

**REPORT TO:** Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 25 November 2009

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Environment

**SUBJECT:** Receipt of Petition - Level of Public Transport Provision on Halton Road

**WARDS:** Halton Brook

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Board of a petition that has been received from the residents of Halton Road and surrounding areas regarding the levels of public transport operating via Halton Road.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) Support be given to extend the 52 bus service so that the last journey departing from Runcorn High Street will be 18.10 (Monday to Saturday), for a period of 6 months to enable an assessment to be made of the benefits;**
  - (2) Following an assessment of the benefits of the extended service, the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation & Logistics) in consultation with the Executive Board Member Planning, Transportation, Regeneration & Renewal makes a decision on whether to continue to operate the extension to the service; and**
  - (3) Organisers of the petition be advised of this decision.**
- 3.1 A petition was received on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2009, signed by 106 residents, (See Appendix 1), requesting that the Council look again at improving the bus service along Halton Road, since the last review and decision not to continue subsidising the service. The basis of the petitioners' concerns is that they feel excluded from using the facilities in Runcorn Town Centre, including the new street market trading each Tuesday.
- 3.2 Appendix 2 provides details of the timetable for the currently operating 52 bus service. This service operates Monday-Friday inclusive. It can be seen from the timetable that the first bus leaves Runcorn High Street at 09:20 and that the last journey departs at 14:10, which limits the scope for journeys to be made from the town

centre. The inbound journey from Beechwood, stops at the Halfway House, Halton Road at 10:04, with the last stop at 14:54

- 3.3 Unfortunately, there are no direct commercial alternative bus services operating via Halton Road to help address this issue. The nearest service is the 3A/3C and this would require a walk of approximately 700 metres from the junction of Halton Rd and Sea Lane to Halton Brook Avenue. This distance can be compared to the distance recommended for the location of bus stops for new developments, which is approximately every 400m.
- 3.4 Service 52 is subsidised by the Council and is operated under a local bus contract agreement by Anthonys Travel. The cost of the contract currently stands at £20,840 per annum and is subsidised due to there being no alternative commercial service operating via Halton Rd.
- 3.5 It is estimated that the cost of extending the 52 service on a Monday to Saturday daytime to 18:10hrs would be in the region of £14,000/year, which would have to be funded from the Council's 'Bus Support' allocation. This allocation is used to provide socially necessary services, which cannot be operated on a commercial basis.
- 3.6 It is recognised that the existing service does not adequately meet the needs of residents in providing access to Runcorn Town Centre. However, there is considerable pressure on the Council's 'Bus Support' allocation, due to the level of demand and increases in costs of contracts. It is therefore proposed that the 52 service be extended on the current levels of frequency so that the last journey operating from Beechwood to Runcorn High Street will be 17:31hrs and the last journey departing from Runcorn High Street and terminating at Halton Lea will be 18:10 (Monday to Saturday), for a period of 6 months to enable an assessment to be made of the benefits.
- 3.7 It is further proposed at the end of this 6 month trial period that the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics), in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration & Renewal, evaluates the assessment of costs and benefits and makes a decision on whether to continue with the extension of the service, based on passenger numbers and availability of funding.
- 3.8 Finally, it is proposed that the organisers of the petition be informed of the proposed course of action.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific policy implications resulting from this report.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 **Resource Implications:** The approximate cost of providing the proposed extension to the 52 service would be in the region of £7,000 for a period of 6 months.
- 5.2 **Social Inclusion Implications:** The proposals contained within the report would help to reduce social exclusion by increasing the accessibility of Runcorn Town Centre.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** – There are no direct implications resulting from this report.
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills** - There are no direct implications resulting from this report.
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton** - There are no direct implications resulting from this report.
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton** - There are no direct implications resulting from this report.
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** - The proposed extension to the 52 bus service will increase the accessibility of Runcorn Town Centre.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 The risk of undertaking the trial extension to the 52 bus service is that there could be an expectation of the trial becoming permanent.
- 7.2 The risks of not undertaking the trial extension to the 52 bus service are that accessibility to Runcorn Town Centre could be compromised and complaints could continue to be made.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 The extension to the 52 bus service will increase accessibility for all sections of the community to Runcorn Town Centre.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

- 9.1 None