

Meeting of the Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel

6 June 2007

Report of the Director of City Strategy

BUS SERVICES IN ELVINGTON

Summary

1. To consider a petition presented by Councillor Vassie to Council on 12 April 2007, seeking a better public transport system for Elvington. A sample page of the petition, and an accompanying note accompanies this report as Annex B.

Background

2. Since Elvington became part of the City of York Council area in 1996, the Council has made a number of attempts to improve the extremely limited level of bus service provided for the village at that time. Most notable amongst these attempts was the "Connexions" C2 service, which formed part of the Council's successful bid for Rural Bus Challenge funding in 1998/99. This provided a more regular and more frequent service on weekdays and Saturdays than had previously existed, relying on an interchange with the Park & Ride service at Grimston Bar to facilitate travel to and from York City Centre. This enabled the one bus used on the service to offer more journeys than would have been possible with a through service to and from York and avoided travelling on congested roads. The service included journeys at York College start and finish times offering through travel to and from the College.
3. However, during the three year period of Challenge funding, insufficient patronage was built-up to attract continuing funding from central government in a subsequent Challenge funding bid for the 2001 to 2004 period. The Council could not justify increasing its own transport spending to maintain the service, as it did not meet the threshold of the criteria for the continued subsidy of bus service.
4. A reduced, weekday off peak only, service was maintained, funded from the Council's own resources. This was designed to supplement the established daily peak period and occasional days/journeys off-peak East Yorkshire Motor Services Route 195 between York and Pocklington, which passes through Elvington, but this failed to retain most of the passengers who had used the Connexions service and was discontinued in December 2005. A decision was taken, as reported to this panel on 1 February 2006, to engage

with East Yorkshire Motor Services with a view to developing the established, but very limited, Service 195 as the course of action most likely to achieve the best possible bus service for Elvington. A contract was entered into in January 2006 until August 2008, which used the subsidy previously allocated to provide other bus services to and from Elvington, to augment the timetable. The current subsidy payable under this contract is £17,112 per annum. The resulting timetable forms Annex A to this report, together with a summary of surveyed passenger figures for the City of York Council supported journeys. The success or otherwise of this venture is due to be considered before the contract is renewed in 2008.

5. The Council's Dial & Ride service is also available to Elvington residents who are elderly or disabled, offering return journeys to York City Centre on Thursdays and Fridays, Monks Cross on Mondays, and the Tesco store at Askham Bar on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
6. On Sundays, the bus service between Holme-upon-Spalding-Moor and York via Wheldrake, which is jointly funded by East Riding of Yorkshire Council and City of York Council and currently also run by East Yorkshire Motor Services, is diverted via Elvington. However, due to the road layout, it can only serve the western extremity of the village, before passing the Air Museum between Elvington and York. The service is not well used, and very few passengers from Elvington or the Air Museum use it. The contract is due for renewal at the end of March 2008 and the future of this service is by no means certain. An alternative route, taking the bus further into Elvington, would miss the Museum stop and make the route unacceptably indirect for longer distance passengers.
7. A recent development has been the introduction of an additional journey from Elvington to York at 1635 daily as a commercial initiative by Top Line Travel. The journey is run on schooldays by a bus returning to York after taking pupils home from Fulford School on behalf of the Council. On other days, a City Tour open-top bus is used, and the journey commences from the Air Museum, rather than Elvington Primary School.

Consultation

8. Council officers attended two Elvington Parish Council meetings during 2005, which were also attended by several villagers, to discuss various aspects of bus service provision to the village. The main issues were summarised in the February 2006 report to this panel, and informed the decision to build up the frequency of Service 195 as much as possible.
9. On 20 April 2007, a stakeholder meeting, convened by John Grogan M.P., to discuss issues relating to bus services in Elvington and Wheldrake, was attended by Councillor Vassie and Council Officers. Residents' aspirations for improved bus service access to York were reiterated. Particular issues raised by Elvington residents were:
 - Infrequent and complex service timetable, with no weekday evening service and poor Sunday provision;

- accessibility of York College severely limited and expensive (need to pay separate fares for connecting journeys contributes);
- improved access to York University for students and staff desirable;
- no public transport access from neighbouring villages to Health Centre, and
- convenient connections to established bus services to Monks Cross and Clifton Moor do not exist.

Options

10. Available options for improvements are limited by the availability of funding within established budgets and the lack of a significant customer base for public transport in Elvington, and other villages along the 195 route. Options to consider, therefore, are:
- Take no immediate action, but continue to look for any realistic opportunities to improve the service in the future
 - Allocate additional funding to enhance the present service, guided by the petitioners' aspirations, possibly on a trial basis until August 2008, or for a longer period in conjunction with an extension of the current contractual arrangement. This report makes no suggestions as to the possible source of any such funding.

Analysis

11. The petition is accompanied by a note, expressing the views that:
- The basic acceptable requirement is for a bus service which will facilitate commuting to and from York every day of the week;
 - the bus service should be available at times of day which give reasonable access to York and its workplaces and amenities, and also gives value for money. In particular, the lack of bus services after 1700 hours is highlighted;
 - adults and teenagers would like to have public transport access to York City Centre, Designer Outlet, and Monks Cross (Shopping Centre and Swimming Pool), and
 - a bus service enabling access to York College should be considered a basic right for all villages paying taxes to City of York Council.
12. The author (of the petition) appears not to have realised that there is one journey into York before 0800 hours and one journey back after 1700 (Monday to Saturday). This provides some limited opportunities to access work in York and, by catching connecting services in York City Centre, to get to York College. However, the service timetable may appear to be complex and, in general terms, offers a very limited public transport service along the route. The service is a mix of wholly commercial journeys, journeys jointly subsidised by East Riding of Yorkshire and City of York Councils, journeys subsidised solely by East Riding of Yorkshire Council, and journeys wholly subsidised by City of York Council.

13. The petition itself has 312 signatories, the majority of whom have Elvington addresses, representing about 25% of the village population. Other signatories include staff and visitors at Elvington Air Museum and residents of neighbouring villages in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Respondents were asked to indicate when they might use a bus service. The results, which include some multiple choices, are summarised in the table below:

Anytime	Weekend	Saturday	Weekday	Evening	1 to 3 days a week	Occasionally
134	92	17	33	1	25	26

The "Occasionally" column includes 12 who specifically indicated School Holidays.

14. As outlined in paragraph 4 of this report, the current weekday timetable was created by seeking to provide as extensive a service as possible, using funding previously committed to the provision of other bus services for Elvington. No other funding was available within bus service support budgets and poor patronage levels on previously provided services made it difficult to argue for a re-allocation of funding to provide a more extensive service. Similarly, East Riding of Yorkshire Council was not in a position to commit additional funds to facilitate improvements to this bus service. As there had been limited success in growing bus patronage in Elvington, the current approach extends service improvements to a wider catchment area in an attempt to raise patronage to sustainable levels. Despite this, analysis of data supplied by East Yorkshire Motor Services for the most recent four week period available shows the Council subsidised weekday journeys carrying 4 passengers per bus hour, well below the guideline figure of 11 currently used to inform funding decisions. This amounts to 60 passengers a week at a subsidy per passenger of £5.48. A substantial increase in patronage, without a significant increase in resources allocated, would be needed for the approach to be judged successful. An average of 53 passengers a day used the Sunday 18A service in 2006/7, representing 7 passengers per bus hour and a subsidy per passenger of £0.65 per passenger for City of York Council and £2.50 per passenger for the two funding authorities combined.
15. Previous experience has shown that it can take an extended period of time to build up patronage on improved bus services, particularly where relatively small populations are served, there is little established tradition of bus service provision and use, and the improved service is still relatively infrequent. Any improvements made in these circumstances are therefore likely to need a long term commitment, of at least three years, to prove themselves.
16. Following the stakeholder meeting on 20 April 2007, Council officers are engaging with East Yorkshire Motor Services and East Riding of Yorkshire Council to explore whether or not there is scope to re-allocate existing resources to provide a more simplified Service 195 timetable, possibly routed via York University instead of Hull Road. If achievable, there will be time to

monitor the initial affects before the current contract expires in August 2008. Any improvements achieved in this way are, however, unlikely to go very far towards meeting the petitioners' aspirations.

17. The Council's Local Transport Plan 2006 to 2011 (LTP2) recognises the need to improve public transport in rural communities as a means of improving access for rural residents to the City's facilities. A range of possible solutions is set out in the Plan for consideration, but implementation largely depends upon appropriate funding for new initiatives being secured. During the Plan period, it is intended to review existing support for bus services to ensure that it is being spent appropriately in pursuit of the Council's accessibility objectives. Whether or not this will provide the opportunity to allocate additional resources to bus service provision in Elvington will be considered, as part of the process. Taking any prior action to further improve bus services in Elvington would be premature and would require additional funding to be made available.
18. The amount would depend on the scale and nature of any improvements. As a guide, however, the Council is currently spending £17,000 per annum to secure 14 journeys each week on the Service 195 timetable. These run outside peak hours, so are less expensive than journeys which might be required in the 0730 to 0930 and 1500 to 1800 periods on weekdays.

Corporate Priorities

19. Providing subsidised bus services, which would otherwise not exist, to supplement those services provided commercially by the private sector, contributes towards many of the Council's eight Corporate Aims, as set out in the Council Plan for 2006/7. In particular, they contribute towards the "Sustainable City" and "Inclusive City" strategic objectives in the Community Strategy and Improvement Priority IS2 (to increase the use of public and other environmentally friendly modes of transport) for the 2006 – 2009 period;. They also contribute towards achievement of the shared priorities (with Government) embodied in LTP2; to reduce congestion, improve safety, improve air quality, improve accessibility, and improve other aspects of quality of life.

Implications

20. **Financial;** Unless Members wish to allocate additional funding for improvements to bus services for Elvington, there are no Financial Implications arising from this report. Any modifications agreed to the existing bus service will otherwise be guided by the need to contain spending within existing allocated budgets.
21. **Equalities;** Lack of a convenient public transport service disadvantages people who are dependent on such services for their mobility and access to various facilities available in the City. Failure to address this issue therefore has Equalities Implications.

22. **Transport;** Lack of a convenient and attractive public transport service leads predominantly to reliance on the private car to meet travel demands, with a consequent effect on traffic volumes. The volume of traffic originating in Elvington is not, however, considered, taken in isolation, to make a material difference to traffic congestion in and around the City.
23. There are no other implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

24. In compliance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy, the main risks that have been identified in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives (Strategy) and those affecting the competitiveness of the service and its ability to deliver Best value (Competitive). Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score all risks has been assessed at less than 16. This means that ,at this point, the risks only need to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the Council's policy objectives.

Recommendations

25. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member for City Strategy to approve that:

1) The Director of City Strategy be directed to explore with East Riding of Yorkshire Council and East Yorkshire Motor Services whether or not any potentially beneficial changes can be made to the existing bus service through Elvington at no additional cost to the Council.

Reasons: To seek a positive response to the petitioners' requests, which might improve patronage of the bus service, without incurring additional expenditure by the Council.

2) The Director of City Strategy be directed to consider the need and feasibility for bus service improvements for Elvington when development work is undertaken to implement the Bus Strategy within the Council's Local Transport Plan.

Reasons: To ensure that the villagers' needs and aspirations are considered and assessed in conjunction with other desired improvements to the City's bus service network.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Date 24/05/07

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Wards Affected: Wheldrake

All tick

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Electronic Ticket Machine Data supplied by East Yorkshire Motor Services for contracted journeys on Service 195.

Electronic Ticket Machine Data supplied by Arriva Yorkshire North for contracted journeys on Connexions Service C2

Electronic Ticket Machine Data supplied by First York for bus services previously operated to and from Elvington

Passenger Survey Data collected by Council Officers on various bus services to or through Elvington

The Council's Local Transport Plan 2006 to 2011

Annexes

Annex A: Timetables for current Bus Services in Elvington

Annex B: Extract from the petition being considered in this report.

Annex A Elvington Bus Service Timetables

Annex B Petition Details

ELVINGTON VILLAGE – GIVE US A DECENT BUS SERVICE

My daughter Lauren (Haynes) decided to start a petition within the village after speaking with other residents (300 + signatures) and coming to the conclusion that the services provided to the Village of Elvington are sadly lacking.

The basic requirements ACCEPTABLE for a bus service between Elvington / Wheldrake and York, should be one that enables the VILLAGE Residents, the ability to commute between the village and York EVERY day of the week.

The bus service should be available between Times of the day that give REASONABLE Access to the City of York and its Work Places & amenities and also give value for money.

DOES York close at 17:00hrs – It feels that way to most Villagers, Unless we DRIVE

Adults & Teenagers alike would like to have access to:-

DESIGNER OUTLET

MONKS CROSS – Shopping Centre & Swimming Pool

York City Centre

Another IMPORTANT concern also, is that the Students of Elvington & Wheldrake have a bus service in place that will enable them to attend **YORK** SIXTH FORM college. This should be considered a BASIC RIGHT for all VILLAGES paying TAXES to YORK CITY COUNCIL.

ELVINGTON VILLAGE – GIVE US A DECENT BUS SERVICE

Elvington / York Bus Service

The Bus Service currently provided is Totally ADHOC and unsuitable for MOST peoples practical USE

- 1) Workers ? No early morning Bus Tues (9:58am) / MWTF – 07:28 am.
Last Service YORK to Elvington 17:22pm – only 3 Days a Week
- 2) Latest Buses from Elvington to York - 12:01pm Mon & Thursday
13:01pm M,T,Thursday
13:30pm Sat
- 3) Latest Buses York to Elvington – 17:22pm M,T, Th
17:47pm Sat

Sunday Service - ALL Elvington AIR Museum – Approx 1 mile out of village.

This service should come into the centre of the village – ie ELDERLEY / PARENTS with Youngsters in Winter Conditions etc.

From the Bus Timetable it's obvious that if you actually get to York, getting back to Elvington is even trickier.

Please Support this in order to achieve a better public transport system for Evington!

Would you benefit from a bus service that runs from Evington to Monks-cross?

Do you find it difficult to get out of the village using public transport?	Name	Address	Day/s you're likely to use it
Yes	Suzanne Mackenzie	4 Riverside Grove Evington	Friday, Saturday
Yes	James Pater	10 Riverside Grove Evington	Saturday / Sun
Yes	Keith Ke	11 Riverside Grove	Saturday / Sunday
Yes	J. Pater	12 Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	R. Jones	25 Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	J. Fizzell	28 Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	L. Green	32 Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	Sharon Whalley	13 Riverside Grove	all day weekends
Yes	J. Whalley	1 Riverside Grove	all days
Yes	C. Whalley	1 Riverside Grove	all days !!
Yes	C. Whalley	2 Riverside Grove	all days
Yes	Mr. Whalley	1 Riverside Grove	All family days
Yes	Louise Gladwin	1 Riverside Grove Evington	Sat / Sun
Yes	Mr. Whalley	2 Riverside Grove	"
Yes	T. Hill	Hillgrove	"
Yes	Sally Firth	24 Riverside Grove Evington	Sat & Friday
Yes	Ann Doherty	1 Riverside Grove	Sat. & Sunday
Yes	Eric Clapham	1 Riverside Grove	Sunday, Sat, Sun
Yes	J. Whalley	4 Hillgrove	Sat & Friday
Yes	J. Whalley	1 Riverside Grove	Wed, Thu, Sat
Yes	J. Whalley	1 Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	H. K. L. L. L.	Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	V. Whalley	3 Riverside Grove	any day
Yes	O. Carter	1 Riverside Grove	any day