



Date of Meeting: Wednesday 10 July 2019

Lead Member: Lead Member for Highways, Travel and Environment

Lead Officer: Corporate Director for Economic Growth and Infrastructure

Executive Summary:

Dorset Council has a statutory duty to provide school transport for over 7500 pupils, of which close to 1000 are Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Council also provides transport for Adults to Day Care facilities and for Children in Care.

The Dorset Travel team is responsible for commissioning transport for Mainstream Home to School Pupils and SEND Pupils. The team also provides transport for Adults wishing to access Day Care facilities and for Children in Care.

Transport is provided through a mixed economy commissioning model, including private bus operators and taxi firms and the Council's own fleet of vehicles and drivers.

The team is responsible for managing nine subsidised public transport routes and supports Community Transport initiatives. In addition, it looks after public transport infrastructure such as bus stops and real-time information equipment

Equalities Impact Assessment:

N/A

Budget:

N/A

Risk Assessment:

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW (Delete as appropriate)

Residual Risk HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW (Delete as appropriate)

Other Implications:

N/A

Recommendation:
Reason for Recommendation:
Appendices: None
Background Papers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural Bus Services Review (Cabinet 24 February 2016)• New Passenger Transport Contract Model (Cabinet 26 October 2016)• Integrated Transport Review (People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 4 July 2018)
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1. Introduction

1.1 Dorset Council has a statutory duty to provide school transport for over 7500 pupils, of which close to 1000 are Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Council also provides transport for Adults to Day Care facilities and for Children in Care.

1.2 The Council provides financial support to uneconomic local bus services in order to advance economic and social objectives. There is no statutory obligation to provide these services and many other Councils have previously withdrawn all funding. Following a review of Transport Services in 2016, contracts for supported bus services in Dorset were reduced from a revenue spend of £2.7million to a current annual spend of £1.0m, as the number of subsidised routes was reduced to nine.

2. The role of Dorset Travel

2.1 The Dorset Travel team is responsible for commissioning transport for Mainstream Home to School Pupils and SEND Pupils.

2.2 The team also provides transport for Adults wishing to access Day Care facilities and for Children in Care.

2.3 Transport is provided through a mixed economy commissioning model, including private bus operators and taxi firms and the Council's own fleet of vehicles and drivers.

2.4 The team is responsible for managing the nine subsidised public transport routes and supports Community Transport initiatives. In addition, it looks after public transport infrastructure such as bus stops and real-time information equipment.

3. Public and School Transport Review

3.1 A review of public transport in Dorset was conducted by the Council in 2016. The aim was to work with commercial providers to ensure the viability of principal inter-urban routes, whilst removing all subsidy and support from uneconomic routes and seeking to ensure that community based and led services were in place or developed to meet the travel needs of rural communities.

3.2 The consultation for the Review ran for eight weeks between 27 May and 22 July 2016 and sought people's views on their proposals for the future of subsidised bus services in Dorset.

3.3 The Review was needed due to increasing pressures on the authority's budget. As a result, the public transport subsidy was reduced by £1m and school transport services reduced by £850,000.

3.4 It was not possible to retain the existing public bus network within the revised budgets. It was therefore proposed to work closely with community transport operators, community groups and councillors to develop Dorset's community transport network. The remaining subsidy was prioritised for those core routes that can service the most people and contribute the most to the economic well-being of the county. There are currently 9 core routes that are subsidised by Dorset Council. These provide connections between market towns therefore providing maximum opportunities for bus travel to employment sites, education, shopping and leisure. These are routes where it is not viable for bus companies to operate a commercial service.

3.5 The outcome of the Review was implemented in summer 2017 and as a result, some areas of Dorset no longer have access to a public transport service where commercial transport operation is not viable. To mitigate this, the Council has supported the development of Community transport solutions to bring both innovation and flexibility to fill these gaps in an inclusive way

4. Dorset Community Transport

4.1 Dorset Travel has committed to supporting community transport and it has produced a toolkit to help communities develop different travel/transport solutions tailored to the needs of residents.

4.2 A dedicated Community Transport officer is employed as part of the Dorset Travel team to support communities.

4.3 Since 2016, officers from Dorset Travel have attended over 60 community engagement meetings across the county involving councillors, parish councils, transport operators, members of the community and other interested stakeholders.

4.4 Dorset Council has produced a Community Transport Directory that is available on the community transport pages on the Council's website. There

has been an increased amount of communications about community transport. This includes using social media to ensure that messages reach younger travellers as well as featuring in more traditional publications such as the Council's countywide newspaper.

- 4.5 Dorset Council also offers a Community Transport Grant, introduced in October 2016, for capital and revenue support to help with costs associated with setting up and running a community transport scheme. Dorset Travel offers other support such as providing training for volunteer drivers.