

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

19 JUNE 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

COUNCIL/CABINET DECISION

Regeneration & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor R Cook

TEES VALLEY BUS NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS

1. Summary (expanded report summary)

On 7 September 2006, Cabinet authorised the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit – acting on behalf of the Council and its partner Authorities in the sub-region – to develop and submit a Major Scheme Business Case for the Tees Valley Bus Network Review to the Department for Transport. Following rejection of the initial Business Case submitted in October 2006, a revised Business Case for the scheme was submitted to the Department for Transport on 29 February 2008.

This Report asks Members to note the development of the scheme – now known as the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements – and, subject to approval of the revised Business Case by the Department for Transport, to authorise officers to pursue the preferred strategy for its delivery within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Members note the scope of the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements, and the implications of the scheme for the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.
2. Members note that a revised Major Scheme Business Case was submitted to the Department for Transport on 29 February 2008, and that the Department's decision on 'Conditional Approval' is expected by the end of August 2008.
3. Subject to Department for Transport approval of the Major Scheme Business Case, officers be authorised to pursue the preferred strategy for delivery of the scheme as outlined within the Report.
4. Members note the intention to carry out a Borough-wide publicity campaign following the granting of Conditional Approval for the scheme.
5. A further Report, updating Members on progress, be brought to Cabinet in October 2008.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

Improvements to the public transport infrastructure are central to the delivery of key elements of the local transport plan and will make significant changes to the mode of travel available to the community.

This scheme is intended to not only halt the decline in bus patronage but to make positive changes to the way in which people travel to and from work and access services and facilities.

Central to this project will be an improvement in the quality of the public transport services offered in the Tees Valley which will be measurable through the satisfaction level with bus services.

Coupled with this scheme will be a consultation programme and publicity campaign that will raise the profile of public transport in the area and encourage modal shift towards more sustainable transport.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

On 7 September 2006, Cabinet authorised the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit – acting on behalf of the Council and its partner Authorities in the sub-region – to develop and submit a Major Scheme Business Case for the Tees Valley Bus Network Review to the Department for Transport. Following rejection of the initial Business Case submitted in October 2006, a revised Business Case for the scheme was submitted to the Department for Transport on 29 February 2008.

This Report asks Members to note the development of the scheme – now known as the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements – and, subject to approval of the revised Business Case by the Department for Transport, to authorise officers to pursue the preferred strategy for its delivery within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Members note the scope of the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements, and the implications of the scheme for the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.
2. Members note that a revised Major Scheme Business Case was submitted to the Department for Transport on 29 February 2008, and that the Department's decision on 'Conditional Approval' is expected by the end of August 2008.
3. Subject to Department for Transport approval of the Major Scheme Business Case, officers be authorised to pursue the preferred strategy for delivery of the scheme as outlined within the Report.
4. Members note the intention to carry out a Borough-wide publicity campaign following the granting of Conditional Approval for the scheme.
5. A further Report, updating Members on progress, be brought to Cabinet in October 2008.

DETAIL

Background

1. A comprehensive appraisal of the operation of the sub-regional bus network – the 'Tees Valley Bus Network Review' – was carried out by the TAS Partnership, a specialist public transport consultancy, in 2004 on behalf of the five Local Authorities within the sub-region.

The Review recommended the adoption of a new approach to bus service provision, based on the creation of a stable, hierarchical network and the development of high demand and high quality links – known as ‘Core Routes’ – to and between key centres.

2. At its meeting on 7 September 2006 (Minute No. 521 refers), Cabinet authorised the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (TVJSU) – acting on behalf of the Council and its partner Authorities in the sub-region – to develop and submit a Major Scheme Business Case, based on the recommendations arising from the Review, to the Department for Transport (DfT).
3. An outline Business Case was duly submitted to the DfT on 31 October 2006. The DfT responded on 30 November 2006, confirming that it had no major concerns regarding the strategic case for the scheme, but setting out a list of additional work required prior to the granting of funding approval.
4. Accordingly, over the subsequent months, a revised Major Scheme Business Case for the scheme – now known as the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements – was prepared, again led by the TVJSU but with significant input from the five Local Authorities and the two major local bus operators (Arriva and Stagecoach). The revised Business Case was finally submitted to the DfT on 29 February 2008, and copies of the Executive Summary have been placed in the Members’ Library for information.

The Scheme

5. The proposed scheme is focused on a set of key elements, as outlined below:

‘Core’ Route Corridors

These are the top tiers of the hierarchical network structure proposed in the Tees Valley Bus Network Review, with the majority of the proposed Core Routes operating within the urban areas of the sub-region.

The Core Routes identified within the Borough are summarised in the Table below:

| Service Number | Route | Operator |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------|
| 7 (part) | Stockton – Yarm | Arriva |
| 15 | Roseworth – Stockton – Thornaby | Arriva |
| 17/17A/17B/17C (part) | Middlesbrough – Thornaby | Arriva |
| 36/37/38 (part) | Park End – Middlesbrough – Stockton – Norton | Stagecoach |
| 52 | Stockton – Billingham | Stagecoach |
| 58 | Stockton – Hardwick | Stagecoach |
| 59 | Stockton – University Hospital of North Tees | Stagecoach |
| 61 | Stockton – Elton Park (Fairfield) | Stagecoach |
| X6 | Stockton – Ingleby Barwick – Middlesbrough – James Cook University Hospital | Arriva |

Bus Priority and Infrastructure

A comprehensive series of bus priority measures have been developed to alter the traffic balance in favour of buses on the identified Core Routes. The site-specific measures proposed within the Borough are listed in the Stockton Infrastructure Register, which is summarised in **Appendix 1**.

Passenger Facilities

The facilities provided at all of the bus stops on the Core Route Corridors will be upgraded where necessary in line with a common specification agreed between the scheme partners. This specification includes 'basics' such as the introduction of raised, low floor-compatible platforms and passenger shelters, together with the provision of enhanced lighting and, where justified, CCTV coverage to address concerns regarding personal security.

Service Specification

Work to refine the Service Specification has continued throughout the development of the scheme. The current specification, which has been agreed in principle by all of the scheme Partners, is as follows:

- Minimum daytime frequency of six buses per hour operating between 07:00 and 23:30 Monday to Saturday, with a reduced period of operation on Sunday;
- 'Clearway' approach along whole route;
- Bus priority at all major junctions;
- Vehicle detection at traffic signals;
- Introduction of dedicated bus and cycle lanes where required;
- Review of loading/waiting restrictions along each route to maintain the 'clearway' approach and ensure access to bus stops;
- Comprehensive enforcement, together with the widespread use of self-enforcing measures to minimise enforcement costs;
- High specification, high quality, low emission, fully accessible 'branded' vehicles, with enhanced interior comfort and facilities; and
- A minimum 95% journey reliability target.

Fares and Ticketing

The Local Authorities are working with the bus operators to promote 'cashless entry', reducing the need for the driver to handle cash fares and speeding up boarding times. Discussions are also ongoing with regard to the introduction of a simplified fare structure, removing the need for passengers to buy separate tickets when making journeys involving more than one bus operator.

Complementary Measures

Complementary measures such as the introduction of high quality, accessible timetable information and 'real time' journey information (including displays at bus stops together with on-line, on-board and SMS messaging) will help the proposed scheme deliver a 'whole journey' concept aimed at encouraging bus use for a wide variety of journey types throughout the day.

6. Whilst the scheme is focused on upgrades to 'Core' Routes, stabilising this part of the network will allow the limited funding available for the remainder of the commercial network and the supporting tertiary and rural services to be used more effectively. Elements of the scheme, including improvements to passenger information and new ticketing initiatives, will also be rolled out across the whole of the network, not just those corridors that form part of the scheme.

Project Delivery

7. It is intended that the project will be delivered through one or more Statutory Quality Partnership schemes, in line with the draft Local Transport Bill published in May 2007. This will enable sustainable delivery of the required improvements and ensure significant local investment from both the public and private sector partners, as well as providing an ongoing legacy of targeted investment across the network. As well as bus operator commitments, this approach will place an additional obligation on the Local Authorities to provide, maintain and enforce the agreed infrastructure improvements.

Next Steps

8. The DfT has undertaken to inform the TVJSU of any major concerns regarding the Business Case by the end of April 2008. A decision on whether to grant 'Conditional Approval' for the scheme is due to follow by the end of August 2008 and, if this decision is positive, 'Full Approval' should follow by the end of the calendar year. Subject to approval being granted, works 'on the ground' should commence early in 2009, with completion of the scheme as a whole envisaged by mid-2011.
9. Given the above timescale, work is currently underway to develop a detailed Project Plan for delivery of those elements of the scheme within the Borough over the next three years, taking into account factors such as:
 - **Consultation**, both on the scheme as a whole and for the individual schemes proposed within the Stockton Infrastructure Register;
 - **Legal Requirements**, including the need to advertise Traffic Regulation Orders and resolve any objections that may be received;
 - **Procurement** of the schemes within the Stockton Infrastructure Register;
 - **Preparatory Works**, such as detailed scheme design and the diversion of statutory undertakers' services (e.g. water and gas mains) where required; and
 - **Temporary Traffic Management Measures** necessary to minimise disruption whilst works are underway.

The Key Milestones over the life of the project are summarised in **Appendix 2**. It should be noted that the timescales shown are provisional at this stage.

10. Assuming that Conditional Approval for the scheme is secured in August 2008, a Borough-wide publicity campaign will be carried out over the remainder of the calendar year. This campaign will inform local stakeholders – including the residents of the Borough – about the benefits of the scheme, the proposed delivery programme and the measures that will be put in place to mitigate disruption to the travelling public whilst works are underway.
11. A further Report will be brought to Cabinet in October 2008, by which time the position with regard to the release of funding for the scheme will have been established and the detailed Project Plan finalised.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The total cost of the proposals has been estimated at **£61.224 million**. £40.496 million has already been allocated to the proposals through the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) process, with this funding supplemented by local contributions from:
 - The five Local Authorities, primarily through their annual Local Transport Capital Settlements and from external funding secured through the development control process; and

- The two major bus operators (Arriva and Stagecoach), both through investment in vehicles and training and by meeting the ongoing cost of operating the enhanced levels of service that underpin the proposals.
13. The total outturn cost of the schemes within the Stockton Infrastructure Register has been estimated at **£18.715 million**. Of this total, £12.630 million will be funded through the RFA, with the remaining £6.085 million met from local contributions. **Appendix 1** includes a breakdown of these totals by scheme, and identifies the source(s) of local funding in each case.
14. The funding requirements associated with the scheme have been built into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, as approved by Cabinet on 21 February 2008 (Minute No. CAB 141/07 refers).

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. There are no immediate legal implications associated with the activities flowing from the recommendations contained within this Report.
16. Assuming that Conditional Approval is granted in August 2008, the process of advertising the Traffic Regulation Orders associated with the individual schemes in the Stockton Infrastructure Register will commence shortly thereafter. Any objections received will be considered by the Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport.
17. A common Procurement Strategy for the scheme is currently being developed by the five Local Authorities, with Hartlepool Borough Council taking the lead on this issue. A draft 'Action Plan' is due to be published during May 2008.

RISK ASSESSMENT

18. The activities flowing from the recommendations contained within this Report are categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities will be sufficient to control and reduce risk.
19. Effective management of risk will be crucial to the successful delivery of the scheme. For this reason, the Major Scheme Business Case includes both a Strategic and a Project Risk Register, identifying all of the potential risks to delivery together with the mitigation measures necessary to address them.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

20. The proposed scheme will contribute towards achievement of the key objectives set within a number of the policy platform areas of the Community Strategy 2005-08, as summarised in the Table below:

| Policy Platform Area | Improvement Theme | Key Objective |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Economic Regeneration and Transport</i> | <u>Theme 4</u> : 'Accessibility of Local Facilities and Services' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to education, jobs and health services. • Reduce road congestion. |
| | <u>Theme 5</u> : 'Reduce the Harmful Effects of Road Travel' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce road traffic related air pollution. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <u>Theme 6</u> : 'Sub-Regional Transport Structure' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the connections and transport links within and into the Tees Valley City Region. • Transport network rebalanced to promote more sustainable modes. |
| Liveability | <u>Theme 3</u> : 'Create a Better Environment' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to quality, safe and secure green spaces in the Borough. |
| Healthier Communities and Adults | <u>Theme 2</u> : 'Access to Health Services' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to healthcare for traditionally marginalised groups. |
| | <u>Theme 4</u> : 'Promote the Independence of Vulnerable Older People and Adults' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support independent living. |

By providing a more sustainable alternative to many journeys currently made by car, the proposed scheme will also contribute positively towards meeting the air quality and climate change objectives set out in the Second Stockton-on-Tees Local Transport Plan and the Stockton-on-Tees Climate Change Action Plan.

Community Safety Implications

- Concerns regarding personal security, particularly by users of evening bus services, have been a key contributory factor to the long-term decline in patronage and the corresponding shrinkage of the commercial network across the Tees Valley sub-region. The adoption of a common specification across the Core Route network with respect to measures such as the provision of enhanced lighting at bus stops and the introduction of CCTV cameras on buses and at bus stops recognises the fact that positive action needs to be taken to address these concerns if the cycle of decline is to be tackled effectively.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- This Report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and has been judged to have a positive impact. No remedial actions are required.

CONSULTATION, INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLOR

- The overriding priority to emerge from the consultation carried out during preparation of the Second Stockton-on-Tees Local Transport Plan, which covers the five-year period from 2006 to 2011, was the need to improve both the quality and coverage of the bus network within the Borough. Regular updates on the scheme have been given to the four Area Transport Strategy Steering Groups, whilst presentations have also been made to the Economic Regeneration & Transport and Environment Thematic Partnerships and, most recently, the four Area Partnership Boards of Stockton Renaissance. The Major Scheme Business Case was also covered in some detail at the inaugural meeting of the Tees Valley Bus Users' Forum, held at the Swallow Hotel in Stockton on 25 February 2008.
- As stated earlier within this Report, it is intended to undertake a Borough-wide publicity campaign during autumn 2008, subject to Conditional Approval for the scheme being secured at the end of August. Detailed consultation will also be carried out prior to the introduction of each of the individual schemes within the Stockton Infrastructure Register.

Corporate Director of Development & Neighbourhood Services

Contact Officer: Rob Farnham
Tel: (01642) 526729
e-mail: rob.farnham@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Report to Cabinet, 7 September 2006 (Minute No. 521 refers).

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All.

Property:

All of the proposed schemes in the Stockton Infrastructure Register can be accommodated within the existing highway boundary, with the exception of Scheme Ref. S10 (Southern Gateway). The land assembly associated with this scheme was considered by Cabinet on 20 December 2007 (Minute No. CAB 112/07 refers).