

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Planning and Development Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **04 November 2014**

Report of: **Director of Planning and Development**

Subject: **PUBLIC TRANSPORT REVIEW - FINDINGS [INTERIM REPORT]**

SUMMARY

This report presents the interim findings from the work carried out to date on the Policy Development and Review (PDR) Panel's Public Transport Review, under the guidance of the Working Group. The main purpose of the Review was to establish the existing provision of bus services in the Borough, and to identify possible actions for working more effectively with the organisations delivering these services to better meet the needs of the local communities through the Borough Council's community leadership role.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel:

- Notes the contents of the Interim Report relating to the provisional findings from the Public Transport Review, and in particular the proposed changes resulting from Hampshire County Council's review of subsidised bus and community transport services.
- Considers the conclusions in the Report that may inform the future development of bus service provision and associated infrastructure in the Borough.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the interim findings from the work carried out to date on the Public Transport Review under the guidance of the Working Group on behalf of the PDR Panel. The appointed members of the Working Group are Cllr A. Mandry (Chairman), Cllr P. Davies and Cllr G. Fazackarley.
2. The main objectives of the Public Transport Review were, firstly, to define and clarify the current provision of bus services in the Borough, and secondly to identify possible actions for working more effectively with the organisations delivering these services to better meet the needs of the local communities through the Borough Council's community leadership role.
3. The work of the Review has focussed initially on bus and bus rapid transit (BRT) services as the principal mode of public transport in the Borough. However, it is recognised that other forms of public transport – including community bus, rail, taxi and ferry services – together with the efficient interchange between modes each play a key role as part of an integrated transport solution that should be easily accessible to all travellers.
4. The following meetings have taken place in order to provide a steer for the work and to discuss the initial findings of the Review:
 - 1st Working Group Meeting, 5 August 2014;
 - 2nd Working Group Meeting 19 August 2014;
 - Panel Presentation 2 September 2014;
 - 3rd Working Group Meeting 2 October 2014;
 - 4th Working Group Meeting 24 October 2014.
5. In undertaking this work it is recognised that the Borough Council has an important subsidiary role in influencing outcomes of initiatives from Hampshire County Council, who as Transport Authority hold the overall responsibility for the provision of bus services in Fareham and Gosport.

SCHEDULED AND PRIVATE CONTRACTED BUS SERVICES

Scheduled Services

6. The existing network of bus routes in Fareham and Gosport provides connections to and from the Town Centre, local centres and other major destinations including Fareham Railway Station. However the frequency of service, a key determinant of quality as perceived by customers, varies substantially across different routes - at one end of the scale the Eclipse BRT service runs with a frequency of 6 minutes (E1/E2 services combined) during Monday to Saturday daytimes, whilst at the other extreme there is at best a two-hourly service on Routes 11 and F3 for the same time periods.
7. The descriptions and current route frequencies of bus services in Fareham and Gosport are reproduced in Attachment 1 of this report.
8. In July 2014, First Bus revised the timetables of some services, with some routeing and

frequency changes, and announced that the F2 and F3 services would be reviewed after 6 months and may not continue beyond the required 56-day notice period should the financial performance prove to be unsatisfactory.

9. Meanwhile, Hampshire County Council has carried out a public consultation on the operation of subsidised bus routes and community transport services in Fareham and Gosport as part of a County-wide initiative to reduce costs, with the option of withdrawal of a number of services that are not judged to represent good value for money. The HCC review includes 7 subsidised bus services which may be partially or completely withdrawn if recommendations are approved.
10. Recommendations from the HCC Review will be considered at the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment (EMETE) Decision Day Meeting on 27 October 2014. The associated Decision Report setting out the proposals is available on HCC's website (Reference: 6029), and recommendations for changes in bus services in Fareham and Gosport are presented in Attachment 2 of this report.
11. A summary of results from the HCC Passenger Transport Review 2014 consultation responses has also been published on the HCC website. Key statistics relating to the use of bus services in Hampshire include the following:
 - Travelling to/from shops for essential shopping is the most common journey purpose (20% of respondents); only 6% use the bus to travel to/from work.
 - 21% of respondents use the bus either every day or on most days of the week.
 - 69% of respondents do not use subsidised services after 7pm; 64% do not use subsidised Sunday services.
 - 21% of respondents said they have no alternative mode to travel other than using the bus.
 - The top priority for funding identified by the highest number of respondents (23%) was the retention of the current days that a service operates (ie. Monday-Friday).

Privately-Contracted Services

12. Alongside scheduled bus services there are a number of privately-contracted services operated by business organisations, educational establishments and other institutions in the Borough that have been procured in order to provide a public transport alternative for site access. These routes generally offer dedicated facilities with little or no thought given to effective integration with scheduled bus routes. Contractual arrangements have meant that in only selected cases are these private services available for use by fare-paying passengers.
13. Examples of privately-contracted services currently operating in the Borough include the following:
 - ASDA Fareham Newgate Lane: Free Shopper Buses (Fareham Bus Station, Stubbington Village, Lee-on-the-Solent), Mondays to Fridays;
 - Whiteley Shopping Centre: Free Bus Service operating Monday to Friday lunchtime periods;

- CEMAST Daytime Shuttle, student bus service linking to the BRT at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport;
- CEMAST Morning and Evening Bus Services student service between the College campus, Fareham Bus and Rail Stations, and Gosport.

14. In conclusion, there is a lack of coherency and uniformity in bus service provision across the Borough, with the main corridors served relatively well but infrequent services on intermediate routes elsewhere, and with Fareham Town Centre acting as the main transport hub. Each privately-contracted route serves a specific purpose and is not equivalent to a conventional scheduled service available to the general public.

15. From a bus passenger perspective, periodic changes in services by operators and publicity associated with possible further service reductions are unlikely to inspire confidence that the bus necessarily represents a sustainable long-term alternative travel choice.

MEETINGS WITH BUS OPERATORS

16. To assist with the Review, representatives of transport providers operating scheduled bus services and community transport in the Fareham area have accepted invitations to attend meetings of the Working Group.

17. Further liaison is also planned with bus operators and organisations contracting private services, such as Fareham College, before finalising the recommendations of this Review.

First Bus

18. First Bus is the principal bus operator for the Fareham and Gosport area, operating services that it expects will cover running costs whilst also making a profit. The financial performance of services is reviewed on a regular basis, as are opportunities for new routes linked to developments within the Borough.

19. The Company is prepared to run a service if deemed viable and provided that customers make use of the service. Alternatively, services will be removed if they are not used as under the current legislation First Bus is unable to cross-subsidise with more profitable routes. Extensive use of concessionary passes by passengers is not necessarily conducive to the profitability of services.

20. First Bus does not currently believe that there are additional bus services in the Borough that could be run on a commercial basis. However, First continues to review its service levels and when opportunities become available to provide new services or enhance existing ones they will be considered.

21. Of interest to the Borough Council is the fact that First arrange Customer Panel meetings in Fareham on a quarterly basis to elicit views on local bus services and provide information on forthcoming changes. Panel members are selected as representative of other customers who use specific services, and meeting minutes are published on First's website www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/hampshire/help_contact/customer_panel

22. Current membership of the Customer Panel includes officer representation from both Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council, with Fareham Borough Council represented informally by Cllr Peter Davies.

Community Action Fareham

23. Community Action Fareham currently operates 3 school contracts and has confirmed interest in running scheduled community bus services in order to increase the utilisation of vehicle fleets and assist in amortising costs. They are proposing to combine operations with their counterparts in Gosport, thereby increasing scalability.
24. They have prepared business cases for various service options which have highlighted the potential financial risks to the organisation, and therefore to date have not committed to setting up any new route. Previous attempts at partnering with First Bus to share marketing and other costs have proved to be unsuccessful.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY NEEDS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN FAREHAM

25. The initial method of determining potential need amongst local communities for better access to public transport was based upon an assessment of household data from the 2011 National Census, combined with an analysis of catchment areas to locations in the Borough served by existing bus routes.
26. By plotting socio-economic parameters such as average household income and car ownership against levels of accessibility to existing bus and rail services, it was possible to delineate areas of the Borough with a combination of low average car ownership or household income and low levels of access to public transport. These areas could be considered to have a greater need for adequate levels of public transport than those with higher income or car ownership.
27. This approach has been applied successfully in studies elsewhere in the UK, with recent research indicating that in neighbourhoods with high population density there is a correlation between deprivation and access to public transport.
28. Notwithstanding the above, the results of plotting socio-economic data for the Borough from the Census against daytime or evening bus services were generally inconclusive in terms of identifying specific needs for enhanced services. Whilst the plots mirrored the corridors well-served by buses, it was not possible to identify actual requirements for new provision in other areas without further detailed investigation.
29. In conclusion, there are not considered to be significant gaps in the provision of bus services in the Borough on the main arterial routes, although there are pockets of transport deprivation away from these routes. It is also possible that this situation may be exacerbated in the future should further cut-backs result from the emerging recommendations of HCC's own review of subsidised bus services.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE OPERATION OF COMMUNITY BUS SERVICES

30. In the light of the above findings, it is anticipated that any opportunities for operating additional bus services on a financially-viable basis are generally limited and likely to emanate from one or more of the following scenarios:
 - The possible future withdrawal of a commercially-run route by an operator and/or withdrawal of a subsidised service (or part-service) in early 2015 following the outcomes of HCC's Bus Review;
 - a demonstrable and proven need for new daytime or evening services to meet a specific passenger requirement – for example, a 'Shopper-type' service – which

would avoid the abstraction of passenger demand away from commercially-run services;

- the strengthening of feeder services to the *Eclipse* BRT or enhancement of local bus services that would benefit from planned transport infrastructure improvements linked to major developments, such as Welborne and Solent Enterprise Zone (Daedalus).

31. With respect to the possibility that Fareham Borough Council may wish in the future to operate its own bus services, it has been confirmed by the Traffic Commissioners that, since the Council is legally constituted as a 'district council', it is not empowered under the 1985 Transport Act to hold an operator's licence should it wish to do so. Whilst there are examples of organisational arrangements made elsewhere to obtain an operator's licence and run bus services, it has been concluded that since the restriction would not apply to Hampshire County Council, a more practical approach would be for the Borough Council to work in partnership with the Transport Authority for the latter to secure a licence if required.

32. A number of case studies were reviewed to inform the viability assessment of new community bus services in Fareham. With a few notable exceptions the evidence suggests that community bus schemes rarely meet their original objectives and are generally under-funded. This implies that there are substantial risks associated with setting up a community bus operation without a detailed understanding of actual demand for these services and conducting appropriate due diligence on the financial model.

33. One example of a successful project is the Risborough Area Community Bus scheme in Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire. This has evolved into a viable operation by adapting to meet the specific needs of the local communities and focussing on targeted marketing campaigns to boost patronage. Importantly, it has also received both financial and administrative support from the local District and County Councils.

34. More locally, the Meon Valley Community Bus Association operate off-peak bus services between West Meon and Fareham Town Centre on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

35. In conclusion, it is apparent that the operation of a new community bus service in Fareham would be a major undertaking with significant financial risks, taking account of both the initial capital and on-going running costs incurred. It may however be appropriate for Fareham Borough Council to assist other organisations who can exploit existing assets in bringing forward proposals for a new service by engaging with the County Council and other interested parties.

BUS SHELTERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

36. Bus stop facilities are an important component of the total public transport offer across the Borough, and require appropriate levels of investment for upgrading and maintaining existing street furniture.

37. Responsibilities are currently split between Fareham Borough Council and Hampshire County Council for the provision of bus stops and bus shelters respectively, with the latter also having ownership of all BRT-related infrastructure.

38. The Borough Council is currently reviewing options for procurement of bus shelters in

the future, including the benefits associated with developing a methodology with defined criteria for allocating a limited annual budget to these facilities.

39. It is also necessary to protect bus stops from parking by other vehicles which can result in buses being unable to reach the stops and purpose-built infrastructure for low-floor vehicles where this is provided. A solution available to Councils is the 'bus stop clearway' which can be implemented and enforced without a traffic regulation order.
40. In addition to civil engineering infrastructure improvements, there are a number of complementary technological developments aimed at improving the accessibility and affordability of public transport in Fareham. These developments include the *SolentGo* smart ticketing initiative and RNIB *React* tags enabling blind or partially-sighted passenger to use the *Eclipse* bus stops. The Borough Council is assisting in disseminating this information to the appropriate user groups.

FURTHER LIAISON WITH HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

41. Following attendance by representatives of First Bus and Community Action Fareham at earlier Working Group meetings, it is proposed that Peter Shelley, Head of Passenger Transport at Hampshire County Council, be invited to a future meeting of the Working Group. The main purpose of this meeting would be to clarify the decisions reached at the EMETE Decision Day Meeting on 27 October 2014, in terms of the likely impacts on bus and community transport services in Fareham and Gosport.

PROTOCOL FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

42. It was concluded from the meeting with First Bus that there would be benefit in Fareham Borough Council formalising the process of consulting residents and other interested parties - either through Customer Panels or by other means - on the need for new or improved bus services, with the aim of agreeing proposed service changes with operators for implementation.
43. One method of achieving this would be to define a Protocol comprising a set of principles of community involvement as a formal procedure for implementing changes to local bus services. In this particular case, signatories would include Fareham Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, First Bus and other service providers in the Fareham and Gosport area, and developers with significant proposals affecting local communities within the Borough.
44. An example of an indicative Protocol for Community Engagement is given in Attachment 3 of this report. It should be noted that this protocol has not been discussed with other potential signatories of the document at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

45. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSIONS

46. The lack of coherency in the provision of bus services across the Borough, combined with uncertainty around the HCC review of subsidised bus services and the tendency for First Bus to change services on a regular basis, make it difficult for passengers to keep up-to-date with current timetables and gain reassurance that bus represents a viable long-term choice of travel mode for journeys in Fareham.

47. First Bus has confirmed that the Company arranges Customer Panel meetings on a quarterly basis to elicit views on local bus services and future improvements, with the minutes of meetings published on First's website.
48. Community Action Fareham has previously assessed the potential for new bus routes in the Borough, and has indicated to the Working Group an interest in principle in operating new services with the support of other interested parties.
49. In terms of identified needs for improved bus services, there are not considered to be significant gaps in the provision of bus services in the Borough on the main arterial routes, although current frequencies are often lacking in terms of adequate levels of service and there are pockets of transport deprivation away from these routes.
50. It is clear that the operation of a new community bus service in Fareham would be a major undertaking with significant financial risks. It may however be appropriate for Fareham Borough Council to assist other organisations who can exploit existing assets in bringing forward proposals for a new service by engaging with the County Council and other interested parties.
51. The Borough Council is currently reviewing options for procurement of bus shelters in the future, and is promoting the availability of new technology applications for assisting bus passengers. The Council continues to monitor the operation of bus stops in the Borough where these are prone to parking by other vehicles.
52. It is proposed that the Head of Passenger Transport at Hampshire County Council, Peter Shelley, be invited to a future meeting of the Working Group, to discuss the results of the County's own public consultation and the results of this Review.
53. It is considered that there would be benefit in Fareham Borough Council formalising the process of consulting residents and other interested parties on new bus service proposals, and that one method of achieving this would be to define a Protocol comprising a set of principles of community involvement as a formal procedure for implementing these proposals.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Existing Bus Services in Fareham and Gosport

Appendix B – Changes to Bus Services in Fareham and Gosport Proposed in the Hampshire County Council Decision Day Report

Appendix C – Indicative Protocol for Community Involvement in Provision of Local Bus Services

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Robert Burton. (Ext 2373)

APPENDIX A – EXISTING BUS SERVICES IN FAREHAM AND GOSPORT

Route Descriptions and Frequencies

Route No.	Operator	Route Description	Mon-Sat Daytime	Mon-Sat Evenings	Sundays & Bank Holidays
Eclipse E1	First	Fareham-Rail Station-Busway-Brockhurst-Elson-Gosport	12 mins	30 mins	20 mins
Eclipse E2	First	Fareham-Rail Station-Busway-Brockhurst-Ann's Hill Road-Gosport	12 mins	30 mins	20 mins
F1	First	Fareham-Blackbrook Road-Highlands (Shops)-Thorni Avenue	30 mins	-	hourly
F2	First	Fareham-Maylings Farm-Frosthole Crescent-Highlands (Nashe Way)	hourly	-	hourly
F3	First	Fareham-Dore Avenue-Portchester Precinct	3 journeys	-	-
3	First	Fareham-Portchester-QA Hospital-Cosham-North End-Portsmouth	10 mins	30 mins	20 mins
X4	First	Portsmouth-M275-Portchester-Fareham-Locks Heath-Lowford-Southampton	30 mins	(see timetable)	(see timetable)
X5	First	Gosport-Stokes Bay-Lee-on-the-Solent-Stubbington-Fareham-Locks Heath-Warsash-Lowford-Southampton	hourly	(see timetable)	hourly
9/9A	First	Fareham-Bridgemary-Rowner-Gosport	15 mins	(see timetable)	30 mins
10	First	Fareham-Bridgemary-Brockhurst-Gosport	hourly	-	-
11	First	Fareham-Fleetlands-Brockhurst-Gosport-Alverstoke	2-hourly	-	-
20	First	Fareham-Highlands-Funtley-Knowle-Wickham	70 mins	-	-
21	First	Fareham-ASDA-Stubbington-Hill Head/Lee-on-the-Solent	(see timetable)	-	-
X23	Xelabus	Locks Heath-Warsash-Lowford-Windhover (Tesco) (Tuesdays & Thursdays only)	1 journey	-	-
26	First	Fareham-Highlands-Swanwick-Botley-Hedge End (Sainsburys/M&S)	6-7 journeys	-	-
28/28A	First	Fareham-Highlands(28) or West End(28A)-Whiteley-Locks Heath-Warsash	5-7 journeys	-	-
69	Stagecoach	Fareham-Wickham-Bishop's Waltham-Fair Oak-Winchester	hourly	1 journey	-

Source: Hampshire County Council Fareham & Gosport Bus Map & Guide (27 July 2014)

APPENDIX B – CHANGES TO BUS SERVICES IN FAREHAM AND GOSPORT PROPOSED IN THE HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DECISION DAY REPORT

A. Subsidised Local Bus Services in Fareham & Gosport

- **Bus Service number F1/F2, Fareham – Highlands** -The proposal is to withdraw funding for the Sunday service in line with Sunday services across the county. Weekday services are provided commercially.
- **Bus Service number 11, Fareham – Gosport – Alverstoke** - It is proposed that the Saturday service be withdrawn (average use Monday to Saturday is 13 passengers per journey total for Alverstoke-Gosport and Gosport-Fareham).
- **Bus Service number 20, Fareham – Knowle – Wickham** - The schooldays only timetable has been revised as Knowle students now travel via dedicated school transport.
- **Bus Service number 21, Fareham – Hill Head** - A replacement for a withdrawn commercial service was introduced in January 2014 on a trial basis. It is now proposed to retain this with a revised route and timetable. It would run more frequently to Hill Head but would no longer serve Lee on the Solent as residents there can use the X5 service to access shopping in either Fareham or Gosport as well as the Asda shopper bus as journeys to Asda accounted for most journeys surveyed on that section of route. The service would no longer run on Saturday afternoons as fewer passengers use the service at this time.
- **Bus Service number 26, Fareham – Botley – Hedge End** - It is proposed that this service be combined with the 28 service. The Park Gate to Hedge End section of the route would be withdrawn due to low passenger numbers (less than 2 passengers per journey on average). It is proposed that a Taxi-share service would then be offered to Burridge residents as other communities have public transport available.
- **Bus Service number 28, Fareham – Whiteley – Locks Heath – Warsash** – It is proposed that this service be combined with the number 26. The Locks Heath to Warsash section of the route would then be withdrawn as passengers use the faster and more frequent X4 and X5 services. Newtown residents would be provided with a Taxi-share.

B. Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme 2015/16

- The proposal is to maintain the enhancements to the statutory scheme provided for Hampshire residents eligible for a disabled person's pass.
- Travel times for holders of older person's passes would come into line with the statutory scheme, and that the 0900 to 0930 extension on Monday to Friday would be discontinued except on those routes where there is currently a departure between 0900 and 0929 and no further departure until after 1031.
- These departures would be listed and passes allowed from 0900 on those specific journeys, as has been done elsewhere.

DRAFT ISSUE ONLY – FOR DISCUSSION WITH POTENTIAL SIGNATORIES

APPENDIX C

Indicative Protocol for Community Involvement in Provision of Local Bus Services – Draft Only

In signing up to this Protocol, Fareham Borough Council agrees to:

- Provide support and leadership in communicating with interested parties and help in identifying the full range of community views.
- Ensure that elected Members are fully informed and up-to-date on proposals to introduce service changes.
- Participate in confirming or bringing forward proposals that have received the support of other interested parties.
- Put out the information on initiatives (smart ticketing, RNIB tags, etc)

In signing up to this Protocol, Hampshire County Council agrees to:

- Establish a clear point of contact at the Council that will assist in the exchange of information and decision-making.
- When requested to provide staff at community involvement events to answer any technical questions.
- Participate in confirming or bringing forward proposals that have received the support of other interested parties.

In signing up to this Protocol, Operator 1 (First Bus) agrees to:

- Engage constructively with other interested parties with the objective of gaining consensus on particular proposals to change bus services within the Borough.
- Agree timescales for achieving approvals and delivery of proposals.
- Participate in confirming or checking details of proposed service changes.
- Share the results of Customer Panels which relate to bus service changes.

In signing up to this Protocol, Operator 2 (XXXX) agrees to:

- Engage constructively with other interested parties with the objective of gaining consensus on particular proposals to change bus services within the Borough.
- Agree timescales for achieving approvals and delivery of proposals.
- Participate in confirming or checking details of proposed service changes.

*****DRAFT ISSUE ONLY – FOR DISCUSSION WITH POTENTIAL SIGNATORIES*****