

ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
20 JANUARY 2011	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Operations

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BUS SERVICE REVIEW

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report is being presented at the request of the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee. The report follows changes to the subsidised bus network that were approved by Cabinet in February 2010. This report provides feedback on those changes.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to consider and comment on the contents of the report.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 Peterborough's Sustainable Community Strategy is the plan for the future of our city and the surrounding villages and rural areas. It sets the direction for the overall strategic development of Peterborough. This report directly links to the Council's strategic priority, Creating the UK's Environment Capital.

- 3.2 In addition, this report helps to achieve the following indicators:

NI175 Access to services by public transport, walking and cycling
NI177 Local bus passenger journeys
NI185 CO2 reduction from local authority operations
NI198 Children travelling to school – mode of travel usually used

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Under the 1985 Transport Act, the Council has a statutory duty to secure the provision of such public transport services as the Council considers appropriate to meet any public transport requirements which would not otherwise be met commercially. The Council financially subsidises a number of journeys that fall under this category.
- 4.2 A review of Council subsidised bus journeys was undertaken as a result of improvements to commercially operated bus services reducing the need for some Local Link journeys. Subsequently, the number of passengers on these journeys reduced. In addition, a different way of delivering bus services to rural areas, providing either the same or better period of operation, was identified. This allows the vehicle to operate only at times when the service is needed rather than adhering to a rigid timetable and the bus operating with no passengers on board; wasting resources and emitting needless CO2 emissions.
- 4.3 Some Local Link services have seen an increase in patronage. Therefore it was suggested that a trial of improved frequency was undertaken to assess if this further increased passenger journeys or whether the same number of passenger journeys were undertaken but simply split over the more frequent departures.

- 4.4 The recommended bus service changes and trial increased frequency (see paragraph 4 of cabinet report of 8 February 2010) were approved by the Council's Cabinet in February 2010. A copy of the Cabinet report is attached at Appendix 1.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 Officers have been assessing the impact of the implementation of the recommendations previously approved. One of main changes was the withdrawal of a number of journeys operating in the rural area of the authority and replacement with the Call Connect service. As part of this change a number of children eligible for free school transport needed to transfer from the withdrawn services to a contracted home to school transport. In addition, a number of passengers were using the subsidised services even though a comparable commercial bus service was available. When assessing the impact of this change, the number of passengers using the previous service has been compared to the number of passengers using the Call Connect service. The number of passengers using the previous service naturally varied from day to day and after removing the number of school children and passengers that had a comparable commercial service available less than 10 passenger journeys per day would have no alternative means of transport other than the Call Connect service. By comparison on the Call Connect service, an average of 25 passenger journeys per day were made in October 2010 and an average of 30 passenger journeys per day were made in November 2010.
- 5.2 The other main change was the trial increased frequency of the Local Link 406 service from hourly to half hourly. Again, to assess the impact of this change, the number of passenger journeys made before and after were compared, with passenger numbers increasing from between 13% and 74%. As a result the half hourly frequency will continue.
- 5.3 There were a number of other changes as a result of the recommendations, such as the withdrawal of the evening journeys to the Showcase cinema, some evening journeys on the Local Link 406 and a number of Local Link journeys around Dogsthorpe. A small number of complaints have been received from residents affected by the changes. The majority of these complaints were concerning the withdrawal of the Local Link journeys around Dogsthorpe. Dogsthorpe is well served by commercial services operating on a 10 minute frequency during the daytime. As such, there are no plans to reintroduce any of the withdrawn bus journeys.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no implications as a result of this report. The implications of the bus service review recommendations were considered and are detailed in the cabinet report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 No consultation has been undertaken prior to the preparation of this report. A number of areas of consultation were undertaken prior to the recommendations of the bus service review being presented to the Council's Cabinet. These are detailed in the Cabinet report.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 No further action is required as a result of this report.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Bus Service Review Cabinet report of 8 February 2010.