enhanced to provide more continuous feedback and that specific action should be taken with regard to unreliability of one train and on station announcements.

Service Competitiveness and Alternative Supply (5.4)

41. The Panel has considered the competitiveness of the Ivanhoe Stage1 service and options for alternative supply. The findings and conclusions are that:-

- The cost per train mile is lower on the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service than on other services;
- The subsidy cost per passenger trip is broadly the same;
- The support costs are therefore competitive with elsewhere;
- The cost competitiveness is largely determined by the national regulatory framework and largely outside the Council's control;
- More can and should be done through service promotion to increase passenger revenue; and
- There are no options open to the Council for alternative supply as the authority is obliged to negotiate with the franchised train operator.

42. The Panel is recommending that a new promotion be developed for the service and implemented with targets for increased patronage.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT (SECTION 6)

43. In pursuit of the objective of reducing social exclusion for those with mobility impairments the Public Transport Group provides support for 50 transport services for mobility impaired passengers, carrying 250 passengers a day. The service comprises mainly voluntary sector car and minibus schemes but also Access and dial-a-ride services run by commercial companies. The service also seeks to increase the usefulness of accessible low-floor buses by working to encourage their introduction in QBPs and by providing matching high kerbs.
44. There is no statutory requirement to provide the service and no defined minimum levels of service, though there are clear indications from government that it expects local authorities to have strategies to help meet the access needs of mobility impaired people.
45. Overall expenditure (£195,000) has been controlled within a cash-limited budget by rationing funding to schemes although it has been possible to provide a slowly growing total number of journeys.
46. Amongst customers and other stakeholders:-
- many believe conventional bus services should be made more accessible and services generally need expanding to meet demand;
 - there is high satisfaction with voluntary sector services;
 - there is generally high satisfaction with Access and dial-a-ride services, though individual failures cause concern;
 - disabled people welcome low-floor buses but continue to be put off by other aspects of bus travel;
 - disabled people believe the customer care shown by taxi drivers is generally poor.
47. Benchmarking with other authorities shows that most support a combination of dial-a-ride, minibus and car schemes, relying heavily on the voluntary sector, but no authority identified supported 'Access' type services. Spending varies widely, with many about the same level as Leicestershire but with an appreciable number spending £1m+ a year. Many authorities feel that they are unable to afford an adequate service.
48. The Panel has identified a number of issues about the service including concern at lack of countywide coverage and equitable access, service rationing and suppressed demand, lack of clarity about access needs and the best form of provision, and overlap with the policy aims of other departments.
49. The Panel has considered whether accessible transport could be better targeted to meet specific access needs (Section 6.3.1) and concluded that:-

- it would be wrong to be too prescriptive about access for a group of people whose mobility is seriously impaired;
- transport to health facilities should only be funded on the basis of agreed responsibilities between the Council and health authorities; and
- the range of other available schemes makes it inappropriate for the Council to support transport for work purposes.

Countywide Coverage (6.3.2.)

50. The Panel has considered the issue of countywide coverage and service equity. Analysis shows:-
- expanding to countywide coverage at current service levels would cost an additional £80,000 a year approx.;
 - also increasing supply to avoid rationing and provide for 50% more passengers would cost an additional £110,000 a year;
 - achieving countywide coverage is not straightforward;
 - using output measures would equalise the available trips per scheme user per year; and
 - altering the rule by which scheme users pay volunteer travel costs from home to pick-up will make geographical coverage less tied to where volunteers live but could increase net costs.
51. The Panel supports the above proposals for expansion to provide countywide coverage, over perhaps a 3-year period, without severe rationing. The Panel also proposes steps to address a potential overlap of funding with the Social Services Department.

Service Quality (6.4.)

52. Access and dial-a-ride services are subject to the same quality regime as local bus services. Consultation shows general satisfaction with the quality of accessible transport services. The Panel has considered options for improving quality and is recommending the introduction of a comment card system to elicit more feedback and developing more formal working relationships with the taxi licensing authorities to try to bring about improvements in the service offered to disabled people by taxis and private hire cars.

Alternative Provision and Competitiveness (6.5.)

53. The service has developed measures of support costs per passenger journey for different types of accessible transport provision. However, no comparable benchmarking information has been found. Other authorities have taken a number of initiatives including using their own vehicles or operating integrated social car schemes to meet general purpose and health authority funded access needs. The Access and dial-a-ride services are already let by open tender.

54. The Panel has considered an analysis of current and alternative options for service provision including considerations of competitiveness (Appendix D13). The analysis concludes that:-
- voluntary sector based transport should be supported as first choice, though the use of spare time/capacity in social services or SEN vehicles should be tested;
 - a current City Council review of Access and dial-a-ride may produce a more cost-effective solution for Central Leicestershire.
 - work should be carried out with District Councils to make taxis more useful to disabled people through driver training, provision of suitable vehicles and increased travel concessions;
 - there is scope for integrating supply with some health authority transport and social services transport and investigation of this should continue to a conclusion;
 - there could be scope for efficiencies by integrating the bookings service for more than one scheme.
55. The Panel is making a number of recommendations to take these matters forward.

SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION (SECTION 7)

56. The service is managed in-house within the Planning and Transportation Department by a group of 30 staff who also manage concessionary travel and mainstream school transport. The group's cost centre budget for 2001/02 is £625,000 excluding indirect staff costs and other overheads.
57. The group buys in the majority of the service from external suppliers. The main activities carried out in-house are:-
- design, award and management of contracts for local bus services;
 - inspection and enforcement activities for contracts;
 - partnership work inside QBPs;
 - design and layout of bus service leaflet timetables for contract services;
 - taking bookings for Central Leicestershire dial-a-ride and planning route schedules and pick up times;
 - negotiating agreements with the voluntary sector for accessible transport services and service monitoring/development.
58. Benchmarking shows that most authorities use one team of staff to manage school transport, local bus services and the other services in this review. Some also have unified management for special education transport and social services transport. A small but growing number of authorities have externalised the service.

59. It has not been possible to produce clear benchmarking evidence about the cost of administering the service compared to other authorities. A comparison of staff numbers shows little disparity with other authorities in the region. Management/Administration cost is approximately 9% of total budget.
60. The Panel has considered the following options for improving competitiveness of service administration:-

Externalisation

61. Only around 3% of authorities have currently externalised the service. Where they have done so it has been part of a larger externalisation of highways and transportation staff. None of the externalised authorities have been able to supply comparable cost figures. The relatively low cost of administration in Leicestershire compared to service expenditure suggests the scope for cost savings might not be great. There would also be costs associated with maintaining an 'intelligent client' in-house.
62. Given the limited information available the Panel is recommending that the scope for externalisation be considered again following any approach to the market which might be carried out as part of the current Highway Services review.

Integrated Transport Procurement/Provision with Other Departments

63. A Best Value assessment to consider transport provision across the Council is programmed for 2004/05. The Panel believes there is a prime facie case for greater integration of transport across the authority and that work on this issue should be brought forward if possible.

Improve Existing Service Administration and the Trading Agreement with Leicester City Council

64. The Panel is recommending action to improve management information and I.T. systems. The Panel's findings confirm that the trading agreement with Leicester City Council is justified and should continue subject to resolving the issue of increased calls on County staff time.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

New Bus Policy

1. That, subject to further consultation to test the acceptability of the approach, the proposals for a new bus support policy set out in the report be approved for inclusion in the improvement plan, to be introduced through a phased introduction approach. The improvement plan will need to include provision for detailed local consultation on individual services as part of the phased introduction programme.
2. That in order to ration limited funds a target be set for the percentage of Leicestershire people who are provided access through each service type then a vfm measure be used to buy in services to move as close as possible to that target.
3. That the value for money measure to be used as the main determinant in deciding on which service to provide be 'the population served per £ subsidy'. That the 'subsidy per passenger journey' criterion be used as the day to day management tool for monitoring the performance of contract services and taking action where necessary.
4. That a process of annual review be used to ensure that services are adjusted to meet changes in demand and in the commercial services network and to ensure that expenditure stays within available funding without ad-hoc decision making.

Bus Service Quality

5. That the Council should continue work to improve the effectiveness of Quality Bus Partnerships through a variety of detailed measures, including a more innovative approach to bus priorities, more attention to bus terminals and interchange and clear formal agreements between the partners for every QBP initiative, covering inputs and target outcomes.
6. That an improved monitoring system be introduced so that a more sound assessment of the impact of specific initiatives can be made. Only after this is in place will it be possible to reach a more soundly-based judgement as to the future level of investment in QBPs.
7. That the Council further develop its general role in providing feedback to bus companies on customer views and investing in complementary measures both within and without QBP areas.

8. That whilst the Council can hope to improve the scope and quality of commercially-run bus services by the above means, it be noted that the fundamental limitations, through the lack of any statutory powers, will remain.
9. That the improvement plan should confirm the development of partnership working through such schemes as the Rural Bus Challenge project and the development of improved bus terminals and interchanges. The plan should show how ways of improving the Council's role in helping to provide feedback to bus companies on customer views of their services will be considered.
10. That the following specific steps be taken to improve quality:
 - Lobbying the Government to strengthen the work of the Traffic Commissioners;
 - For contract services, producing a tighter definition of quality requirements at the service specification stage, pre-tender;
 - Taking more rigorous steps before a contract is awarded to ensure that tenderers can meet the required quality standards, perhaps with the help of a 'two envelope' system of tendering;
 - Developing the newly-enhanced inspection and enforcement regime to focus increasingly on helping bus operators to drive up their own standards; and
 - Producing more sophisticated ways of measuring customer satisfaction with quality so that the authority can better measure performance and determine targets.

Bus Supply

11. That the approach in Section 4.7.4 to improving interaction with the market be supported and that, in view of the fact that market conditions can change quickly, this area be kept under regular review.
12. That the case for in-house operation of vehicles has not been justified but that the situation be kept under regular review in case the market rate overtakes the in-house rate.
13. That the option of buying vehicles and placing these with the contractor be tested in more detail, by analysing experience from elsewhere and looking for a possible test case in the county. This work should be linked with other work in developing competition in the relatively new markets of taxi and small minibus operation of public transport services.

14. That the improvement plan demonstrate how the authority will:
- Take a series of steps to improve our interaction with the market, as outlined in Section 4.7.4.
 - Improve the numbers-based monitoring of market conditions and regularly review the approach to the market
 - Explore the option of buying vehicles to be placed with contract operators, and keep the possible operation of in-house vehicles under review
 - Communicate with and develop the supply market for taxis and small minibuses
 - Develop mechanisms for helping the expansion of voluntary-sector operation of public transport services

Bus Information

15. That subject to further consultation:-
- A Bus Information Strategy be produced on the basis that information is produced in partnership, with the Council funding information for revenue-risk contract bus services but not for commercial bus services.
 - The proposed main elements of the strategy be telephone and internet services, roadside displays, timetable leaflets and booklets, a Central Leicestershire map guide, and continued development of the Star-trak real-time information system.
 - The improvement plan should set out how this is to be carried forward through consultation to implementation over the year following approval of the plan.
16. That controlling the cost of bus passenger information requires a continuation of the present 'good housekeeping' approach, with market testing where appropriate, rather than any radically different approach.
17. That in setting out proposals for taking forward the preparation and consultation for the Bus Information Strategy, the improvement plan demonstrate how appropriate quality controls can be built in.

Rail

18. That steps be taken to ensure that support for the Ivanhoe Stage 1 rail service is passed to the Strategic Rail Authority.
19. That work continue with the SRA/Railtrack and train operating companies to introduce possible new stations as circumstances permit.

20. That a review of rail station interchange be completed and justifiable proposals for improvement taken forward.
21. That lobbying for improved services and station improvements be continued.
22. That existing monitoring of quality for the Ivanhoe Stage 1 Rail service be enhanced to provide more continuous feedback.
23. That specific action be taken with regard to unreliability of one train and the problem of station announcements both on the Ivanhoe Stage 1 Rail service.
24. That it be noted that there is currently no means of gaining an alternative supplier for the Ivanhoe Stage 1 service and that cost-competitiveness is largely determined by the national framework.
25. That a new promotion plan for the service be drawn up and implemented with targets for increased patronage.

Accessible Transport

26. That the service, in partnership with mainly voluntary sector providers, be expanded to give effective countywide coverage, over perhaps a three-year period, incorporating new policies on the allocation of resources.
27. That the current overlap in funding between Social Services and Planning and Transportation Departments be resolved so as to gain the maximum benefit from Council funding overall.
28. That the current discussions with the health authorities be taken forward to a conclusion which clearly resolves the boundary of responsibility for funding transport to health facilities.
29. That the currently enhanced funding through the Local Transport Plan process be used to produce accelerated introduction of raised kerbs, to make low-floor buses of more value to wheelchair users and others.
30. That initiatives be taken to make it easier for customers to comment on voluntary sector services.
31. That the potential integration of service supply with health authorities and social services should be explored further.
32. That the current City Council review of the Access and Dial-a-ride services be used, if appropriate, to help influence the type of future service provision in Central Leicestershire.

33. That the service option of using spare time/capacity in Special Education and Social Services minibuses be properly tested.
34. That partnerships with district councils be progressed, to try to improve the usefulness of taxis and private hire cars for mobility-impaired customers, particularly in respect of obtaining a mixed fleet of vehicles and improving drivers' customer care skills.
35. That the possibility of offering a more generous travel concession, for disabled people to use when travelling by taxi, be fully investigated.
36. That a more cost-effective booking system for voluntary sector schemes should be investigated, possibly resulting in a more centralised system.

Service Management and Administration

37. That action be taken to improve service administration in the areas set out in section 7.3.2
38. That the scope for externalisation of public transport management/administration be considered again following any approach to the market that might be carried out as part of the current Best Value Review of Highway Services.
39. That there is a prima facie case for greater integration of transport procurement/provision across the authority and that work on this issue be brought forward if possible.
40. That performance in monitoring and target setting be improved, using improved management information systems including the development of comparative benchmarking information.
41. That the trading agreements with Leicester City Council be continued subject to further discussions to resolve the issue of increased calls on County Council staff time.