

# Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 September 2019

## Public Transport in Warwickshire – Bus Services

### Recommendation

That the Committee considers the options in the report and how these may be applied to Public Transport strategy development.

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At their last meeting the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Chair and Group Spokespersons requested that a report be brought to the Committee outlining the use of s106 funding to support bus routes, the role of transport planning and changes resulting from the Bus Services Act 2017.

### 2.0 S106 funded bus services

- 2.1 s106 funding, included as part of planning applications for housing, is used to augment the Council's spend on bus services in the specific area of development. They are a very important element in 'pump-priming' bus services with the intention of stimulating usage so that at the end of the funding there are sufficient passengers to warrant the commercial operation of the route. Warwickshire County Council is fully engaged with negotiations with scheme developers to ensure sufficient funding is included for the level of service required:-

- Schemes have an allocated, time-limited funding to provide or improve bus services for the access and connectivity of each development. This may take the form of a completely new service if non currently exists, or increases in frequency to existing route/services.
- Funding can be provided through these agreements to provide home to school services where it will be necessary to transport children to schools that meet entitlement criteria.
- The Council currently supports 10 schemes across the county using £1,183k of s106 funding annually (Appendix A).
- The negotiations to provide funding in the agreement is undertaken by Transport Planning/Planning in consultation with transport operations, who provide information on the frequency and type of operation required and the cost of this provision.

### **3.0 The Role of Transport Planning**

- 3.1 There is a requirement upon the County Council to formulate policies to secure and manage passenger transport services that cannot be delivered commercially. It is also required to coordinate and publicise the passenger transport network across the County.
- 3.2 The County Council has a Revenue Support Criteria to determine an equitable distribution of financial support towards socially necessary local bus services. This ranks communities by population, weighted by car ownership levels and determines minimum service frequencies required. The County Council has a core Passenger Transport Revenue Support Budget and additional financial support is available through Section 106 developer funding and a direct grant from Central Government known as Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) to cover duty on fuel costs. Bus services provided by this funding enables people to access a range of health, educational, training, shopping and leisure services which would not otherwise be possible. Services are secured through a robust tendering process specifying routes and timetables.
- 3.3 There is an ongoing need to adopt a coordinated and collaborative approach to all aspects of passenger, community and voluntary, home to school and specialist transport. This has been Warwickshire's approach for several years and ensures maximum service and vehicle capacity to secure the most efficient and cost effective network.
- 3.4 As well as the urban and local centres, there are a number of major centres, both in and outside Warwickshire that are well served by the bus network. These include University Hospital Coventry, Warwick Hospital, George Eliot Hospital, Alexandra Hospital, Birmingham International Airport and Rail Station, National Exhibition Centre and Warwick and Coventry Universities.
- 3.5 In recent years there have also been a number of additional services introduced to carry passengers from urban areas to large scale employment sites. Services operate throughout the day and night to correspond with key shift patterns. Examples include Birch Coppice and DIRFT.

### **4.0 Bus Services Act 2017**

- 4.1 The Act seeks to improve bus services for passengers by providing local authorities and operators with a new toolkit to enable improvements to be made, in particular:-
  - Strengthened arrangements for partnership working between operators and local authorities, introducing Advanced Quality and Enhanced Partnership schemes;
  - Modernised ticketing legislation;

- Necessary changes to information available to passengers through audio and visual on-board information and the provision of open data on timetable, fares and bus service arrival times
- 4.2 Recent activity is centred around the provision of open data for the use of passengers and a 'readiness assessment' is currently being undertaken by the DfT to better understand the current system capabilities and digital maturity across bus operators and local authorities.
- 4.3 The intention is to encourage partnerships between operators and local authorities to improve services. This will result in more frequent journeys with increased access to services and at better value.
- 4.4 The Act seeks to encourage partnerships, with both sides expected to contribute. The local authority's side of this bargain is likely to involve providing bus-related facilities; stops, shelters and bus stations, and taking measures that encourage bus patronage. Such measures may include:-
- parking policies that encourage the use of public transport;
  - traffic management policies that prioritise buses; and
  - advertising and marketing campaigns to promote the use of local bus services.

## Appendices

### Appendix A - Current s106 Warwickshire County Council supported schemes

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