

By: Mr Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport  
Ms Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: County Council meeting – 16 March 2017

Subject: Select Committee: Bus Transport

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Summary: To comment on and endorse the report of the Select Committee on Bus Transport.

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## **1. Introduction**

Bus services are key to providing a transport network that enables access to 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, it does work 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 of the extent to which the 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 the viability and effectiveness of alternative models.

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

## 2. Select Committee

### 2.1 Membership

The Chairman of the Select Committee was Mr Alan Marsh (Conservative). Other members of the Committee were Mr Mike Baldock (UKIP), Mr Andrew Bowles (Conservative), Mr Colin Caller (Labour), Mr Ian Chittenden (Liberal Democrat), Mr Mike Harrison (Conservative), Mr Geoff Lymer (Conservative), Mr Brian MacDowall (UKIP) and Mrs Jenny Whittle (Conservative).

### 2.2 Terms of Reference

The agreed terms of reference were:

- To examine the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent.
- 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.
- To explore whether alternative models of local bus transport delivery are available and, if so, to consider their viability and effectiveness.
- To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill for bus transport in Kent.
- To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

### 2.3 Evidence

The Bus Transport Select Committee conducted its evidence gathering programme between September and November 2016. The Select Committee held nineteen hearings, from which it collected a wealth of information and evidence from a variety of sources, including:

- Kent residents
- Representatives of local bus operators
- National level organisations representing bus passengers' interests
- Consultants
- Other local authorities
- KCC officers.

Full details of all the oral evidence received by the Committee are available online. (<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=874&Year=0>)

This oral evidence was complemented by extensive written evidence and by one visit. Literature stemming from desktop research was also used to inform the review.

A list of the witnesses who provided oral and written evidence can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3. The Report**

The Select Committee approved its report at a formal meeting on 2 March 2017. The executive summary of the report is attached in Appendix 2. A copy of the full report is available online (please see the link below) or via the Select Committee Research Officer (details below).

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/67784/Bus-Transport-Select-Committee-Report.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/67784/Bus-Transport-Select-Committee-Report.pdf)

### **4. Next Steps**

The Cabinet Member will ask officers to produce an implementation plan to share with the Scrutiny Committee around June 2017. In the meantime, the Cabinet Member will take forward more immediate actions, such as writing to the Secretary of State for Transport regarding the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) and the Bus Services Bill.

### **5. Conclusion**

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport welcomes the report, applauds its pragmatism and would like to congratulate the Select Committee on completing this piece of work.

He would also like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee and the officers who supported it.

#### **5. Recommendations**

5.1 The Select Committee be thanked for its work and for producing a relevant and balanced document.

5.2 The witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the Select Committee be thanked.

5.3 County Council's comments on the report be noted and the report endorsed.

Select Committee Research Officer:

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### Evidence

#### Oral Evidence

The list includes a summary of the key topics discussed in each session.

#### Tuesday 27 September 2016

- **Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Kent County Council**
  - Legislation and regulations in relation to bus transport in the UK
  - Overview of the structure and operation of the current model of bus transport in Kent
  
- **Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Kent County Council**
  - KCC's main responsibilities in relation to the delivery of bus transport in Kent
  - Discussion of the main achievements and challenges associated with local bus services

#### Friday 30 September 2016

- **Philip Norwell, Managing Director, Stagecoach South East**
  - Overview of the structure and operations of Stagecoach in Kent
  - Roles and responsibilities of Stagecoach in relation to the delivery of bus transport in Kent
  - Key opportunities and challenges facing Stagecoach
  - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
  
- **Mike Bartram, Bus Policy Advisor, Transport Focus**
  - Bus passengers' priorities for bus service improvement
  - Extent of passengers' engagement in decisions about bus service delivery
  - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
  
- **James Coe, Policy and Public Affairs Executive, Community Transport Association**
  - Main issues and opportunities associated with the provision and delivery of community transport
  - Role of access, inclusion and social value in bus transport delivery models
  - The Bus Services Bill and community consultation

## Monday 10 October 2016

- **Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Kent County Council**
  - Main concessionary travel schemes supported by KCC
  - Criteria adopted by KCC to determine its bus services' support
- **Norman Kemp, Co-owner, Nu-Venture, and Chair of the Kent & Medway branch of the Confederation of Passenger Transport**
  - Overview of the structure and operations of Nu-Venture in Kent
  - Main challenges and opportunities faced by smaller bus operators in Kent
  - The effects of the Bus Services Bill on smaller bus operators
- **Anne Clark, Managing Director, MCL Transport Consultants**
  - Operation of KCC concessionary travel schemes
  - Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Claude Evele, Joseph Horsnell, Arpana Rai and Charlotte Swaine, Kent Youth County Council Transport Committee**
  - Key local bus transport issues from young persons' perspectives
  - Opportunities and challenges associated with the Kent Young Person's Travel Pass

## Tuesday 18 October 2016

- **Keith Harrison, Chief Executive of Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)**
  - Bus service provision in rural Kent
  - Main issues and opportunities associated with the provision and delivery of community transport in Kent
  - Main benefits and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill
- **Dai Powell, Chief Executive, and Julia Meek, Head of Business Development, HCT Group**
  - Outline of the HCT Group in terms of its operations and objectives
  - Account of the States of Jersey's model of bus transport and of HCT Group's experience of the franchising process
  - Main benefits and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill

- **Cllr Bernard Heyes, and Chris Miller, Parking, Highways and Transportation Manager, Ashford Borough Council**

- Outline of the structure and main operations of the Ashford Quality Bus Partnership
- Key achievements of the Partnership
- Key challenges facing the Partnership
- Views on the Bus Services Bill

## **Tuesday 25 October 2016**

- **Heath Williams, Regional Managing Director for Arriva Southern Counties**

- Overview of the structure and operations of Arriva in Kent
- Roles and responsibilities of Arriva in relation to the delivery of bus transport in Kent
- Key opportunities and challenges facing Arriva
- Main benefits and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill

- **Ruth Goudie, Senior Transportation Officer, Canterbury City Council**

- Outline of the structure and main operations of the Canterbury Quality Bus Partnership
- Key achievements of the Partnership
- Key challenges facing the Partnership
- Views on the Bus Services Bill

- **Stephen Joseph, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport**

- Bus passengers' priorities for bus service improvement
- Extent of passengers' engagement in decisions about bus service delivery
- Views on the opportunities and challenges associated with the Bus Services Bill

## **Friday 28 October 2016**

- **Stephen Elsdon, Chief Executive, Compaid, and Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager, Kent County Council**

- Outline of the main services provided by Kent Karrier and Compaid
- Extent of KCC's involvement in the operation and delivery of local community transport schemes
- Main issues and opportunities associated with the provision and delivery of local community transport
- Local community transport and information sharing

- **Diana Beamish, Jean Bentley, Brian Gasson, Frank McConnell and Veronica McGannon, Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum**
  - Importance of bus transport and concessionary bus travel schemes to senior Kent residents
  - Views on the current quality of local bus service provision
  - Extent to which current bus service provision meets the needs of Kent communities
  - Extent of Kent residents' engagement in decisions about local bus service delivery
  
- **Councillor David Burton, Maidstone Borough Council**
  - Outline of the structure and main operations of the Maidstone Quality Bus Partnership
  - Key achievements of the Partnership
  - Key challenges facing the Partnership
  - Views on the Bus Services Bill

### **Wednesday 2 November 2016**

- **Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager, and Dan Bruce, Infrastructure and Development Senior Officer, Kent County Council**
  - Session to discuss and clarify any final issues

### **Written Evidence**

- **Mike Bartram, Bus Policy Adviser, Transport Focus**
- **James Coe, Policy and Public Affairs Executive, Community Transport Association**
- **East Kent Seniors Forum**
- **Roland Eglington, Commercial Director, Chalkwell**
- **Stephen Elsdon, Chief Executive, Compaid**
- **Ruth Goudie, Senior Transportation Officer, Canterbury City Council**
- **Keith Harrison, Chief Executive of Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)**

- **Cllr Bernard Heyes, Ashford Borough Council**
- **Norman Kemp, Co-owner, Nu-Venture, and Chair of the Kent & Medway branch of the Confederation of Passenger Transport**
- **Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) Transport Committee**
- **Julia Meek, Head of Business Development, HCT Group**
- **Philip Norwell, Managing Director, Stagecoach South East**
- **Oxfordshire County Council**
- **Public Transport division, Kent County Council**
- **Senior Citizens Forum for the Towns and Villages of Dover District**
- **Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum**
- **States of Jersey**
- **Swale Seniors Forum**
- **Tunbridge Wells Over Fifties Forum**

## **Visits**

**Friday 28 October 2016**

- **Stagecoach, newly built bus depot, Herne Bay**



## Appendix 2

### 1. Executive Summary

#### 1.1. Committee Membership

1.1.1. The Committee consists of nine elected Members of Kent County Council (KCC): five members of the Conservative Party, two members of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), one member of the Labour Party and one member of the Liberal Democrat Party.



Mr Mike Baldock

UKIP

Swale West



Mr Andrew Bowles

Conservative

Swale East



Mr Colin Caller

Labour

Gravesham East



Mr Ian Chittenden

Liberal Democrat

Maidstone North East



Mr Mike Harrison

Conservative

Whitstable



Mr Geoff Lymer

Conservative

Dover West



Mr Brian MacDowall

UKIP

Herne Bay



Mr Alan Marsh

Conservative (Chair)

Herne and Sturry



Mrs Jenny Whittle

Conservative

Maidstone Rural East

## **1.2. Scene Setting**

- 1.2.1. Bus services are key to providing a transport network that enables access to 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.
- 1.2.2. Although KCC does not directly influence the provision of commercial bus services, it does work 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.
- 1.2.3. While KCC has endeavoured to protect these subsidies, significant budget pressures now require a careful consideration of the extent to which the 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 the viability and effectiveness of alternative models.
- 1.2.4. The timing of the review is appropriate; the recent Bus Services Bill offers a number of tools to help local authorities and bus operators to unlock the potential of the bus industry to provide more efficient and effective services that meet the needs of the county.

### **1.3. Terms of Reference**

- 1.3.1. To examine the current delivery model of local bus transport in Kent.
- 1.3.2. 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.
- 1.3.3. To explore whether alternative models of local bus transport delivery are available and, if so, to consider their viability and effectiveness.
- 1.3.4. To consider the implications of the recent Bus Services Bill for bus transport in Kent.
- 1.3.5. To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

## 1.4. Scope

1.4.1. The complexity of this topic and the tight timetable for the review required a clear and focused approach. Key themes and aspects 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 was therefore agreed 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 that are 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.
  - a. 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. To make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

## **1.5. Recommendations**

The recommendations are listed in priority order.

### **Recommendation 16**

The Select Committee endorses the Bus Services Bill and strongly supports the franchising model of bus transport in particular. The Committee recommends a full investigation into the adoption, in Kent, of the most appropriate elements of the Bill. The adoption of any element of the Bill in Kent should reflect the features highlighted by the Committee.

### **Recommendation 17**

The Committee believes that the Bus Services Bill should extend franchising powers to all local authorities in England and Wales and should allow the formation of municipal bus companies. The Committee recommends that KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport writes to the Secretary of State for Transport expressing these views.

### **Recommendation 1**

Kent County Council should appoint a "bus panel", composed of a number of KCC Members, to review the current method of prioritising subsidisation of socially necessary bus routes, to make sure that it reflects the current needs of local communities more accurately.

### **Recommendation 2**

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should write to the Secretary of State for Transport asking for a review of the calculation of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) funding to ensure that it is sufficient to cover the cost of the scheme in Kent.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Select Committee urges KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport to protect the discretionary element of the ENCTS scheme offered by KCC.

### **Recommendation 4**

KCC's Public Transport division should work with bus operators to assess the viability of introducing the opportunity of upgrading the Young Person's Travel Pass to include bus travel during evenings, weekends and holidays.

### **Recommendation 5**

**KCC should:**

- **Promote the establishment of a number of bus transport forums. The remit of these forums should be to discuss local bus transport-related issues and to identify possible solutions, which are then referred to Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) through formal communication channels.**
- **Ensure that at least one Kent County councillor is a member of each QBP, and that their attendance is formalised.**
- **Encourage all Kent QBPs to include all bus operators in their areas.**
- **Encourage all Kent QBPs to brief their respective Joint Transportation Boards on a regular basis on bus transport-related priorities, measures for intervention and achievements.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**KCC's Public Transport division should examine demand management measures, where feasible and appropriate, to ease traffic congestion and promote bus patronage in Kent.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**KCC's Highways division should ensure clear lines of communication with bus operators to give them timely notification of roadworks and coordinate such programmes to minimise disruption to bus services. The Division should also investigate the feasibility of increasing the size of fines and using the income from utility companies that overrun roadworks programmes to improve the range of community bus provision for Kent residents.**

### **Recommendation 8**

**KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should lobby the Government, Network Rail and Train Operating Companies to include improved connectivity between bus and rail services in Kent as a key element of South Eastern's new franchise agreement in 2018.**

### **Recommendation 9**

**KCC's Public Transport division should:**

- **Seek greater financial contributions from local bus operators and businesses towards the provision and maintenance of local bus infrastructure.**

- Encourage Kent districts to make greater use of the Community Infrastructure Levy to finance local bus infrastructure schemes.

#### **Recommendation 10**

KCC's Public Transport division should strongly encourage local bus operators to:

- Extend the range of their discounted fares, particularly for those on lower incomes.
- Expand their network coverage and service frequency, especially in rural areas, to better meet the needs of local communities.

#### **Recommendation 11**

KCC's Public Transport division should identify and subsidise a number of bus services that would better serve selected rural communities and give them access to their nearest main towns on selected days.

#### **Recommendation 12**

KCC's Public Transport division should urge local bus operators to increase the deployment of smaller buses, particularly in congested Kent localities. In the case of KCC tendered services, the appropriate bus size should be specified within the commissioning process.

#### **Recommendation 13**

KCC's Public Transport division should make available an approved driving course to train a number of bus drivers to be employed by smaller bus operators in Kent.

#### **Recommendation 14**

KCC's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport should reiterate to Arriva and Stagecoach the importance of the Connected Kent and Medway smartcard and should urge these companies to participate in the scheme.

#### **Recommendation 15**

KCC's Public Transport division should investigate:

- Extending coverage of Community Transport operations in the County.
  - Acting as a single point of information for all local transport provision and developing a database which holds up-to-date information on all community transport schemes in the County.
-