

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17TH MARCH 2004

Report of the Head of Planning Services

ITEM 5 TRANSPORTATION REVIEW – QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIPS

Purpose of the Report

To set out the programme and issues to be discussed in the Review at the meeting

Background

Environment Scrutiny Committee on 24th September 2003 resolved that Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) be included in the Committee's work programme as the first issue to be scrutinised through the select committee approach. The Committee on 17th December 2003 agreed a work programme and list of potential stakeholders to be invited to participate.

Responses to invitations

Expressions of interest to take part in the review were received from:

Kinchbus
Arriva
Leicestershire County Council
Action for a Better Charnwood
Charnwood Association of Town and Parish Councils
Charnwood Disability Forum

Loughborough University also wished to take part but were unable to attend on the chosen date. They have been invited to submit written representations.

Representatives of the five stakeholders listed above have been invited to participate in the review. They have been provided with copies of the Background Paper and supplementary information previously circulated to members of the Committee. Each participant has been asked to submit responses to the issues for scrutiny by 10th March. Responses will be circulated to all participants prior to the meeting.

Issues for Scrutiny

After consideration of the issues by the Chair, Vice-chair and Head of Planning Services three topic areas have been selected for scrutiny.

Topic 1: The effectiveness of existing Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs)

QBPs for Central Leicestershire and Loughborough bring together operators and local authorities (and users in the case of the Loughborough Partnership) to work on a

consensual basis to improve bus travel, in particular commercial services, in a co-ordinated and effective manner.

Question 1

How effective have the current QBP arrangements been in improving bus services and facilities to meet the needs of existing and potential users?..

Are there any alternative arrangements that could produce better results widening the appeal of bus travel?

Topic 2: Characteristics of the local bus service network

The current network of local bus services in the Borough combines daytime commercial services of at least half hourly frequency with hourly County Council supported services. Evening and Sunday services operate on some commercial routes. The number of supported services has increased in recent years as commercial services become focused on fewer core routes.

Almost all services operate along inter urban routes. These link Leicester to Loughborough (and then Shepshed and Coalville), Leicester to Melton Mowbray and Loughborough to Derby, Nottingham and Melton Mowbray. It is generally difficult to make trips by bus away from these routes. In some areas people are dependent for access on demand responsive, community based services using minibuses.

Question 2

- a) *What options are realistically available to improve the coverage and frequency of bus services to meet the needs of Charnwood residents for access to jobs, shopping, leisure and other destinations, and to meet policy objectives to provide a real alternative to the car?*
- b) *What complementary provision will be needed in areas where bus services are not viable because passenger numbers will be too low?*
- c)

Topic 3: Making bus travel high quality, reliable and popular

Significant efforts are being made to improve bus provision but more needs to be done. People seem put off using buses by the perceived high cost relative to car use, services that are unreliable and insufficient, and a new Star Trak electronic information system not performing as well as hoped. The discussion will focus on what can be done. This could involve extending traffic management measures- bus lanes and bus priority signals at junctions – providing accurate and easy to understand information, simpler and better ticketing, good value fares etc. There may also be a role for new initiatives such as effective travel planning, changes to parking policies making car use less attractive relative to public transport, park and ride, or even congestion charging.

Question 3

What measures will be needed to enable the development of high quality, reliable and well used bus services over the next 10 years?

Programme for the Review

It is suggested that the format for discussion of each topic should be:

- An introduction by the Chair
- A short presentation of the views of each invited speaker
- Questions from Members of the Committee
- Open discussion
- Summary of issues/ conclusions by Chair/Head of Planning Services

Up to 40 minutes will be allowed for each topic.

Following the discussions, the Head of Planning Services will prepare a further report summarising the findings and recommendations emanating from this review.

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