

By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Research Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)

To: Bus Transport Select Committee – 15 July 2016

Subject: Bus Transport Select Committee Topic Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To discuss and agree proposed Terms of Reference, Scope and general approach for the Review

1 Introduction

Bus services are key to providing a transport network that enables access employment, education, retail, leisure and health services in the county.

As the local transport authority for Kent, Kent County Council is responsible for promoting and improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area and for implementing local transport schemes that support these long-term objectives.

Although KCC does not directly influence the provision of commercial bus services, the local authority works closely with private bus operators to improve the quality of services and to ensure that the highway network is planned and managed effectively. For the last 30 years KCC has also subsidised a number of routes which, while not commercially viable, have been considered important to the needs of the communities and passengers they serve.

While KCC has endeavoured to protect these subsidies, significant budget pressures now require a careful consideration around the extent to which the local authority can afford to support local bus transport. This provides an opportunity for the Select Committee to examine the current delivery model of local bus transport, assess the extent to which KCC can afford to support this model, and explore alternative delivery models and their viability and effectiveness.

The timing of the review is appropriate; the recent Bus Services Bill offers a number of tools to help local authorities and bus operators unlock the potential of the bus industry to provide more efficient and effective services in the current economic climate to meet the needs of the county.

2 Committee Membership

The Select Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council:

Mr M Baldock (UKIP)

Mr A Bowles (Conservative)

Mr C Caller (Labour)

Mr I Chittenden (Liberal Democrat)

Mr M Harrison (Conservative)

Mr G Lymer (Conservative)

Mr B MacDowall (UKIP)

Mr A Marsh (Conservative)

Mrs J Whittle (Conservative)

3 Resource Implications

As stated in KCC's Constitution (Appendix 4, Part 4, Paragraph 4.21), the Select Committee should make explicit the likely resource implications of their proposals and have due regard to their affordability and deliverability, taking account of the resources available to the Council.

4 Draft Terms of Reference

1. To examine the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent.
2. To assess the extent to which KCC can prioritise support of the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent, while having due regard to the resource implications and the budget setting processes.
3. To explore whether alternative models of local bus transport delivery are available and, if so, to consider their viability and effectiveness.
4. To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill for bus transport in Kent.
5. For the Bus Transport Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

5 Draft Scope

The complexity of this topic and the tight timeframe of the review require a clear and focused approach. Possible key themes and aspects to be covered by the review are detailed below:

1. To examine the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent.
 - a. To explore the structure and operation of the current model of local bus transport in Kent.
 - b. To consider the roles and responsibilities of KCC, local bus operators and partner organisations in relation to the delivery of this transport model.
 - c. The focus of the review, as agreed by the Scrutiny Committee, is on bus transport and its public subsidy. It is therefore proposed to include a consideration of the Kent Young Person's Travel Pass but to exclude an investigation of the general issue of school transport on the grounds that this is a commissioned service and, as such, entails additional complexities and sits outside the review's remit.
2. To assess the extent to which KCC can prioritise support of the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent, while having due regard to the resource implications and the budget setting processes.
3. To explore whether alternative models of local bus transport delivery are available and, if so, to consider their viability and effectiveness.
 - a. To explore whether alternative delivery models of local bus transport are available, including an investigation of the role of Community Transport.
 - b. To consider the viability and effectiveness of any models identified.
4. To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill for bus transport in Kent.
 - a. To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill for bus transport in Kent.
 - b. To explore the opportunities that the Bus Services Bill offers to help local authorities and bus operators to provide more efficient and effective services in the current economic climate.
5. For the Bus Transport Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

6 Proposed Timetable (summary)

July 2016	Informal cross-party meeting for Committee to discuss the Terms of Reference of the review
July 2016	First meeting of Select Committee, to appoint the Chairman and to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference of the review
September 2016	Arrangements for hearing sessions, site visits, written evidence and other evidence gathering methods
October 2016	Hearings and possible visits
Early November 2016	Committee meets to identify key issues and to make recommendations
Mid November to mid December 2016	Report writing, production of first draft
Early January 2017	Committee discusses the first draft of the report and suggests amendments. Amendments carried out accordingly
Late January 2017	Select Committee share the draft report with Cabinet Member(s) and Corporate Director(s)
Mid February 2017	Select Committee to agree the final report
Mid February 2017	Report shared with relevant boards (by email)
Late February 2017	Despatch for Cabinet
Early March 2017	Report presented to Cabinet
8 March 2017	Despatch for County Council
16 March 2017	Report presented to County Council

7 General Approach

The review is proposed to include a short period of desk-based research. Oral and written evidence will be obtained during the course of the review. Site visits may also be organised.

8 Evidence Gathering – Hearings

It is proposed that a number of hearing sessions of 45 minutes each will take place in October 2016. Hearings will normally be open to the public unless there is a specific requirement to hold a closed session.

It is proposed that Members remain for 20-30 minutes after each set of interviews (normally no more than 3 in each set) to ensure that all views, key points and emerging recommendations are captured.

Details of suggested witnesses/organisations to invite to hearings are outlined below. Others may be suggested as the review progresses (written evidence may be requested from those who are unable to attend or cannot be included in the timetable).

- KCC officers from the **Public Transport team** (to provide an overview of the main issues, information, figures etc)
- **Mr Matthew Balfour**, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Kent County Council
- Representatives of local organisations and/or KCC officers involved in **community transport** (eg Kent Karrier, British Red Cross Transport Service, Compaid etc)
- Representatives of **bus operator companies** in Kent (eg Arriva, Stagecoach, NuVenture, Kent bus operator organisations that can represent the views of bus operators in Kent)
- Representatives of **senior citizens** using concessionary fares
- Representatives of particularly **vulnerable groups** of people using subsidised bus transport in Kent (eg people with disabilities)
- Representatives of **rural communities** in Kent
- Representatives of the **Department for Transport** (to talk about the recent Bus Services Bill and other related national policies and strategies)
- Representatives of the Department for Infrastructure of the States of **Jersey and HCT Group** (to discuss the Jersey model of bus transport and their experience of the franchising process)
- Representatives of **Transport for London** (to talk about their commissioning model)

- Representatives of **Cornwall Council** (to discuss their Devolution Deal and the associated new powers to franchise bus services)
- Representatives of **local authorities** that severely reduced or discontinued their subsidy for bus transport
- Representatives of **other organisations** that can contribute with information and evidence with regard to bus transport in Kent (eg Community Transport Association, Passenger Focus, Confederation of Passenger Transport)
- Representatives of Kent **District and Borough Councils** (to talk about Quality Bus Partnerships)
- **Academics, professionals, advisers** and other witnesses who can make relevant contributions
- **Other**

9 Site Visits

A number of site visits may be organised to provide Members with the opportunity to gain a better insight into particular issues with relevance to the review.

10 Project Risks

The tight timescale necessitates a focused approach. There is no opportunity for an extension given the period of purdah prior the local elections in May 2017.

Recommendations:

1. To agree the Terms of Reference and general approach to the review of Bus Transport

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