

REPORT TO: Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 29th June 2016

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

SUBJECT: Halton Public Transport Advisory Panel – Municipal Year 2016/17.

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight to the Board the public attendance record of meetings of the Council's Public Transport Advisory Panel in recent years and to seek the Board's endorsement to meetings of the Panel being suspended until further notice, in light also of the demands on diminishing Council resources. The report also highlights key issues discussed/raised by the Panel when it met during 2015/16.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) The Board endorses the proposal to suspend future meetings of the Public Transport Advisory Panel until further notice; and**
- 2) The key issues discussed by the Panel during the Municipal Year 2015/16, as set out in Appendix One of the Report, are noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Historically, at the start of each Municipal Year, a Chair and three other Members have been nominated to attend meetings of the Halton Public Transport Advisory Panel.

3.2 The purpose of the Halton Public Transport Advisory Panel has been to:-

- Monitor the performance of the public transport network within the Borough to ensure it meets the mobility needs of local communities;
- To make recommendations to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on future developments and improvements to the conventional local public transport network; and

- To review and comment on the effectiveness of the Council's public transport priorities.

3.3 Regrettably, attendance at meetings of the Panel by members of the public has been very poor, as evidenced by the figures below:

Date of Panel	HBC Staff	HBC Members	Bus Co. reps	Public
April 2016	4	3	3	3
Oct. 2015	4	4	4	6
April 2015	3	3	4	3
Oct. 2014	4	3	4	3
April 2014	4	3	2	3
Oct. 2013	4	3	1	3

- 3.4 Our records indicate that the regular public attendees represent the Windmill Hill Bus Users Group, Soroptimist (an organisation that works to better the lives of women and girls) and an individual member of the public. However, attendance does vary and other attendees have included Halton Open, Halton Speak Out and Halton Family Voice.
- 3.5 In light of the poor attendance record and the need to now consider more carefully the resource demands of holding meetings (in terms of officer and Member time, providing a venue, producing agendas and minutes etc.), it is suggested that meetings of the Panel be suspended until further notice.
- 3.6 Members of the public have, and will continue to have, the opportunity to raise matters of concern and/or seek information on public transport services from the Council (via its Transport Coordination Team) or from the bus operators themselves. Whilst the Panel would no longer be able to meet as a group to discuss the matters identified in 3.2 above, these or indeed any other matters relating to public transport could, if necessary, still be brought to the Board for consideration, as and when appropriate. The option would also exist to reconvene the Panel at any point in the future if there was felt to be a need, at which point Member nominations to Chair and sit on the Panel could be sought in line with previous practice.
- 3.7 It is, therefore, proposed that future meetings of the Panel be suspended until the Board agrees otherwise with public transport queries being handled as in 3.6 above.
- 3.8 A summary of the key issues discussed at the Halton Public Transport

Advisory Panel, during 2015/16, is shown in Appendix 1.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

It is widely recognised that good quality and affordable public transport services can help to improve access to key facilities for children and young people within the Borough. The proposal to suspend the Panel would mean that it, as a group, would not meet to review progress on these matters or comment on emerging initiatives but work on them would still continue and matters could be brought to the Board for consideration as necessary.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Halton Borough Council and its partners continue to provide a wide range of accessible and affordable public transport services within the Borough aimed at improving access to key employment, learning and training facilities.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Improving access to health care facilities is acknowledged as a key priority in Halton.

6.4 A Safer Halton

No direct implications.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Improving access to key regeneration areas by sustainable forms of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling, is widely acknowledged as playing a key role in sustainable regeneration and urban renewal. The Council will continue to work with its partners and utilise funding at its disposal to continue to provide these forms of transport where possible.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The risk of suspending the Public Transport Advisory Panel is that members of the public would no longer be able to meet with Members, officers and public transport operators to discuss matter of concern or to learn of any proposed changes to the network or of new initiatives etc. However, attendance records show that very few members of the public actually turn up for these meetings. The public will still be able

contact the Council or the public transport operators directly if they need any information about services or proposed changes to them. If necessary, the Panel could be reconvened at a future date if the Board feel it is necessary.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Good quality and affordable public transport services can play a key role in ensuring all sections of the community can access a wide range of facilities.

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

- 9.1 There are no background documents under the meaning of this Act.

Appendix One

Summary of the key Issues discussed at the Halton Public Transport Advisory Panel – Municipal Year 2015/16.

Two meetings were held during 2015/16 Municipal Year, as follows:

- Wednesday 22nd April 2015 at Civic Suite, Runcorn Town Hall
- Wednesday 21st October 2015 at Civic Suite, Runcorn Town Hall

LOCAL BUS SERVICE CHANGES

The Panel was updated at both meetings on changes to the local bus network during the period leading up to each meeting. This included an update on registrations received for: cancellations of services; the introduction of new bus services; and alterations to existing services; and as applied to both commercially operated and supported bus services. Changes are generally either route and/or timetable changes or because of a requirement to re-tender.

INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The Panel was notified of improvements carried out to public transport infrastructure and information, including:

- the addition and replacement of bus shelters at locations around the borough and the bus shelter re-paint programme.
- the improvement and investment in infrastructure and waiting facilities (cleanliness/seating, etc.) including at bus stops and interchange points.
- details around the upgrades to bus stops to accessible standard including locations, numbers of stops upgraded and percentage of stops at accessible standard.
- timetable information, detailing information updates, replacement information due to damage/vandalism and changes on the website, etc.

CONCESSIONARY AND TICKETING

The Panel was updated at both meetings on the continuation of the Cheshire Concessionary Scheme along with any proposed amendments to any of the scheme elements. Updates were also provided on sales of the Halton Hopper range of tickets including weekly, monthly and student passes. Finally, the panel were notified of the introduction of MyTicket

from September 2015, which is a young person's day ticket that can be used on bus services across Merseyside for a flat fare of £2.00.

TRAFFIC DELAYS AND DISRUPTION

Verbal updates were provided at both meetings on the programme of works in connection with the new Mersey Crossing with those in attendance being reminded that bus services would be disrupted as a result and to expect delays when travelling around the borough generally.

PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Panel received updates on a range of issues including:

- Contract re-tendering, the re-planning of services and the outcome of a major tender exercise involving all passenger transport contracts for of Children's and Adults services.
- Fleet replacement programme, notifying the panel that one large 14 seat minibus with multiple wheelchair spaces and two small 10 seat minibuses with a single wheelchair space were to be replaced.
- In-house fleet vehicle advertising, detailing that vehicle advertisements were present on several vehicles including initiatives for the CCG (urgent care centre promotion) and the Police (anti burglary campaign).
- Provision of training being delivered to in-house staff, school teachers and staff and other local authorities including, MiDAS (Minibus Driver Assessment), Adapted PATS (Passenger Assistant Training) and Independent Travel Training (Train the Trainer) courses.
- as a consequence of introducing new software updates on the Passenger and Vehicle Booking System were provided.
- Accessible Transport Services, providing an update on door-to-door transport services provided by Halton Community Transport, including passenger numbers using the Dial-A-Ride daytime and evening service.

BID UPDATES

The Panel received updates and progress reports on several funding bids including:

- Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)/ Regional Growth Fund including an outcome on the work delivered during the bid period, with particular reference to the Daresbury Sci-Tech local Enterprise Zone and the on-going benefits.

- Clean Bus Technology Fund, a DfT initiative (co-ordinated locally by Merseytravel) providing grants of up to £500,000 to local authorities to support the upgrade of buses with technology (using innovative pollution reducing technology) to reduce emissions in areas of poor air quality.
- ULEV Fleet Readiness Project detailing that this scheme will provide funding to lease eligible ultra-low emission vehicles over a 24 month period where 75% of the lease costs will be met. The scheme will also provide funding to install recharging infrastructure. It was reported that Merseytravel is co-ordinating this bid on behalf of the city region which is are expected to receive 20 fully electric vehicles, with Halton receiving two.
- Ultra Low Emission Taxi Scheme, it was explained that this further electric vehicle fund is aimed at taxis of which only purpose-built taxis are eligible. The scheme offers a total of £20 million over five years commencing September 2015 for vehicles, infrastructure and R&D. The vehicle element is a taxi top-up grant i.e. the difference between a standard vehicle and the electric equivalent. The taxi must qualify for the plug-in car grant as an ultra- low emission vehicle. The aim is to increase the uptake of ultra-low emission taxis and private hire vehicles, to improve air quality in urban areas (carbon reduction).

OTHER PUBLIC TRANSPORT UPDATES

The Panel was presented with reports and updates relating to various other transport related matters including:

- Schemes funded through the Integrated Transport Block for 2015/16, including details on expenditure and noting that the settlement figure for the year had reduced from £1.020m in 2014/15 to £908k. Schemes included measures to assist buses, walking, cycling.
- National Survey on passenger satisfaction with local bus services with the main findings being:
 - 9 out of 10 (92%) of 47,000 passengers surveyed were satisfied with the quality of service
 - Value for money, the provision of quality information and helpful drivers were felt to be the most important factors to users
 - The highest scores achieved were in York, Norfolk, Suffolk, Merseyside (90%)
- One North, reporting that an interim report had been submitted to the Chancellor in March 2015 detailing plans for a Transport for the North strategy which involved potential £15 billion investment for a Northern Powerhouse. The final report (the Northern Transport Strategy Spring 2016 Report) was submitted to the Chancellor in March 2016.

- DVSA changes including abolishment of tax discs, discontinuation of driving licence paper counterpart and the introduction of 'Lite' vehicles into the minibus market.

- A Route One 'Cuts hit England's routes' report showed that there had been a fall in the number of bus journeys taken in England of 27 million and fares had risen by 3.3%. This was linked with, and believed to be a consequence of, funding cuts from central government resulting in local authorities needing to withdraw support for bus services, and introduce cuts to concessionary travel reimbursement and Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG).

- An Air Quality Consultation which was launched on 12th September 2015 to seek views from local and transport authorities, businesses and members of the public on what local and national action could be taken to improve air quality. Options for local authorities to consider included:

- networks of electric car charging points
- introducing low emission buses and taxis or converting fleets
- upgrading cycling infrastructure
- introducing or expanding park and ride schemes.

- Bus Services Bill, it was reported that the Government was developing proposals to deliver practical measures that will benefit the bus sector nationally and is considering funding reforms. It was stated that the main aim was to support a thriving local bus market with the passenger at its centre.