

From: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 20 September 2018

Subject: Big Conversation

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary:

To continue to provide sustainable rural bus services that potentially could improve rural access and be delivered at a lower cost, it is necessary to review, develop and test alternative delivery models.

An eight-week consultation finished on the 8 August 2018 where 2,335 submitted a response. During this period there was public engagement through 12 district meetings, 4 parish seminar meetings and 4 focus group sessions.

The next stage of the programme is to develop the options to share at the bus summit which is due to take place on the 30 October 2018.

Any subsequent pilots would be developed for implementation from June 2019.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In Kent, 97% of services are commercially provided. KCC has no regulatory power over these routes.
- 1.2 As the Local Transport Authority for Kent, KCC will consider funding bus services that are not provided commercially. KCC currently spends £7 million on these discretionary services across 126 routes throughout the county.
- 1.3 In May 2018, the Big Conversation programme was launched to understand and explore potential new models of delivery. The key aims of the programme are to shape what a transport model for rural services could look like and to seek views about how best to:
 - Improve rural accessibility for those without alternative means of travel

- Help tackle social isolation
- Improve the use of existing transport resources including Community Transport
- Contribute to increasing resilience and continuity of service delivery
- Potentially save money through innovative coordination and integration with partners
- Provide the “right transport solution for the right client need for the right price”

- 1.4 To understand the ‘art of the possible’, market engagement was conducted which saw a range of operators, (including commercial bus operators, taxi operators and community transport operators) meet separately with officers to discuss possible models.
- 1.5 The ideas identified with operators were incorporated into a public consultation which ran for 8 weeks from 13 June - 8 August 2018.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 The consultation sought to understand community views on three ideas: feeder services, bookable services and taxi-bus services. The consultation also engaged with those currently travelling with concessionary passes to identify whether they would be willing to contribute towards these services.
- 2.2 The consultation was supported by a series of meetings including:
- 12 public meetings, including one in each district, attended by 621 individuals
 - 4 parish seminars attended by over 100 parish councillors
 - 4 focus-group workshops attended by over 120 individuals recruited independently by Lake Market Research as a representative sample of the population
- 2.3 KCC received 2,355 responses to the consultation questionnaire. Lake Market Research has been commissioned to analyse and report upon the responses to the consultation which will feed into the development of proposals for pilot schemes. This report is due to be received the week commencing 17 September 2018.

3. Development of Pilots

- 3.1 Based on insights gathered throughout the consultation, potential pilots are currently being developed which cover all three of the proposed ideas. This insight includes engagement at the public/parish meetings and early feedback from Lake Market Research.

3.2 Once the consultation report has been analysed, each of the pilots will be evaluated, in consultation with Members, users and industry against the following:

- The need of the local area
- Current service levels
- Response to the consultation
- Cost and anticipated revenue
- Deliverability
- Risks and potential impacts

3.3 Following the pilot evaluation, these will be presented to Cabinet Member for shortlisting.

4. Bus Summit

4.1 The Bus summit will take place on the 30 October 2018 between 18:00 and 20:00. This event will be an invite only and expressions of interest can be made at bigconversation@kent.gov.uk.

4.2 This event will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transportation and Waste.

4.3 The agenda will include an overview of the consultation report that will be published in October 2018 and the proposed pilots will also be announced.

4.4 Following confirmation of the pilots, detailed development will take place prior to commencement of these from June 2019.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 No legal implications identified.

6. Equality Implications

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out prior to the start of the consultation which has been attached as Appendix A. Impacts have been identified with appropriate mitigations. The assessments will be updated for each option that is developed.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The consultation ran for 8 weeks and 2,355 responses have been received across members of the public, parish council and other interested parties.

7.2 Pilots are being developed during September and will be evaluated across six criteria. These will be proposed for approval through the appropriate governance framework.

7.3 Feedback from the consultation and proposed pilots will be announced at the Bus Summit on 30 October 2018.

7.4 Following the Bus Summit, pilots will be further developed for launch in Summer 2019.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the and comment on the report

9. Background Documents

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

10. Contact details

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