

**TO: ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
22 JANUARY 2013**

**BUS STRATEGY REVIEW
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel establishes a Working Group to guide the emerging Bus Strategy.
- 1.2 In 2011, a reduction in available bus subsidy budget was proposed. Following wide consultation the decision was taken not to reduce services. It was further agreed that a review of the Bus Strategy was needed to inform future financial support. The decision was supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group which had been set-up to review the budget reduction proposals.
- 1.3 In its recommendations, the Working Group proposed that the Bus Strategy should be updated and, to allow a full and thorough review, the supported bus budget remain untouched for 2013/14 to allow for network stability while the Strategy is developed and implemented. The Working Group also recognised it could play a useful role in reviewing the emerging Strategy as it was being developed.
- 1.4 To be able to implement the Bus Strategy for April 2014, a draft strategy will need to be developed by May 2013.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel establishes a Working Group to guide the Emerging Bus Strategy, ready for implementation in April 2014.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 To ensure that the Executive makes a fully informed decision when determining future provision of public transport in the Borough.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.
- 4.2 The Council has a statutory duty to deliver supported bus services – without a review of the Bus Strategy, which guides the delivery of supported services in the Borough, the Council risks committing to a bus network that is economically unsustainable and, with the development of the Town Centre imminent, failing to reach its full potential.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Annex A includes an outline work programme for the Working Group

- 5.2 Officers are currently conducting a short term retendering exercise on two routes, and extending contracts for the other routes in the borough, with the aim of maintaining the network until April 2014.
- 5.3 Officers are currently writing a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to be published on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), to announce the Councils plan to retender the entire subsidised bus network in Bracknell Forest during 2013/14, ready for implementation in April 2014. The Bus Strategy will help shape this tendering exercise.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS / EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT / STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES / CONSULTATION

- 6.1 A procurement plan is currently under development which will require input from both the Borough Solicitor and Treasurer.
- 6.2 A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be required, which will include a 12 week public and stakeholder consultation on the draft strategy.

Background Papers

A review of the Proposed Reductions to Public Transport Subsidies and Concessionary Fares Support – Working Group draft Report 27 October 2012

Executive Member for Planning and Transport – CMT Report – Bus Strategy Review 09 October 2012

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Annex A

To provide context and to direct discussions to help the Working Group guide the emerging Bus Strategy, three 'workshops' are being proposed:

Session 1: Roles and responsibilities

- Introduction to buses and bus networks; *how they work and are procured (inc. difference between commercial/tender network, cost + subsidy contracts, conc fares scheme etc)*
- Roles and responsibility of the Council; *what is legally required and what is discretionary*
- Priorities for Bracknell; *open discussion about priorities to help shape session 2, based around Council's 6 overarching key priorities i.e. A town centre fit for the 21st century – importance of evening and Sunday services, compared with access to all.*

Session 2: Local context and direction

- Introduction Bracknell's network and history; *why it is like it is*
- Critique; *Strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to the network*
- Priorities for Bracknell; *more focused discussion about priorities in Bracknell, using the focus created in session 1 to add a bit more local context, implications of some choices (cost and resources), and some best practice (how do other authorities measure this)*

Session 3: Shaping the new bus strategy

- Informed by the first two sessions, we can put forward some more concrete principals and also specific targets for the bus strategy to focus the discussion, and attempt to get agreement on priorities.