

## Environment, Transport and Locality Services Select Committee 14 October 2014

Agenda Item	Page No
8 <b>PUBLIC TRANSPORT INQUIRY UPDATE</b> For Members to consider and agree the draft inquiry report and recommendations	3 - 24



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE







Buckinghamshire County Council

Environment, Transport and Localities  
Select Committee

# Draft Public Transport Inquiry

---

*DRAFT Report-V5*

Agreed as a final report of the ETL Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014 (tbc)

## **The Environment, Transport and Localities Select Committee**

The Environment, Transport and Localities Select Committee is appointed by Buckinghamshire County Council to carry out the local authority scrutiny functions for all policies and services relating to these areas.

### **Membership of the Committee**

Bill Bendyshe-Brown  
Timothy Butcher  
David Caroll (Vice-Chairman)  
Dev Dhillon  
Phil Gomm  
Steven Lambert  
Warren Whyte (Chairman)

### **Powers**

The Committee is one of the Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committees, the powers of which are set out in Buckinghamshire County Council Constitution. This is available at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/constitution](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/constitution)

### **Publications**

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by Buckinghamshire County Council by Order of the Committee. All publications of the Committee are on the Internet at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny)

### **Committee support staff**

The committee is supported by the Scrutiny Team and Democratic Services. The current staff supporting the Committee directly are Kama Wager (Policy Officer) and Sharon Griffin (Democratic Services Officer).

### **Contacts**

The telephone number for general enquiries is 01296 382615. Email [scrutiny@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@buckscc.gov.uk)

Further information on the work of select committees can be found online at

[www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/scrutiny)

Follow select committee updates on twitter@scrutinybucks

# Contents

---

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	
<b>1 Recommendations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2 Inquiry Context</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3 The Council's existing policy &amp; approach to public transport</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4 Bus and Community Transport Provision</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5 Integration</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Inquiry Evidence Programme</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Council Spend on bus subsidies</b>	<b>21</b>

## **Executive Summary**

Public Transport has a vital role to play in enabling people to get to work, access services, support the local economy and help reduce social isolation. This is a timely inquiry as the Council is undertaking a restructuring of its services to meet the financial challenges ahead. Our report seeks to inform the Council's strategic approach to public transport policy and delivery to deliver the best possible overall value for money.

Our report findings and recommendations are identified in chapters 3 to 5 in relation to overall policy, bus and community transport provision and integration.

In Chapter 5 our key findings are that current policy is fragmented resulting in a corresponding fragmented approach to the allocation of resources. The major issue with the current Council approach is that there is a failure to objectively assess value for money from different types of transport service provision as each area is considered in isolation. To rectify these deficiencies we make recommendations to improve the overall evidence-base of understanding the real needs of Buckinghamshire's residents as well as a new approach to strategically commission services to meet the Council's Strategic Plan priorities and outcomes.

In Chapter 6 we explore current arrangements for bus and community transport provision. Our key findings are the Council has a de-facto policy prioritising buses as the best transport solution for improving accessibility over other alternatives. We recommend that this must change to achieve better outcomes and better value for money. In particular, we make recommendations to strengthen the Council's approach to supporting the development of community transport solutions.

In Chapter 7 we assess the current weaknesses with the in-house splits between different teams undertaking commissioning of transportation services. We conclude that establishing an Integrated Transport Unit with integrated commissioning is the best way forward.

The Council needs to articulate a clear long-term vision for a total transport approach for public transport provision, rather than considering historic services in isolation. Our recommendations are designed to help the Council achieve a strategic and joined-up approach to future commissioning of public transportation.

# **1 Recommendations**

- 1. We recommend that the Council undertakes a full assessment of the access and connectivity requirements of Buckinghamshire residents in order to understand the demands on passenger transport, establish a clear view of need in relation to different sections of the population, and identify gaps. This assessment should be used to inform the future provision of coordinated public transport across the county.**
- 2. We recommend that, prior to commissioning, or re-commissioning public transport services, the Council undertakes an objective assessment of all service delivery options. This assessment should include community schemes, commercial services and other forms of demand-led transport.**
- 3. We recommend that the Council develops a new transport subsidy strategy that focuses the limited available resources in a way that drives the delivery of coordinated public transport across the county and demonstrates clear value for money.**
- 4. We recommend that the Council encourages existing Dial-a-Ride schemes to evolve to suit changes in demand and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by newer, more flexible and sustainable operating models for community transport schemes.**
- 5. In order to address community transport's untapped potential, we recommend that the Transport, Economy & Environment Business Unit prioritises the improvement of community transport across the county in its forthcoming business plan. This should include leading the development of a joined up approach with partners to encourage more accessible, sustainable and responsive community transport schemes.**
- 6. To ensure limited resources are spent in a coordinated manner, we recommend that the Council's Transport, Economy & Environment Business Unit identifies a lead client side officer within the broader transport team with responsibility for encouraging the development of the community transport sector and strengthening the Council's control of externally contracted service delivery.**
- 7. We recommend that an Integrated Transport Unit be created within the Transport Economy & Environment Business Unit to drive a joined up approach to the Council's investment in transport services, including public buses, client transport, home to school transport and community transport.**
- 8. We recommend that the Council explores opportunities to undertake a pilot project with the Department for Transport focused on innovative Total Transport options.**

## 2. Inquiry Context

1. We decided to conduct an inquiry into public transport to support the Council to achieve value for money in a time of increasing financial pressures, particularly arising from discussions on the pressures on subsidised bus services.
2. We decided to look strategically at all public transport provision policy, financial support, and the role of community transport alternatives in order to consider how best to support an effective, affordable and sustainable transport network across the county towards 2020 and beyond.
3. We have been mindful in carrying out this inquiry of the need for the Council to continue to make savings and as such have looked at evidence of different approaches which could help the Council meet its statutory obligations whilst maximising value for money over its discretionary spend.
4. During the course of our inquiry the transport service has been going through a period of continued change and we became aware of other internal or consultant-led reviews. For example, a bus subsidy policy review being undertaken within the Place service, and the transport category/commission review planned. We welcome these pieces of work and see them as complementary to our own strategic policy work and look forward to their speedy conclusion.
5. Originally, our inquiry was planned as a staged inquiry. We have however decided to report and conclude this review earlier than planned in order to influence the development of the new Transport, Economy and Environment Business Unit set-up, as well as 15-16 MTP.
6. The inquiry group comprised the following Members who met from June 2014 to August 2014: Mr W Whyte (Chairman); Mr B Bendyshe-Brown; Mr T Butcher; Mr P Gomm; Mr S Lambert. The inquiry group were also joined by other committee members during the some of the evidence gathering sessions in July.
7. The inquiry group's evidence schedule is set out in Appendix 1. The evidence gathering included a series of meetings with internal and external experts as well as supplemented by research carried out by the supporting policy officer.
8. For the purposes of this inquiry 'public transport' is defined as those non-personal transport services run by public, commercial or community & voluntary sector organisations that enable members of the public to get from their homes to places of work, shops, services, learning and leisure.



### 3. The Council's existing policy on public transport—'Bus is Best'

9. Under the Transport Act 1985, Buckinghamshire County Council (the Council) has a duty to: *"secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the Council considers it appropriate to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not, in their view, be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose."* This means that the Council has to identify public transport requirements which would not otherwise be met and then provide reasonable access to transport to people living in the County.
10. Public transport is critical to supporting the Council's Strategic Plan priorities of self-reliant communities, helping the vulnerable and delivering a buoyant local economy. Public transport helps people to access services, employment, education and training. It also helps to reduce social isolation and help people to lead healthier lives.
11. Currently the Council's policy on public transport is set out in the Local Transportation Plan 3 (LTP3) 2006-11 and other supporting policies such as the Travel Bucks Strategy. The Travel Bucks Strategy explains that the current method of prioritising budgets for bus services is *"based on maintaining well used services that contribute to our congestion reduction policies whilst also maintaining existing rural accessibility services where they continue to be used."* This categorisation approach means that value for money is assessed in relation to the 'core network' and separately in relation to rural accessibility bus services.
12. Officers acknowledged that the policy context for public transport could be clearer *"There is policy vacuum and fragmentation. Policies need to be stronger and should take on a holistic view of how a specific area could affect a piece of road i.e. should a Park and Ride be built to avoid grid lock in a town centre."*<sup>1</sup>
13. We also heard from the Community Transport Association that public transport policy reflects a general public presumption that the bus is the best and only transportation solution to enable people to access services and work. The image of public transport is so heavily focused on buses that other options such as taxis, community buses etc...are all viewed as 'alternatives' to buses rather than simply different modes of transport. This makes it difficult for policy-makers and decision-makers to have a mindset shift towards a wider view of public transport.

---

<sup>1</sup> Neil Gibson, Strategic Director Buckinghamshire County Council (tbc)

14. The current Council approach to allocating money to bus subsidies and outsourcing responsibility for improving community transport to an external organisation results in a de facto 'bus is best' policy. Officers informed us that the focus on buses as the solution for accessibility has led to an "inflexible" approach where there is limited objective value for money assessment of the best transport solution for different geographical communities and groups. For example, some current rural bus subsidies are not well used and thereby have a very high subsidy per passenger trip. In commissioning this subsidy consideration is not always given to other alternatives such as community transport (only a small number of community transport providers are legally allowed to take the general public) or taxis etc...
15. We enquired about the process for assessing the current and future needs of Buckinghamshire's residents to inform the Council's policy and allocation of resources. We were told by the Passenger Transport Manager<sup>2</sup>(TfB) the reality of what this means in practice is that need is currently only measured through patronage of existing services, although efforts are made to consider other issues. It is therefore based on historic demand for services that are currently in place. *"The current policies don't take into account a requirement to assess need for new services or potential for new services and how to prioritise it against one that is existing"*.<sup>3</sup>
16. We received evidence from the Director of Transport at Norfolk and the Council's Community Link Officers and Representative of the Buckingham Transport Action Group to consider a wider evidence base of need to inform the Council's provision of public transport. The Director of Transport at Norfolk argued that the starting point for assessing needs should be about the outcomes of getting people to work, education etc... For example, for young people they may *"often prefer to share a taxi in rural areas to get to a social activity as they are not limited by travel times and the taxi can often be cheaper than the bus"*.<sup>4</sup>
17. Given the significant financial pressures the Council faces we do not consider it acceptable to continue with the current de facto policy of 'bus is best' and a presumption of looking at subsidising historic bus routes as the starting point for allocating resources. We recognise that there are many successful commercial bus routes across the County that are vital to helping people to access services, work, leisure including supporting rural communities. However, it is the issue of bus subsidies for non-commercially viable bus

---

<sup>2</sup> In evidence session on 15<sup>th</sup> July in when considering the scoring and evaluation matrix for evaluating support for bus services.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Feedback from Padbury Youth Club at Buckingham LAF. Evidence given by Lynn Maddocks, AVDC on 25<sup>th</sup> July

routes that we are concerned about most in terms of securing effective value for money services.

18. In considering evidence from bus companies we heard from Mr Kirk, Managing Director of Carousel Buses, that bus companies valued having as much information as possible to enable them to make realistic bids for bus routes.<sup>5</sup> The provision of such information helps to ensure a competitive field and thereby helps the Council to achieve greater value for money in running services.
19. The starting point for commissioning services should be a robust understanding of the current and future needs of Buckinghamshire's residents as this might drive better policy and financial solutions. For example, understanding that one rural area has a growing population base and a particular need for access to transportation at the start and end of the working day might drive a very different transportation solution to helping older people to access a day care service. The Council needs a new commissioning approach to public transport based on an in-depth understanding of needs rather than historic provision alone, as well as updating its policy documents such as the Bucks Travel Strategy and LTP4 to reflect this.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that the Council undertakes a full assessment of the access and connectivity requirements of Buckinghamshire residents in order to understand the demands on passenger transport, establish a clear view of need in relation to different sections of the population, and identify gaps. This assessment should be used to inform the future provision of coordinated public transport across the county.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend that, prior to commissioning, or re-commissioning public transport services, the Council undertakes an objective assessment of all service delivery options. This should include community schemes, commercial services and other forms of demand-led transport.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend that the Council develops a new transport subsidy strategy that focuses the limited available resources in a way that drives the delivery of coordinated public transport across the county and demonstrates clear value for money.**

<sup>5</sup> Evidence session – 24 July 2014 Minutes.

## 4. Bus and Community Transport Provision

### Community Transport Policy

20. Given that buses are not always the best transport solution there are alternatives to be considered such as community transport. Community transport covers a range of services to meet local needs. For example Dial-a Ride schemes for specific groups, or community mini-bus services for the general public or car sharing schemes.
21. We were told by the Community Transport Association (CTA) that community transport services (excluding community car schemes) are primarily run under section 19 or section 22 permits. Section 19 permits allow community transport organisations to provide transport for certain sections of the community—such as older people and disabled people—but not the general public; you have to be a member to use the service. Dial-a Rides operate under this model. In contrast, Section 22 permits allow community transport organisations to provide local bus services (community buses) for the general public in areas where commercial bus routes aren't viable, providing they don't make a profit. We were advised by the CTA that the only viable business model in today's climate is the s22 permit. We were made aware that very few community transport providers in Buckinghamshire have a s22 permit with limits this type of provision.
22. The Council's current Travel Bucks Strategy does include reference to supporting community transport. It states four areas that attempted to recognise and develop community transport solutions across the county, which included working with the voluntary sector, setting up a transport information hub, providing advice and guidance through toolkits for community transport providers, and a community transport challenge fund of £150,000 of Department for Transport funding to "pump prime" community transport schemes.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the current LTP 3 also references the important role of community transport and but states: "*We [sic the Council] have a very limited role in the above initiatives, but do provide financial support to Community Impact Bucks, who play an essential role in their development*".<sup>7</sup>
23. The Council's policy has gone some way to trying to identify and support community transport providers, but delivery has been mainly outsourced to Community Impact Bucks. Enabling some external delivery of an advice

---

<sup>6</sup> See Travel Bucks Strategy

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tfbucks.co.uk/documents/ltp/LTP3.pdf>

service does not negate the need for in-house leadership in driving forward increased and enhanced supply of effective community transport solutions.

### **Meeting the needs of disabled people & others to access community transport solutions**

24. As explained earlier in this report, there is no objective assessment process of determining the needs of different groups such as disabled people and then commissioning services. Rather, there is an ad-hoc historic approach to subsidising specific transportation schemes such as Dial-a-Ride. Dial-a-Ride schemes operate in all of the four district areas and provide wheelchair users and other people a service via bookings in advance and the payment of a fee.
25. We heard from two Dial-a-Ride operators within the county, Aylesbury and Chilterns. We were told that they provide a door-to-door service, 40% of their clients are wheelchair users. The service is run by a mix of paid drivers and volunteers. The operators explained the extreme financial pressures they are facing and in the case of Aylesbury we were told they are "*struggling to maintain our operation*"<sup>8</sup>, they have had to limit their operation to Aylesbury only and cease services to the more rural areas of Aylesbury Vale.
26. In addition to the Dial-a-ride schemes in the Aylesbury Vale District there is a taxi-token scheme operating to help those with difficulties travelling on public transport due to disability, frailty or are unable to make use of their free bus travel. Eligible people may apply for £90 of travel tokens instead of a bus permit. The tokens are issued to help people of pensionable age or people with disabilities make essential journeys. The scheme does not cover long journeys, excursions, or those who have access to their own private transport.
27. We were also informed about a new 'fair for all Scheme' launched on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 by the Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS), a charity run by disabled people for disabled people. This is a quality assurance scheme for disabled people using taxis and minicabs in Buckinghamshire which is a collaborative project by taxi licencing authorities in Bucks and Buckinghamshire Disability Service.
28. Two of our witnesses were wheelchair users<sup>9</sup> and when asked their views on the benefits of Dial-a-Ride operators and taxi services they told us that the issues with Dial-a-Ride are around availability (needing to book in advance, and not having staff for some dates), multiple drop offs, not meeting needs for last minute transport needs. They felt that the taxi token scheme made a

---

<sup>8</sup> Chairman of Aylesbury Dial-a-Ride in evidence session on 24<sup>th</sup> July.

<sup>9</sup> See minutes from 25<sup>th</sup> July under Transport user group's evidence session.

difference in Aylesbury Vale and that the availability of disabled friendly taxi companies they were often the more appropriate solution, particularly in more rural areas of Aylesbury where Dial-a-Ride have ceased operating.

### **Funding specialist community transport solutions**

29. The County Council currently provides £75,000 funding for Dial-a-Ride schemes and no funding is provided to support the taxi token scheme by the County Council. The taxi token scheme is paid for and administered by Aylesbury Vale District Council (the only district council to fund the scheme and its only operational in this area). To run the scheme it costs approximately £38,000 per year. £35,000 goes direct to the recipients and an approximate charge of £3,000 pays for the administration and delivery of the tokens scheme.
30. In order to pay for the taxi token scheme in Aylesbury Vale the District Council made a decision to half the funding given to Aylesbury Dial-a-Ride ( £76k to £36k), as it believed that the taxi token scheme offers a more versatile solution for residents.
31. The separate funding arrangements by the County Council and District Councils reflect a missed opportunity to enhance provision and provide greater value for money if this were joined-up.

### **Future provision**

32. We felt that that the Dial-a-Ride schemes offer a very worthy service and the dedication of the staff and volunteers cannot be underestimated as they offer a lifeline service to those who may otherwise become socially isolated.
33. However, having considered evidence from the Community Transport Association, disabled transport users, and the work that is taking place in improving taxi services and the AVDC taxi token scheme we feel that the market is becoming increasingly innovative to meet the needs of disabled people, creating competition against Dial-a-Ride's outdated and financially unsustainable business model. We therefore came to the following observations:
  - Dial-a-Ride schemes operating model hasn't evolved to suit the new opportunities to develop and grow alongside other providers.
  - Dial-a-Ride schemes are limiting their client base by operating under a section 19 permit and therefore restricting its potential income.
  - Many taxi services now have accessible vehicles and in some cases offer a more responsive service (in terms of availability) in contrast to the pre-booking required of Dial-a-Ride.

- In light of all the changes, Dial-a-Ride suppliers should be encouraged to look at how they might evolve and work with other community transport providers to become more financially sustainable.
- The needs of people to access public transport, including disabled people, might be better served and provide better value for money to the tax payer through other types of provision rather than via the Dial-A-Ride business model.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that the Council encourages existing dial-a-ride schemes to evolve to suit changes in demand and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by newer, more flexible and sustainable operating models for community transport schemes.**

#### **Developing community transport solutions**

34. There are many benefits from developing community transport solutions. These benefits include that these are independent; often have the potential to utilise volunteers; and can respond more flexibility to changing needs—for example dropping off someone at their house rather than a bus stop.
35. We heard from a range of community transport suppliers across the county and from commissioners. Paul O’Hara, from Community Impact Bucks, told us that *“it is evidence that there is a disconnect between different transport sectors”* in the county. We also found the following examples of disconnected services:
- NHS transport to hospital: Healthwatch told us that many of the non-emergency patient transport services are not known about and that interviews conducted in recent research *“forcibly demonstrate the lack of awareness around transport options”*<sup>10</sup>.
  - We heard that Dial-a-Ride suppliers in the county were struggling to ensure that they are financially viable but that no dialogue had taken place with community bus suppliers to consider joining-up service delivery.
  - In speaking with the bus operators and community transport suppliers it was evident there is also a disconnect in the links between community transport and public buses with opportunities/linkages between commercial routes and community transport feeder routes not being fully explored.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs Campbell, Healthwatch – Evidence session minutes 25 July 2014

36. We heard from suppliers of community transport within the county and Community Link Officers that it is hard to get a picture of current provision across the county. The Community Link Officers told us that they have struggled to get any information mapped in a meaningful way; we were told no hard date is available as yet, as there has been difficulty collecting this.
37. Paul O'Hare, Community Impact Bucks, told us that they have been trying to map all the community transport services in the county. However, said that it was proving difficult to get hard data, and see how the community bus transportation linked with the bus network to identify gaps in provision.<sup>11</sup>
38. The Community Transport Association advised us that the first stage of developing community transport across the county should be to first build a clear picture of all the supply in the county. One ultimate aim he advised should be to use existing services and identify gaps where people have restricted transport options.
39. It was apparent to us through our evidence sessions and previous committee items on community transport that there is no clear picture of the market suppliers across the county. It is vital for the Council to understand a clear picture of the supply of the full range of transportation provision, including the connectivity between different types of provisions in order to identify gaps, and thereby focus limited resources on the things that matter.
40. We heard from both the CTA and Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) that through a joint approach with partners to looking at transport provision provides better opportunities to join-up a mix of transport solutions. The CTA told us that one approach would be to broker groups and sectors to come together to explore opportunities and potentially make better use of resources.<sup>12</sup> We were told by the CTA that in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire there a wider range of community transport services. They have community partnerships/forums for operators to talk to each other and use one voice to go to the main funder" therefore not competing for reducing pot of money.
41. In hearing the evidence presented it was our view that transport suppliers in the county are generally independent of one another and do not have a co-ordinated approach to their operations.
42. The Council should lead on partnership working to join-up service delivery of public transportation, and community transport, not only with partnerships

---

<sup>11</sup> Evidence session minutes 25 July 2014

<sup>12</sup> Evidence session minutes 25 July 2014



between the County Council and local Community Transport Schemes, but with the Health Authority and other local agencies with similar strategic objectives and, importantly, funding opportunities. A commitment from the Council to develop joint working will encourage partnerships in service delivery and this in turn will contribute to better services and customer focused outcomes.

**Recommendation 5**

**In order to address community transport's untapped potential, we recommend that the Transport, Economy & Environment Business Unit prioritises the improvement of community transport across the county in its forthcoming business plan. This should include leading the development of a joined up approach with partners to encourage more accessible, sustainable and responsive community transport schemes.**

**Recommendation 6**

**To ensure limited resources are spent in a coordinated manner, we recommend that the Transport, Economy & Environment Business Unit identifies a lead client side officer within the broader transport team with responsibility for encouraging the development of the community transport sector and strengthening the Council's control of externally contracted service delivery.**

## 5. Commissioning & Structural Transport Integration

43. The Council spends approximately £25m per annum on transport services which is split between the different respective service areas that have responsibility for commissioning transport arrangements. The transport services (planning, procurement and contract management of the buses and taxis supply chain) for Client Transport (home to schools (including Special Educational Needs, Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care transport) is carried out by Amey Client Transport whom are commissioned and managed by the Children and Young People Portfolio.<sup>13</sup> Whilst bus subsidies, concessionary fares and community transport are managed by the Place service under the Ringway Jacobs contract.
44. Both client transport services managed via the Children and Young People's Service and other transport services managed by the Place service areas have significant Medium Term Plan savings to achieve over the next few years. A package of savings projects have been identified of which some have been attributed to contract delivery savings to be delivered by Amey. Within the TfB Contract, a total of £350,000 needs to be made from the mainstream bus subsidy spend by 2017 in addition to further reductions in funding from central government.
45. The current structural arrangement within the Council of a split between different services commissioning parts of transportation services has been in place since April 2013. At this time the desire was to align the political accountability and policy-setting for Home to School Transportation which is with the Cabinet Member for Education with the contract management responsibility for the provision of client transportation. The thinking was that this would enable greater responsiveness of the contract to meet political priorities.
46. The Service Director of Place told us that *"there is still work to be done in terms of collaboration between the services areas being as efficient and effective as it can be and that the current review taking place has highlighted a lot of areas where improvements can be made"*.<sup>14</sup> She also explained that the separation of transport services through the contracts that were "right five years ago, may not necessarily be right for the current climate and where we are now, the value of the contract needs to be made attractive to the market".

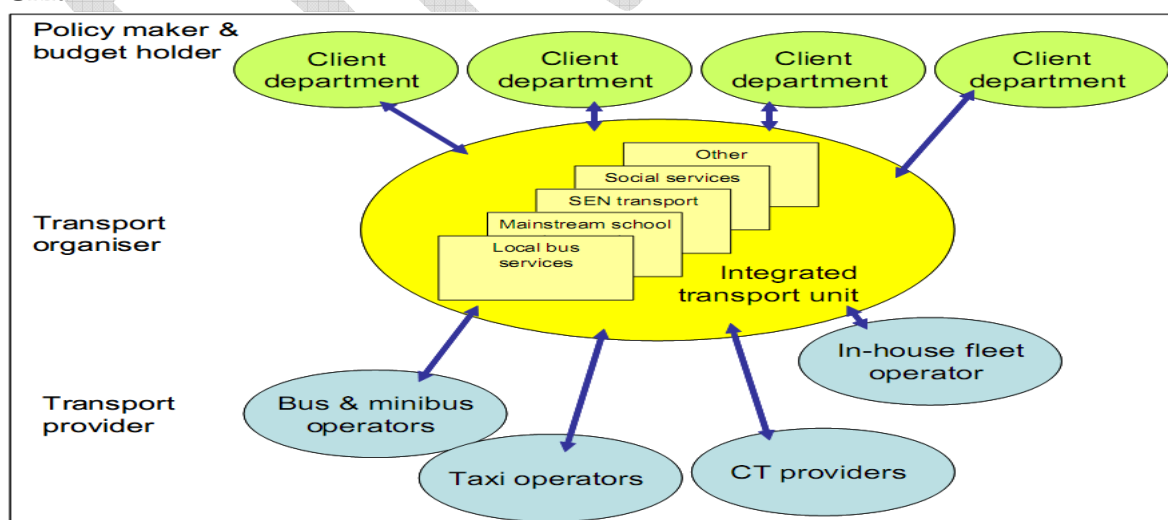
---

<sup>13</sup> Amey appointed in 2008, and moved from Place service management to be managed under the CYP service in April 2013 by the Learning, Skills and Prevention Joint Commissioning Team.

<sup>14</sup> tbc

47. We were also told by both client/contract management teams that they are each carrying out contract and/or policy/eligibility criteria reviews as a result of both audit reviews and improvement plans and in order to make service efficiencies. These reviews have been undertaken by the relevant service areas, with a minimal dialogue between the teams—no formal process for joined coordination of the reviews.
48. It was evident to us that this current approach to transport arrangements has resulted in the service areas working largely in isolation to achieve MTP savings efficiencies without looking for opportunities for joint commissioning, or a single review process to achieve value for money and maximise the use of transport assets. We note that some work has started in its infancy in September 2014 on enabling bus companies to open out some public bus routes on a commercial basis to the wider public, however this is not enough.
49. In contrast to our current structural arrangements, we received external evidence that highlighted that an integrated Transport Unit with integrated commissioning was the best approach for achieving value for money and better services. An Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) is a single unit responsible for coordinating all the authority’s transport services, rather than doing this across a number of teams. Figure one (below) shows how this works at a local authority level in England/Wales. Effectively it is a three tier system involving a top tier of individual clients/departments; the ITU is the middle tier, responsible for designing and managing services and securing their provision; and the third tier comprises transport operators.

Figure 1: Typical passenger transport service delivery with an Integrated Transport Unit.



50. An Integrated Transport Unit approach is recommended by the Department for Transport.<sup>16</sup> The North West Centre of Excellence (NWCE) published a best practice paper detailing different factors for achieving efficiency in local transport. According to its paper, there are five main areas where efficiency benefits can be realised. These are:

- **More focussed professional staff:** An integrated approach presents the opportunity to assemble a team of transport professionals with the skills and experience to address the range of issues around the movement of people.
- **More efficient staff utilisation:** An integrated approach can streamline and standardise processes, cutting out duplication.
- **Better service planning and packaging of external contracts:** An integrated approach encourages consideration of the whole range of transport needs in planning and procuring passenger transport services; An ITU provides a single point of contact for service providers; An ITU wields greater purchasing power; and An ITU will reduce duplication;
- **Better in-house vehicle fleet utilisation:** Better use can potentially be made of the in-house vehicle fleet, particularly where a fleet is under-utilised or used only at certain times e.g. school bus fleet.
- **Greater flexibility:** An integrated unit with professionally focussed staff gives a powerful vehicle for responding to new challenges in transport organisation.

51. We were also told the Strategic Director of Transport for Norfolk County Council who have been operating an integrated transport approach for 12 years that this approach is “*adopted by many local authorities, and those that aren’t are looking to move more towards an integrated approach*”.<sup>17</sup> In her view, there are no benefits of a more split approach that would outweigh the huge range of benefits both in terms of efficiency savings and commissioning the most appropriate services for residents by commissioning the “whole offer” through an integrated approach.

52. Based on the clear evidence of the benefits of an Integrated Transport Unit, both in terms of the management arrangements and commissioning of services, we believe that this is the right time for the Council to change its arrangements to adopt this approach. We believe that this will result in an improved service with better use of limited staffing and funding resources. In

---

<sup>15</sup> NWCE (2006) Integrated Transport Units – A Good Practice Paper [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11h>

<sup>16</sup> Department for transport best practice Guidance, Tendering Road Passenger Transport Contracts, issued in October 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Via a telephone interview on X August 2014.

particular it provides greater opportunity for achieving value for money through reviewing and managing contracts together.

53. Structural integration alone is not enough to ensure that the Council's limited resources are focused in the right ways on achieving the Council's Strategic Plan priorities and outcomes. Public transport can play a key cross-cutting role in helping to reduce social isolation, enable people to access work, support the vulnerable and help the economy. The potential role of public transport should therefore be considered as an opportunity in relation to a number of the Council's Strategic Plan priorities.

54. We therefore conclude that in addition to structural integration, there is a need for cross-council and partnership working to join-up commissioning to maximise the value of public transport to help the Council achieve its priorities.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend that an Integrated Transport Unit is created within the Council's Transport, Economy and Environment Business Unit in order to drive a joined up approach to the Council's investment in transport services, including public buses, client transport, home to school transport and community transport.**

#### **Towards 2020 and beyond–Total Transport Approach**

55. During our inquiry we learnt about the total transport approach. Total transport involves integrating transport services that are currently commissioned by different central and local government agencies and provided by different operators. Such integrated services might deliver improved passenger transport in isolated communities by allocating existing resources more efficiently. That might entail, for example, combining conventional bus services with hospital transport.

56. The House of Commons Transport Select Committee has recently recommended that the Department for Transport develops large-scale pilots of total transport across the UK.<sup>18</sup> The benefits of the approach are that it maximises value for money by enabling partners to pool resources and commission services together rather than in isolation.

---

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmtran/288/28807.htm#a9>

57. With the diminishing resources available to all public sector agencies and local government in Buckinghamshire, the approach of working together with partners to commission services makes sense, particularly with the District Councils and health sector.

**Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that the Council explores opportunities to undertake a pilot project with the Department for Transport focused on innovative Total Transport options.**

DRAFT

## Appendix 1: Inquiry Evidence Programme

Meeting Date	Witnesses
10 <sup>th</sup> June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ruth Vigor-Hedderly, Cabinet Member for Transportation</li> <li>➤ Bob Cook, Interim Highways Manager</li> <li>➤ Gill Harding, Service Director, Place Service</li> <li>➤ Steven Walford, Senior Manager, Planning, Advisory and Compliance</li> <li>➤ Ryan Bunce, PSD Service Lead Officer</li> <li>➤ Sean Rooney, Senior Manager, Transport</li> <li>➤ Andrew Clarke, Passenger Transport Manager</li> <li>➤ Martin Heeley, Design, Construction and Business Manager</li> </ul>
15 <sup>th</sup> July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Andy Clarke, TfB</li> <li>➤ Mike Freestone, TfB</li> </ul>
24 <sup>th</sup> July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Neil Gibson, Strategic Director, Communities &amp; Built Environment</li> <li>➤ Brian Miller, BCC Contract Manager</li> <li>➤ Ben Thomas, CYP Commissioning Manager</li> <li>➤ Andrew Bluck, AMEY</li> <li>➤ Ruth Vigor-Hedderly, Cabinet Member for Transportation</li> <li>➤ Gill Harding, Service Director Place Service</li> <li>➤ Mike Freestone, Interim Contract Manager</li> <li>➤ Andrew Clarke, Passenger Contract Manager</li> <li>➤ Paul Morgan, Commercial Manager, Arriva the Shires</li> <li>➤ Patrick Stringer, Head of Commercial Development, Arriva the Shires</li> <li>➤ Philip Kirk, Managing Director, Carousel Buses</li> <li>➤ Taj Khan, Managing Director, Redline Buses</li> <li>➤ Rebecca Fuller, Policy &amp; Research Manager, Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG)</li> <li>➤ Peter Johnson, Risborough Community Bus,</li> <li>➤ David Ouvrey Chairman, Chesham Dial-a-Ride,</li> <li>➤ Netta Glover, Deputy Cabinet Member, Planning &amp; Environment</li> <li>➤ Sue Marchant, Winslow Community Bus</li> <li>➤ Richard Maskell, Company Secretary, Aylesbury Vale Dial-a-Ride</li> <li>➤ Kyle Bennett, Taxi Licensing Manager, Aylesbury Vale District Council</li> </ul>
25 <sup>th</sup> July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Richard Harrington, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP)</li> <li>➤ Philippa Batting, Bucks Business First (BBF)</li> <li>➤ Simon Garwood &amp; Lynne Maddocks, Buckingham Transport Action Group</li> <li>➤ Paul O'Hare, Community Impact Bucks</li> <li>➤ Tom Hudson, Community Links Officer</li> <li>➤ Ewan Jones, Community Transport Association</li> <li>➤ Rebecca Dengler, BCC Sustainability Service Lead Officer</li> <li>➤ Amanda Phillips-Hodge, non-urgent Patient Transport Bucks and Milton Keynes</li> <li>➤ Anna Clarkson, Customer Care Manager, Patient Transport</li> <li>➤ Clinton Green, Director of Property Services, Bucks Healthcare Trust</li> <li>➤ Janice Campbell, Panel Members, Bucks Healthwatch</li> <li>➤ Colin Higgs, Peter Gulland and Colin Richardson, Aylesbury Vale Transport Users Group</li> <li>➤ Alison Lewis, Wycombe Action for All</li> <li>➤ Alan Wallwork and Chris Emery, Chesham Transport Users Group</li> <li>➤ Simon Billenness, Youth Advocate, BCC</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: County Council net spend on bus subsidy services

Year: Cut:	Net Spend:	Inflation:	Real terms reduction	Future	MTP
2009 10	£3,379,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	
2010 11	£3,196,000	2.40%	8.3%	N/A	
2011 12	£2,999,000	4.77%	11.7%	N/A	
2012 13	£2,893,000	4.82%	8.7%	N/A	
2013 14	£2,788,000	3.09%	6.5%	N/A	
2014 15	£2,676,000	2.67%	6.5%	N/A	
2015 16	£2,516,000	3.00%	8.7%	£248k	
2016 17	£2,505,000	3.00%	3.3%	£102k	