

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

19 January 2021

Executive Response to the Final Report of the Youth Transport Task Group

Purpose of the report

1. To present the response of the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, the Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets and the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills to the Final Report of the Youth Transport Task Group.

Background

2. The committee received the [task group's final report](#) on 10 March 2020. Due to the overview and scrutiny arrangements under Covid-19, this is the first meeting of the committee when the executive response could be considered.

Executive response to the Task Group's recommendations

Recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Recommendation No.1	Ensure that some capacity is retained in the Passenger Transport Unit to deliver effective advertising and promoting of the services on offer and travel options available to young people in Wiltshire, including Connecting Wiltshire.
Reason for recommendation	This would ensure that young people are better aware of the options available to them for traveling in and around the county.
Cabinet member	Cllr Bridget Wayman Lead Officer Jason Salter
Executive response 08/02/21 ACCEPTED	<p>The Government's National Bus Strategy is expected to be published at the end of this month, and we expect the main focus of this will be partnership working between local authorities and bus operators. We see publicity and promotion as a vital part of any partnership and will use the combined resources of Wiltshire Council's Communication Team and the marketing departments of the commercial bus operators.</p> <p>The promotion of the entire network, irrespective of bus company, will be a major part of this, as will advertising targeted at specific market segments. The Task Group has identified areas where young people lack knowledge of</p>

	<p>services available to them, which will allow us to prioritise promotion in this area and to the younger age group.</p> <p>A Corporate decision was taken in 2020 to hold all vacancies across the Council to support meeting the budget targets set. The budget set for 2021/22 takes a proportion of these vacancies as savings. This has resulted in the Passenger Transport Unit not having been allocated budget for a marketing role.</p>
Action	Success criteria
To report back to Children's Select once the contents of the National Bus Strategy have been fully understood.	N/A

Recommendation No.2	Ensure that all bus services contracted by the council have contactless pay facilities by April 2021.		
Reason for recommendation	This would ensure that young people using contactless (which seems to be a preferred choice for parents and carers) can use buses across the county.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Bridget Wayman	Lead Officer	Jason Salter
Executive response 08/02/21 ACCEPTED	<p>All commercial bus services in Wiltshire now offer contactless payments, meaning that about 84% of all buses in Wiltshire now offer the facility. Because the commercial bus services carry more passengers per journey, we estimate that 95% of bus passengers in Wiltshire make their journey on a bus which offers contactless payments.</p> <p>There are, however, still buses running in Wiltshire which do not offer contactless payments. Unfortunately, both the on-bus machines and the back-office processing bring additional costs to the operation and, as passenger numbers are low on these routes, this becomes a significant extra cost per passenger, and ultimately a cost Wiltshire Council has to find from its budget. At the same time, with successive lockdowns and low demand in the periods between, bus companies are only surviving because of the Covid Bus Service Support Grant paid by government, which has, understandably, no provision for investment in new equipment.</p> <p>It will be a requirement of future tender rounds that contractors offer contactless payments, in line with our Procurement timetable.</p>		
Action	Success criteria		
All supported bus services will be contactless when re tendered	N/A		
Target date	Implementation date		
01/04/2023	01/04/2023		

<p>Recommendation No.3</p>	<p>Consider, as part of the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan update, developing a “Bus Strategy” outlining the blue print for future bus provision across the county, which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. specific reference to provision for young people (linking to the unmet needs identified); b. a consultation of all key stakeholders; c. any developments linked to the Open Data Scheme. <p>This could also offer an opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. review post-16 education transport to ensure it benefits as many young people as possible; b. explore developing (or supporting the development of) schemes like Seed 4 Success, should funding be available. 		
<p>Reason for recommendation</p>	<p>This would ensure that the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan and “Bus Strategy” reflects that consideration is given to the needs of young people.</p>		
<p>Cabinet member</p>	<p>Cllr Bridget Wayman</p>	<p>Lead Officer</p>	<p>Jason Salter</p>
<p>Executive response</p> <p>08/02/21</p> <p>ACCEPTED</p>	<p>Buses and Public Transport are already considered in each Wiltshire Local Transport Plan, and the unmet needs identified by the Task Group will feed into that.</p> <p>We are anticipating that the Government’s much awaited National Bus Strategy, published at the end of this month, will heavily influence our future direction in the coming years. Whilst we don’t know yet what form the National Bus Strategy will take, we will consider the needs of young people when implementing the Strategy.</p> <p>The Covid pandemic has seen a significant drop in passenger numbers, not only during the lockdowns (when ridership was a low as 10% of normal on some routes) but also in the less constrained times between lockdowns. Bus companies are only surviving because of the Covid Bus Service Support Grant paid by Government to make up for the lost fares. At the moment it is very difficult for anyone to forecast the demand for bus services, and the shape of that demand, when things get back to near normality. In turn that defines which bus services can run commercially and which will need financial support to continue running. These considerations will influence what we can set out to achieve in the Local Transport Plan, or any wider partnership agreement.</p> <p>The Post-16 Scheme is regularly analysed. That analysis has found that whilst up-take has declined considerably over recent years, largely because the commercial bus operators are now aware of the potential of the post-16 travel market and have introduced their own initiatives to attract these passengers. The commercial bus companies can choose to extend their offer to include travel at other times of day, at weekends or during school/college holidays or over their wider network, all offers which the Council’s present Post-16</p>		

	<p>Scheme has no remit to cover. The Post-16 Scheme budget is spent on providing access to the scheme for low income families at a considerably reduced rate. Post 16 transport is however discretionary and will at some point need to be reviewed to determine its continuation.</p> <p>Community initiatives such as Seeds 4 Success will always be supported where funding permits and Wiltshire Council will work with Community First, who have oversight of Community Transport in Wiltshire, to determine areas where similar schemes might be introduced.</p>
Action	Success criteria
To report back to Children's Select once the contents of the National Bus Strategy have been fully understood.	N/A
Target date - May 2020	

Recommendation No.4	<p>Ensure that the following information is provided to the Environment Select Committee in a timely fashion:</p> <p>a. Developments to the partnership options available under the Bus Services Act 2017;</p> <p>b. The outcome of the "young person test" on the bids submitted for central government funding;</p> <p>c. The outcome of the bids submitted for central government funding;</p> <p>d. Update on demand-responsive transport initiatives nationally and potential application in Wiltshire.</p>		
Reason for recommendation	For scrutiny's focus to remain on developments to public transport in Wiltshire.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Bridget Wayman	Lead Officer	Jason Salter
Executive response 08/02/21 ACCEPTED	<p>We expect that the National Bus Strategy will build on the provisions of the Bus Services Act 2017, especially the various forms of partnership which have so far seen little uptake. Until the Strategy is published, we cannot make any comment on how (or if) Partnerships may be applicable to Wiltshire.</p> <p>Once the content of the Strategy is known we will work towards an outline plan for Wiltshire, which will be communicated to the relevant Committees for comment and suggestion. We anticipate that we will also have to go through the same process with the commercial bus operators. Our response to the Strategy will include a "young person test" before we implement any outcomes.</p> <p>Wiltshire's application to the Rural Mobility Fund to enhance, on an experimental basis, the bus services in the Vale of Pewsey, passed the initial tests and has proceeded to the second phase. We have just completed the secondary data submission phase (8th February) and await the outcome of this, as do all the schemes selected nationally. If the bid is</p>		

	<p>successful, the design of the enhanced service will be strongly influenced by a Demand Responsive Transport Board. Youth representation on that Board will be essential, and we welcome suggestions as to how we can best meet that aim.</p> <p>The various experimental schemes enabled by the Rural Mobility Fund will better inform future options for Demand Responsive Transport. However, this funding is allocated for four years and any outcome will not be known for, probably, five years.</p>
Action	Success criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As specified in the Executive response above To report back to Children's Select once the contents of the National Bus Strategy have been fully understood 	N/A
Target date - May 2020	

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member for ICT, Digitalisation, Operational Assets, Leisure and Libraries

Recommendation No.5	Consider exploring the development of a single "Wiltshire Youth Card" (as described in paragraph 51 of the report).		
Reason for recommendation	This could simplify access to services for young people.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling	Lead Officer	Ian Robinson
Executive response 08/02/21 ACCEPTED	Any "Wiltshire Youth Card" would need to be a corporate project and funded accordingly. The Passenger Transport Unit would support its implementation, but if used purely as a proof-of-age card, a simple "flash card" so long as the holder's ID and the expiry date can be easily seen, would work perfectly well without the complications of being electronically read across multiple bus ticket machine types.		
Action	Success criteria		
As specified in Executive response above	N/A		
Target date			
As required by Cllr Blair-Pilling			

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills

Recommendation No.6	Note this report and recommendations within it.		
Cabinet member	Cllr Laura Mayes	Lead Officer	Jason Salter
Executive response 08/02/2021 ACCEPTED	To agree that the reports and its recommendations are noted and that any implications arising from the National Bus Strategy that are relevant are report back to the Children's Select Committee at the appropriate time		
Action			Success criteria
N/A			N/A
Target date			
May 2021			

Proposal

3. To note the executive response to the Final Report of the **Youth Transport Task Group**.

Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste
Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for ICT, Digitalisation, Operational Assets, Leisure and Libraries
Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

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