

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	Response to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group Report on Subsidised bus routes and through ticketing
Committee:	Cabinet
Date:	12 February 2012
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Coker
CMT Member:	Anthony Payne (Director for Place)
Author:	Andy Sharp (Public Transport Controller)
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Ref:	AS/12/12
Key Decision:	No
Part:	I

Purpose of the report:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board set up a Task and Finish Group to carry out a review into subsidised bus routes and through ticketing. The review was undertaken on four separate occasions throughout October, November and December 2012.

This report is to advise Cabinet on each of the recommendations which came from this review.

Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015:

Deliver growth – effective public transport provision is an enabler for growth, and improved ticketing may open up new opportunities for employment.

Reduce inequalities – there is a clear link between this objective and the delivery of subsidised bus routes.

Provide value for communities – the panel assessed whether the Council and communities are receiving best value for money through existing provision of subsidised services, and made specific recommendations to improve this.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:

The recommendations as presented in this report do not pose any financial impact to existing budgets as they largely rely on existing Council work programmes or delivery from third parties. However, in the instance of introducing multi operating tickets the Council may decide they wish to consider financially contributing in order to make this happen. If this is the case a follow up report could be provided to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Additional recommendation 4 (AR4) highlights that any future payment of Bus Service Operator's Grant from the Department for Transport directly to the Council instead of bus companies should be ring fenced to avoid a reduction in bus services.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

N/A

Equality and Diversity:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

Cabinet is recommended to agree all the scrutiny recommendations with the exception of Through Ticketing Recommendation 3 whereby an amendment is proposed to the implementation date, moving it from March 2013 to March 2014.

Reason:

All the recommendations will help enhance the public transport service in the city.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Not responding to the conclusions of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would mean that the evidence identified through the review would be ignored resulting in a missed opportunity to deliver improvements.

Published work / information:

Subsidised bus routes and through ticketing: A report of the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel – Task and Finish Group. December 2012 (this report is also published with this Cabinet agenda and is referred to in a separate item on the agenda).

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	PC. Plac eF TC1 213 005. 1401 13	Leg	JAR/ 1661 9	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Assets	N/ A	IT	N/A	Strat Proc	N/A
Originating SMT Member Clive Perkin													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes													

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel decided to hold a review into subsidised bus routes and through ticketing in September 2012. The scope of the review examined the City's existing bus network; the then proposed changes by Plymouth Citybus; the Council's current subsidised bus route and the processes by which they are provided; and the opportunities for introducing through ticketing between different bus services.

1.2 Throughout October and November the panel had the opportunity to hear from a range of witnesses including members of the Youth Cabinet, the Senior Citizens Forum, local bus passenger representative body TravelWatch South West, the city's main bus operators and Council officers. The findings and recommendations were set out in a report which was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 12 December 2012.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet on each of the recommendations arising from this review. Each recommendation will be shown in turn followed by an appraisal of it in terms of how deliverable it is and any issues or risks that may arise.

2.0 Responses to Recommendations

2.1 The recommended responses to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's recommendations are outlined below. There were fourteen recommendations which are presented under the following headings:

- Four Through Ticketing Recommendations (TTR)
- Two Subsidised Services Recommendations (SSR)
- Eight Additional Recommendations (AR)

Please be aware that a number of the recommendations rely on the Council's ability to influence third parties, mainly the city's bus operators.

2.2 Through Ticketing Recommendations (TTR)

TTR 1 Through Ticketing Recommendation 1

The Sustainable Transport Team, in partnership with the Economic Development and all city bus operators, actively encourage an increased level of employers to participate in the Plymouth Green Travel Pass Scheme (GTPS) to increase the number of patrons travelling on Plymouth's network using a GTPS. In addition the Planning Department are encouraged to give a stronger emphasis to employers on the GTPS when applications are received from major employers. The increase in patronage is to be undertaken with all bus operators signing up to a commitment to aspire to deliver a universally available multi-operator ticket in the future.

Response to TTRI - Accept.

Although, as noted through the scrutiny process there was very little appetite from the bus operators to expand the scheme further and offer a universally available multi-operator ticket for the city. However, officers will continue to pursue and seek external funding opportunities to help kick start the trial of such tickets. As identified under the Finance section of the report outline the Council may wish to offer financial resources to deliver a universally available multi operator ticket, if so officers could report directly to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

TTR 2 Through Ticketing Recommendation 2

The GTPS should be subject to a nil price increase in 2013; however, if bus operators consider a price increase is necessary for the continued delivery of the GTPS then the level of increase should be no higher than the Retail Price Increase (RPI) at that time.

Response to TTR 2 - Noted

This proposal has been given to the bus companies explaining the importance of the scheme to the Council and the strong desire to minimise further reductions in pass-holder numbers. Cabinet should be aware that legislation states that the bus operators have to set fares for this type of multi operator ticket, and so the outcome of this recommendation rests entirely with them.

TTR 3 Through Ticketing Recommendation 3

Plymouth City Council aspires to deliver a thriving growth centre by creating conditions for investment in quality homes, jobs and infrastructure and asks all operators to commit to this vision by adopting a technological platform that ensures the investment and incorporating of ITSO compliant ticket machines on all buses by the end of the financial year 2012 – 2013.

Response to TTR3 – Accept subject to amendment

Since the completion of the scrutiny process the final bus operator in the City to adopt this technical platform for ticketing, First Devon and Cornwall, has advised that it will not be able to meet this deadline. The bus operator will not commit to rolling them out before March 2014. Therefore it is proposed that the implantation date for the recommendation is changed to reflect the bus operator's commitment.

TTR 4 Through Ticketing Recommendation 4

In order to encourage the increased use of smart tickets and the benefits of smart technology are achieved all bus operators are encouraged to commit to offering incentives to users of smart tickets, subject to the influence of market services and companies profitability.

Response to TTR4 - Noted

Bus operators will be encouraged to do this learning from best practice elsewhere although it should be noted that they will make the ultimate decision.

2.3 Subsidised Services Recommendations (SSR)

SSR 1 Subsidised Services Recommendation 1

In order to deliver a more stable subsidised bus network tendered services will generally be offered contracts of 3 years with an option to extend for a further two years and all will be subject to a 120 day notice period (an increase on the current 56 day statutory clause).

Response to SSR1 - Accept

The extension to the notice period can be implemented immediately for any new contracts, there will be a negligible impact on finances and the reduction in the Council's flexibility is counter balanced by the additional certainty given to both bus operators and passengers.

In terms of contract periods it is recommended this becomes the norm for general purposes but extraordinary contracts may necessitate shorter or longer terms.

SSR 2 Subsidised Services Recommendation 2

The Sustainable Transport Team is asked to provide greater levels of detail in the tendering process for all subsidised services in order to provide more clarity for bidders about how the council will be scoring the process.

Response to SSR 2 - Accept.

2.4 Additional Recommendations (AR)

AR 1 Additional Recommendation 1

To deliver a fair and equal bus network all bus operators are asked to provide a young persons' bus ticket in the city to anyone 18 and under (up to their 19th birthday) or up to their 23rd birthday if still in full-time education, as raised by the representatives of the Youth Cabinet.

Response to AR1 - Noted

This recommendation relies on the Council's influence and the willingness of the bus operators to undertake it. Plymouth Citybus already offer this charging regime for young people and there is a risk that other bus companies will only provide it at the cost of increasing other fares.

AR 2 Additional Recommendation 2

To provide a more open and customer friendly service all bus operators are encouraged to develop a way that provides an easily identifiable contact number for bus patrons to provide comments and suggestions.

Response to AR2 - Noted

Operators will be asked to review what information they display and how it is presented.

AR 3 Additional Recommendation (AR) 3

The Sustainable Transport Team, are to investigate Oxford City Council's experiences, challenges and successes in developing the public transport system that is currently operated in the city, to establish whether a similar system could be implemented in Plymouth, as per the recommendation in Ray Bentley's report (included as Appendix D).

Response to AR3 – Accept.

Visit to be arranged for early in 2013 to include the Cabinet Member for Transport. It is proposed that the recommendation is slightly reworded to remove 'Ray Bentley' and replace with 'TravelWatch South West'.

AR 4 Additional Recommendation (AR) 4

Following the expected devolution of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) funding from Operators to Local Authorities in respect of subsidised services the recommendation is made to permanently ring fence this funding towards the provision of subsidised bus services.

Response to AR4 - Accept

The current BSOG claim for the Council's subsidised bus services is approximately £95,000 per annum. It is unclear at this stage what the amount of funding from the Department for Transport will be and how it will be apportioned to the Council. If this funding is not ring fenced or is insufficient to cover the costs of operating the services there will be a reduction in bus services.

AR 5 Additional Recommendation 5

Sustainable Transport Officers are requested to notify the relevant ward members when the continuation of an individual subsidised bus services becomes at risk.

Response to AR5 – Accept.

A process will be devised to ensure this happens.

AR 6 Additional Recommendation 6

The Sustainable Transport Team will investigate initiating a pilot hail and ride project in Devonport, as proposed by the Senior Citizen's Forum.

Response to AR6 – Accept.

The trial will be undertaken along Prospect Road and Clarence Street on the service 14.

AR 7 Additional Recommendation 7

Sustainable Transport Officers continue to incentivise the bus operators to increase passenger numbers by offering net contracts for subsidised bus services as opposed to gross, where possible and suitable.

Response to AR7 – Accept.

AR 8 Additional Recommendation 8

The Council are encouraged to seek the support of local MPs to encourage them to make representation to the Secretary of State for Transport on the current financial pressures facing the bus industry and the knock on effect to passengers. These pressures are compounded by a reduction and changes to Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG), general fuel cost increases, inflation and uncertainties over concessionary travel reimbursement rates.

Response to AR8 - Accept.

The Cabinet Member for Transport in liaison with Council officers will write to all local MPs to gain support to make representation to the Secretary of State on this issue.