

## CABINET

14 February 2023

### PUBLIC BUS NETWORK REVIEW

#### Report of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport

Strategic Aim:	All	
Key Decision: No	Forward Plan Reference: FP/160922	
Exempt Information	Yes, Appendix 1, 1A, 1B and 1C are not for publication	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Councillor Rosemary Powell: Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport	
Contact Officer(s):	Penny Sharp, Strategic Director for Places	psharp@rutland.gov.uk
	Emma Odabas, Acting Senior Transport Manager	eodabas@rutland.gov.uk 01572 720923
Ward Councillors	All	

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the longlist of options available for consideration for future public bus network re-design as set out in exempt Appendix 1, the objectives of the review and the evaluation criteria against which any future option on the network redesign will be assessed.
2. Approves the development of a business case to consider the preferred delivery models as set out in section 4 and paragraph 5.14 of exempt Appendix 1 to identify the best option to deliver our public bus network for further consideration by Cabinet in Autumn 2023.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out the variables in the delivery models and identifies options for the future public bus network for consideration. The principles to be achieved by any future re-design are proposed in the exempt report at Appendix 1 and a long-list of options, at appendix 1A, includes the various delivery models for Cabinet to consider in the review of the public bus network.
- 1.2 The report sets out the objectives to be achieved in the review and undertakes an

initial evaluation of the longlist of options to identify preferred delivery models which meet the corporate and financial objectives of the council in the provision of a future public bus network. The public bus network review is identified as part of the transformation agenda and will be addressed in the Transport Workstream, to deliver the transformation objectives to ensure that the Council is financially sustainable.

- 1.3 The report makes recommendations on delivery models available and seeks approval for the development of a business case to identify the best option to deliver our future public bus network which will be brought back to Cabinet together with a review of Post 16 transport, for further consideration in Autumn 2023

## **2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 The reasons for the review and main considerations to be made are set out in the exempt report at appendix 1.
- 2.2 RCC were not awarded Department for Transport (DfT), Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding in 2022, however, the recent joint bid for Levelling Up Funding (LUF) with Melton Mowbray was successful which includes a transport element.
- 2.3 The proposition for Rutland will deliver a new transport hub which links economic activity to a traditional bus depot function called a Mobi-hub. The Mobi-hub and demand responsive transport elements of the bid could connect the market towns of Oakham, Uppingham and Melton Mowbray, with further links to Stamford.
- 2.4 This opportunity, together with the significant challenges of low passenger usage and rising operational costs of our existing service, means that a complete review of our existing provision is required to achieve a public bus network that is sustainable, fit for purpose and affordable and makes the most of the bid funding on offer.
- 2.5 We must ensure that the potential on offer with the Levelling Up Funding can be realised and enable the area, through enhanced public transport to have a more flexible workforce and open up access to its town centres, thus increasing footfall and developing the local economy.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW**

- 3.1 The review will aim to achieve the following objectives:
  - 3.1.1 Potential savings applicable to the 2023/24 budget
  - 3.1.2 Achieves BSIP objectives (journey time, reliability, customer satisfaction) and passenger growth
  - 3.1.3 Improves connectivity: Provides access to settlement/residents and key destinations for health and social benefit in the county (appendix C)
  - 3.1.4 Improves suitability of the network to better meet demand of existing passengers/ encourage new passengers/ suit the geography of the county/maximise onward travel options.
  - 3.1.5 Improves resilience of network and management of costs.

- 3.1.6 Makes best use of Levelling Up Funding in the delivery of the BSIP objectives

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 A presentation of the long-list of options was made to the Overview & Scrutiny panel on 13th December 2022. Feedback from the panel supported continuation of a public transport network for the county and the panel was keen to be involved as the review progresses.
- 4.2 A bus user forum held in January 2023 sought feedback on the current provision and difficulties facing the transport were highlighted. A further bus user forum will take place later in the year.
- 4.3 Consultation with stakeholders will take place in the next phase of the project as it is too early to be clear on the preferred option at this stage.

#### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1 Alternative options are set out in exempt appendix 1A including an option to change nothing and continue with the network in its current format.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are significant financial pressures on the current service provision due to the increasing cost of fuel, drivers and transport sector operational costs and this presents challenges and budget pressures on the existing service.
- 6.2 Any option which increases revenue costs to the council only exacerbates the financial pressures being experienced.
- 6.3 The Council continues to operate in a challenging budget position, with the Council's expenditure exceeding its income by around £2m per annum. The Council is committed to being financially sustainable, ensuring that the budget is balanced in any given year. The Financial Sustainability Strategy agreed by Council in November 2022 envisages revenue spending being supported by reserves for the next 4 years whilst also making savings.
- 6.4 The cost of the business case development will be met using DfT capacity grant funding awarded in September 2022.

#### **7. LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1 Enhanced Partnership Scheme & Plan <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-community/transport/transport-strategy/>

#### **8. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has not been completed as there are no data protection implications.

#### **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this stage of the review as no change is recommended.

## **10. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no community safety implications.

## **11. HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications.

## **12. ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no organisational implications at this stage of the review.

## **13. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

13.1 A full review is required to thoroughly investigate the potential bus network delivery models for the county. The report presents the key aims and objectives to be achieved in the review including the BSIP objectives. High level consideration of the options has identified a number of options that offer opportunity for innovation and improved quality of service whilst optimising coverage within an affordable cost envelope.

13.2 The report makes recommendations on the development of a business case which will consider various delivery models to identify the best option for Rutland which achieves an affordable resilient network that are most likely to achieve the BSIP objectives and this could be a blend of the delivery models for further consideration by Cabinet in Autumn 2023.

## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

14.1 Rutland Bus Service Improvement Plan

14.2 Rutland Enhanced Partnership Scheme & Plan

14.3 Rutland Local Transport Plan 4 – Moving Rutland Forward

14.4 All background papers are published here <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-community/transport/transport-strategy/>

## **15. APPENDICES**

15.1 Appendix 1- Exempt Bus Network Review Report

15.2 Appendix 1A – Options table

15.3 Appendix 1B – Options evaluation

15.4 Appendix 1C – County coverage maps options 1-10

**A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.**