

**REPORT TO: BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**REPORT ON: BEST VALUE REVIEW - WHAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO THE CITY'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE BEST VALUE FOR USERS AND FOR CITIZENS GENERALLY?**

**REPORT BY: LEGAL MANAGER**

**REPORT NO: 258-2005**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval in principle for a proposed strategy.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that:

- i the Council utilises the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 to move from the current Tendered and De Minimis arrangements to a Quality Partnership which will list minimum service quality and cost targets for the Council and the bus operators;
- ii the Council carries out a two yearly customer satisfaction survey with users of public transport to inform the development of the Quality Partnership and monitor its progress;
- iii the Council identifies where there is a lack of access to mainstream public transport and considers alternative service delivery methods, such as Demand Responsive Transport Systems;
- iv the Council carries out an audit of all Council mini buses and specially adapted vehicles to establish utilisation levels and the potential for community use;
- v the Council introduces dedicated software to create a single point of contact for the delivery of Council transport requirements and also to control the movement and operation of all Council passenger vehicles;
- vi the Council implements a staff travel plan;
- vii the Council seeks funding to achieve a Dundee Quality Standard of training for staff working in transport;
- viii the Community Transport Team Leader arranges for travel training for users; and
- ix the Community Transport Team Leader continues to chair the Dundee Mobility and Access Partnership (DMAP) through which an annual action plan is produced to feed into the Council Plan at all levels.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, approving the strategy will ensure expenditure is focused on delivering customer needs in partnership with both users and providers. It is also anticipated that the strategy may deliver monetary savings which can be reinvested in improving services to citizens. If the strategy is approved in principle the proposals will be developed by officers and fully costed programmes will be brought before the Council for approval.

#### **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Development of an efficient and well used public transport system and the introduction of travel plans will reduce the dependence on less sustainable modes of transport. This, along with innovations like the use of solar energy to provide the power for bus stop illumination which will begin in October 2005 will have positive benefits for the environment.

#### **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Transport provides access to employment and services and enables people to live full and active lives. People living in poverty, older people and disabled people can face difficulties accessing public transport which in turn limits their opportunities. By breaking down those barriers opportunities are increased to take advantage of work, education, training, health and public services, shopping and leisure facilities.

In addition by taking account of personal safety when planning waiting and interchange environments, providing information, CCTV etc more people including women and the elderly can be encouraged to use public transport, especially after dark.

- 5.2 Access is a vital component of Social Inclusion and Dundee's commitment to being a barrier free city. The Council will continue to focus on creating an environment where all citizens have the opportunity to contribute to future developments, not only within the city but nation wide. Access to suitable forms of transport is a vital component in enabling citizens to participate in the decision making process.

#### **6 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 In 2002 the Scottish Executive announced that that year would be the fifth and final round of the Public Transport Fund (PTF). The PTF was targeted at enhancements to public transport networks. The Council made two final bids to the PTF, one for "SMART BUS – Informing the Journey" (an extensive citywide review of bus stop facilities) was approved, but the other for the Preparation Pool for a Public Transport Review to provide a 30 year vision for the City was not approved.
- 6.2 The Council conducts an annual Consumer Survey. The Survey tracks the public's perception of whether the City is improving. When the Survey was carried out in 2003 and residents were asked on an unprompted basis to identify ways in which the City could be improved, improving public transport was referred to by 6% of respondents, the third highest score.
- 6.3 At its meeting on 19 August 2003 the Best Value Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to a Best Value Review being carried out under the theme of "Caring for the Dundee Environment" with the title "What improvements are required to the City's Public Transport Infrastructure to ensure Best Value for Users and for Citizens generally?"
- 6.4 Transport infrastructure, the reliability of services and the availability of information also shape visitors' perceptions and influence whether they want to come back to Dundee or do business here. Improving the City's public transport infrastructure will therefore bring economic benefits to the City.
- 6.5 In addition by facilitating access to cultural venues and participation in cultural events transport can support the delivery of cultural policy.

#### **7 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

- 7.1 The following major developments have occurred recently and it is important to outline them in order to demonstrate the progress that has already been made in improving the City's public transport infrastructure and to set the context for the proposals in this review.

i Travel Concession Scheme

From 30 September 2002 senior citizens and disabled persons have been enabled to travel free of charge after 9.30am Monday-Friday and all weekend. This concession was extended to men aged 60-64 from 1 April 2003.

This has resulted in a 34% increase in travel by those entitled to use the scheme.

Funding for this scheme is supplied by the Scottish Executive through GAE allocation (£3m), however, the Council requires an additional top up payment of over £1m from the Scottish Executive to meet its duty to reimburse the bus operators.

On a regular basis the Council is requested to enhance the scheme beyond the minimum standard, namely journeys only within the Council boundary after 9.30am Monday - Friday and all weekend. A free national concession scheme, funded by the Scottish Executive, will be introduced from 1 April 2006.

ii Urban Community Transport and Demand Responsive Transport

The Council successfully bid for a three year funding stream of £306k from the Scottish Executive, which allows an Urban Community Transport Pilot to progress in the city. This development involves the following:

- appointment of the Community Transport Team Leader, currently for a two year fixed term;
- purchase of a high quality, fully accessible community vehicle, Optare Solo SS03, operated by Strathtay Scottish Ltd as the "Friendly Bus" for sheltered housing residents;
- development of Community Transport in the city; and
- investigation into the establishment of minibus brokerage of both local authority and voluntary sector vehicles to maximise availability of and access to vehicles in the partnership group of Council departments, the voluntary sector and the health service.

iii Accessibility

- a The number of accessible taxis in the city has risen from 9 in 2002 to over 160 in 2005. This is a direct result of the new taxi licensing regime which has set new quality standards (as opposed to quantitative controls) and this is contributing to the Council's desire to achieve a "barrier free" transportation system.
- b The accessibility of the city's bus fleet is improving. Travel Dundee has a 100% low floor fleet and the City Council is taking steps to make all the bus stops in the city accessible. This will involve raised kerbs, improved bus stop markings and replacement shelters.
- c Lack of availability of detailed and up to date public transport information can be a barrier to accessing public transport.

Bringing Confidence to Public Transport and Smartbus information systems are therefore being revamped across the city, including:

- [www.dundeetravelinfo.com](http://www.dundeetravelinfo.com) web site which allows full address/bus stop/ point of interest journey planning. It also integrates with a Real Time Information System to indicate departures from every stop in Dundee.
- The Journeyplanner is also accessible from a network of 14 kiosks located throughout the city. There have been in excess of 350,000 users between June 2004 and March 2005.

- Through mobile phones, members of the public can access the journeyplanner (wap.dundeetravelinfo.com) and Real Time Information via SMS.
- Real Time Information displays will be supplied at all bus shelters across Dundee.
- Illuminated Printed Timetable Information and Route Mapping will be included at all bus stops and bus shelters.
- Electronic Departure boards have also been provided at Ninewells Hospital, Seagate Bus Station, Dundee High Street and Nethergate.

### iii CCTV

Dundee became the first UK City to have all of its bus fleet covered by CCTV. This will improve on-board security for passengers and the savings in repair costs are being used to reduce fare increases.

### iv Bus Interchange

The creation of a bus interchange has put in place a linked series of facilities for bus passengers in Whitehall Crescent, Crichton Street, Nethergate and High Street.

## **8 NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT**

- 8.1 The Scottish Transport Awards for 2004 saw Dundee City Council being given the Travel Information Award from the Centre for Transport Policy for the refurbished bus terminal at Ninewells Hospital with its improved waiting and information facilities.
- 8.2 It is clear that on a national stage the vision and work of the City Council is recognised. The Council needs to continue to ensure that citizens feel their voice and needs are influencing improvements in service delivery and share in the recognition of the work to date which has come from the focus groups and partnership working.

## **9 SCOPE OF THE REVIEW AND PROPOSED STRATEGY**

- 9.1 The Best Value Review Group has focused particularly on areas of improvement not covered by previous successful PTF bids.

### 9.2 A Quality Partnership

The Council has a statutory duty to subsidise bus services where a need is identified in the community but where it is not commercially viable for a bus operator to provide services.

The current subsidised network involving Tendering and De Minimis agreements was created under the 1985 Transport Act. It is interesting to note that the Revenue Budget allocation for this provision has not increased since 1996 whilst national trends over the same period show an increase of 30%. This has been achieved through partnership working and improvements to the bus operating environment (in particular by reducing bus journey times) and has also resulted in a 6% growth in bus passenger trips in the last year alone and increases in costs have to date been held to inflation.

The service has been the subject of a previous review in 2000 (Report No 226-2000 – Best Value Sub-Committee 11 September 2000 refers) and this has resulted to improvements in services delivery. However, some key issues remain to be addressed in light of changes to primary legislation and to ensure customer needs are met.

In 2004 the City Council, Travel Dundee, Strathclyde Scottish and Tayside Police signed the Dundee Public Transport Partnership Concordat. (Annex A). It is seen as a model of good practice by the Scottish Executive.

It is now recommended that the Council utilises the provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act, 2001 to move from the current tendered and de minimis agreements to a Quality Partnership which will list minimum service quality and cost targets for the Council and the bus operators in areas such as fares, staff training, types of vehicles, reliability, frequency etc. The advantages of this would include the creation of a more holistic approach to bus provision, rather than the current fragmented approach, and greater influence for the Council over bus provision in the City generally. It is proposed to develop this to be one of the first Quality Partnerships in Scotland by the end of September 2006.

### 9.3 **Customer Surveys**

In order to inform the development of the Quality Partnership and monitor its progress it is recommended that a two yearly customer satisfaction survey be carried out with users of public transport, beginning this year.

### 9.4 **Demand Responsive Transport Systems**

Demand Responsive Transport Systems are alternatives to mainstream public transport. For example, rather than a bus following a set route throughout the day it may be a better transport solution to have one route while people are going to work, another while people are going to the City Centre during the day for shopping, leisure etc, another while people are returning from work and another for people going to the City Centre in the evening to the cinema, theatre etc.

In addition it will be a better transport solution to put on the vehicle most suited to the type and number of travellers eg a minibus rather than a bus or vice versa. It is recommended that the Community Transport Team Leader identifies where there is a lack of access to mainstream public transport, including for reasons of disability, lack of resources etc, and recommends alternative service delivery methods, principally Demand Responsive Transport Systems.

### 9.5 **Maximising the Use of the Council's Transport Assets**

It is thought that the use of the Council's current transport assets could be maximised. In this connection it is recommended that the Community Transport Team Leader carries out an audit of all Council minibuses and specially adapted vehicles to establish levels of use and the potential for their community use in order to access city facilities and mainstream public transport.

### 9.6 **Single Point of Contact for Transport Requirements**

It is also recommended that the Council introduces dedicated software to create a single point of contact for the delivery of Council transport requirements and also to control the movement and operation of all Council passenger vehicles to maximise their utilisation. For example, at present the Council operates a taxi contract and a member of staff wishing to travel from one destination to another telephones the relevant firm and orders a taxi. In the future the member of staff would contact the single point with details of their travel requirements and arrangements would be made for them, perhaps by arranging for them to travel by taxi or perhaps on a minibus which is already scheduled to travel to that destination to deliver mail. The system could also be accessed by the community and for that reason it is felt that the single point of contact could become part of the new Customer Contact Centre.

### 9.7 **Staff Travel Plans**

Travel Plans conform with the aims and objectives of Dundee City Council's Local Transport Strategy and aim to reduce the impact the single motor user has on the environment. By encouraging people to use more sustainable methods of transport, considerable environmental benefits can be obtained. These include:-

- reduced congestion;
- improved air quality; and
- a reduction in noise pollution and improved road safety.

Dundee City Council has employed a Travel Plan Co-ordinator on a fixed term contract to develop Travel Plans within the city. This post was funded by the following organisations:-

- Dundee City Council;
- Scottish Enterprise Tayside;
- NHS Tayside; and
- Big Lottery Fund.

Within a three year period it is intended to introduce Travel Plans for Dundee City Council, University of Dundee, Ninewells Hospital and Scottish Enterprise Tayside. To date staff travel habit investigations at the University of Dundee and Ninewells Hospital have identified issues that are of common concern. It is proposed that the Council should take the lead in this process and have a travel plan in place by 2006.

#### 9.8 **Staff Training**

To improve the level of service, training of staff is fundamental. It is recommended that funding should be sought to achieve a Dundee Quality Standard provision of service. This training should include drivers, associated staff, front line and senior managers and be delivered across all sectors to include bus operators, local authority operations and the voluntary sector.

#### 9.9 **Travel Training**

Many people are unfamiliar with accessing public transport. It is therefore recommended that travel training for users be provided including how to use public transport, where to get travel information, entitlement to travel concessions etc.

#### 9.10 **DMAP**

The Secretary of State for Transport has power to make regulations (called "PSV Accessibility Regulations") for the purposes of ensuring that disabled people can get on and off public service vehicles and travel on public service vehicles in safety and comfort but it is not known when these Regulations will be made.

Fleet enhancement and the upgrade of bus stop facilities has addressed some of these issues. Where access is identified as a problem, through consultation with groups such as DMAP, local consultation and elected member involvement, the Council should work to achieve suitable alternatives. In this connection it is recommended that the Community Transport Team Leader continues to chair DMAP and that an annual action plan should be produced to feed into the Council Plan at all levels.

### 10 **REVIEW GROUP**

- 10.1 The Review Group comprised of the Chair, Roger Mennie (Legal Manager), Iain Sherriff (Head of Transportation), Neil Gellatly (Sustainable Transport Team Leader) and Trevor Docherty (Community Transport Team Leader).
- 10.2 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.