

Officer Decision Report

Title:	Multi Operator Bus Ticketing Agreement for High Wycombe
Date decision taken:	15/08/19
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Local Members Affected	All High Wycombe Councillors

Decision

Buckinghamshire County Council will be a signatory to an Agreement between Arriva the Shires and Carousel Buses which will allow them to offer commercial multi operator bus tickets in High Wycombe; in accordance with the Transport Act 2000 and Local Transport Act 2008.

Reasons for the decision

The Department of Transport provides a mechanism to allow commercial bus operators to set up a joint ticketing agreement. The Local Authority needs to be part of such schemes in order to comply with Competition Law requirements as bus operators are jointly setting fare levels. The Council's role will be to co-ordinate the scheme and chair meetings of the Management Committee. An initial Management Committee meeting will take place within 4 weeks of the scheme start date with further meetings taking place on a minimum 6 monthly basis.

Currently bus passengers wishing to use bus routes operated by different commercial operators have to buy tickets from both in order to travel which significantly increases costs to passengers. This Agreement will allow bus companies to set up a single ticket for customers that will be accepted on all routes in High Wycombe.

Feedback from the public and local members has requested that agreements be made to allow joint use of different bus operator's services and tickets. This Agreement builds on the successful joint operating agreements for Route One between High Wycombe and Chesham which started in 2013 and for routes between Bourne End and High Wycombe which started in 2018. No existing bus services or ticket prices will be affected by this Agreement but a new range of jointly accepted tickets and travelcards will be offered by bus companies.

Transport Act legislation encourages local authorities to broker Multi Operator Agreements in situations such as this as doing so offers wider benefits to the public transport network.

This Agreement uses the criteria set in The Transport Act 2000, Local Transport Act 2008 and Department for Transport Guidance published in 2013.

Joint marketing and publicity will take place prior to the launch of the new multi operator products which is currently planned for November 2019. Further information will be provided to Members 4 weeks prior to the confirmed start date. Publicity for bus passengers and residents will be then follow using a range of communications including press releases, poster advertising, leaflets, information on buses, at the bus station and via websites and social media.

Authority to take this decision

The Transport Act 2000 (amended by Local Transport Act 2008) and Department for Transport Guidance on Multi Operator Ticketing (2013) requires that the Local Transport Authority is a signatory to a Multi Operator Ticketing Agreement to confirm that it is in the interests of persons using local services in the area of the authority and that it does not contain any agreement to fix prices.

This decision does not change Council policy and the Council has no financial liability; bus operators will jointly fund any ongoing operating costs for the scheme, as per the terms of the Agreement. The Agreement document has been approved by the BCC Legal Team.

Other options available, and their pros and cons

Transport Act legislation encourages local authorities to broker Multi Operator Ticketing Agreements in situations such as this as doing so offers wider benefits to the public transport network and lowers prices for bus passengers.

Conflicts of interest

None

Feedback from Consultation

Informal requests have been received from some local councilors and members of the public requesting agreements to allow joint use of different bus operator's services and tickets. Bus companies also advise that they have received similar requests from passengers.

Background papers

A copy of the Agreement is attached which includes references to relevant legislation

Other

None

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose email address is given at the head of the paper.