

Report of the Director of City Strategy

**Bus Improvement Study**

**Summary**

1. The York Council Plan sets out the new administration's priorities for the period from 2011 to 2015. As part of the priority to 'Get York Moving', the Council is committed to improve the quality, reliability and punctuality of local bus services in York. The Council aims to deliver a ten percent increase in bus patronage over the same period.
2. This report outlines the content of the bus improvement study which is already underway and will be completed by mid-2012. The report also summarises the progress already made to achieving the Council Plan's objectives for public transport in the City.

**Recommendations**

3. The Cabinet Member for City Strategy is recommended to:
  - a. Note the contents of this report
  - b. Agree the methodology, scope and focus of the bus improvement study (as set out in Appendix A)

Reason: This course of action will allow the Council to continue to work towards its stated aim of delivering a significant improvement to the bus network.

**Background**

4. York, in common with many towns and cities of a similar size, has an excellent track record in the promotion and use of sustainable modes of transport. The city has an established and successful Park & Ride network and a number of strong, commercially viable

bus routes. Unlike many other parts of the UK, bus passenger numbers have remained stable over the past five years. The Council is clear, however, that if it is to reduce the economic and environmental impacts of traffic congestion, this trend needs to be altered and bus patronage needs to increase. To encourage new bus passengers, a step change is required to boost the attractiveness of the bus network.

5. York currently has eleven local bus operators, nine of whom operate frequent services on an at-least hourly basis. The majority of bus services are not specified or controlled by the Council and operate without subsidy from the Council. A modest number of bus services operate with financial support from and to a timetable specified by the Council.
6. The Council is committed to working with bus passengers, bus operators and key local stakeholders, including adjacent transport authorities, to develop and deliver a bus network which more successfully meets the aspirations and needs of existing and potential bus passengers. As a first step to achieving this end, the Council proposes to work with partners over the next few months to undertake an analysis of the existing network and consultation with a variety of interested parties.
7. The Council has established a multi-disciplinary project team to undertake this work, incorporating representatives from the Sustainable Travel, Economic Development and Business Intelligence teams. In addition, it is intended that regular engagement will be undertaken place with colleagues in the Education Transport, Highways Infrastructure and Network Management teams to ensure that issues which go beyond the core functions of staff are picked up.
8. The project team will be aided by external advisors with the knowledge and skills to place York's bus network within a national context, comparing and contrasting the challenges faced in York with those in a variety of other areas.

### **Consultation**

9. Consultation with a number of other local transport authority and Passenger Transport Executive areas has been undertaken to enable the successful and appropriate scoping of the proposed study for York.

10. A significant level of consultation is proposed as part of the study, this will include:
  - a. The inclusion of several questions as part of the Residents' survey (to be sent to all households) to gain feedback on residents' priorities for the local bus network.
  - b. Surveying of bus passengers (on bus and at key on-street locations) to understand their views on York's bus network.
  - c. Consultation with a variety of Parish Council, Ward Committee and Resident Associations to understand the needs the strengths and weaknesses of the bus network in their local area. This consultation will not be undertaken with all representative local groups, but rather with a representative spread of groups (eg some representing Villages in the Outer York area, some in the York suburbs and some in and around the City Centre).
  - d. Consultation with bus operators through one to one discussion and collectively through the York Quality Bus Partnership meetings.
  - e. Consultation with other key interest groups, for instance Visit York, York Independent Living Network and York Youth Council to understand the needs of specific groups of the local population.

## **Options**

11. This report presents two options.

### **Option 1**

12. Appendix A outlines the intended approach for the bus improvement study. Following an initial piece of investigative work, four areas are identified for consideration:
  - a. Perceived under performance of the bus network
  - b. Concerns about the medium term viability of the bus network
  - c. Outlining what has and what could be delivered through the existing voluntary partnership arrangements

- d. What regulatory or partnership arrangements might be available to deliver improvements to the bus network in York
13. Each of the areas outlined above will be studied in depth and, following consultation with both bus operators, members of the public and other key stakeholders, conclusions will be brought back to this meeting.

## **Option 2**

14. The Cabinet Member is invited to propose an alternative course of action if it is felt that the proposals outlined in appendix A will not meet the required objectives, namely to propose a course of action which would deliver a step change improvement to the bus network in York.

## **Council Plan Priorities**

15. Support for bus services in York contributes to the following Council Plan priorities:

### **Get York moving:**

A commitment to improve York's local bus network aims to deliver an increase in the quality, reliability and punctuality of local bus services. Partnership arrangements will be agreed with the bus operators to develop all aspects of bus travel. This will include improvements to vehicle fleets, better timetables, and real-time information and more bus priority measures. Through ticketing will also be introduced, which means passengers will only need to buy one ticket to complete a journey, even if they have to use more than one bus operator's services. These improvements aim to deliver a 10% increase in bus based trips over the next four years.

### **Protect the environment:**

York will be better prepared and more resilient in the face of a changing climate and will steadily reduce its carbon emissions. This study contributes towards the commitment in proposing more efficient utilisation of the City's bus fleet as well as better vehicle standards.

16. Local Transport Plan 2011- 2015 (LTP3): Support for the services outlined above would contribute to several of the aims of the third Local Transport Plan, namely:

- To provide quality alternatives to the car to provide more choice and enable more trips to be undertaken by sustainable means
- Improving Strategic Links to enhance the wider connections with the key residential and employment areas in and around York, and beyond
- Tackling Transport Emissions to reduce the release of pollutants harmful to health and the environment.

## **Implications**

- **Financial**

The cost of delivering the proposed study is £20,000.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications

- **Equalities**

Consultation will be undertaken with a range of interest groups. The outcomes of the proposed study will be subject to a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment.

- **Legal**

There are no Legal implications

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no crime and disorder implications.

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no IT implications

- **Property**

There are no Property implications

- **Other**

There are no other implications

## Risk Management

17. A degree of risk (both financial and reputational) may result from proposals to implement possible outcomes from this study. Completion of the study in and of itself, however, is low risk.
18. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score for all risks has been assessed at less than 16. This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

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Report  
Approved



Date 20.12.11

Report  
Approved



Date Insert Date

### Wards Affected:

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For further information please contact the author of the report

## Annexes

**Annex A:** Scoping Note – Bus Development Study