

**West of England Partnership
Joint Transport Executive Committee
4 February 2010**

Bristol Area Bus Network Review

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of plans to review the Bristol area bus network and to seek their agreement of the proposed objectives and timetable.

Background

2. First are planning to undertake a review of all their commercial bus services operated as part of their Bristol area network, ie within the Bristol built up area. They will also consider the role within Bristol of their interurban services to places such as Yate, Bath and Clevedon and connections to places close to but outside the built up area, e.g. Long Ashton. The West of England authorities, by their involvement in the review in the coming months, will play a key role in shaping and agreeing the new bus network for the area. Both Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils have a particular interest in this review due to the subsidy they provide for service enhancements on otherwise commercial routes and in filling service gaps to create a more comprehensive network.
3. It is critical that the review builds on the work being undertaken to upgrade services and infrastructure on the main corridors through the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) and complement the associated development of statutory Quality Partnership Schemes (QPS) currently being led by Bath & North East Somerset Council. It is therefore important to see this piece of work as one element of the on-going programme of investment and development of public transport in the sub-region. A report explaining the wider programme and context will be brought to the Committee's next meeting on 18 March 2010.

Proposals

4. It is proposed that Bristol City Council lead on the review in conjunction with First and South Gloucestershire, although officers from the other Unitary Authorities will be closely involved. Consultation on the bus network will be carried out, e.g. via the Ask Bristol website, seeking views on how and where bus routes and services might be improved. This will inform the project on the potential future bus network. In addition Bristol will evaluate the performance and value for money of existing service contracts as most of these will be due for renewal or review during 2011 and those that are required in the future will need to be tendered towards the end of 2010. In the same timescale Bristol City Council is carrying out a review of its school and social care transport services and would wish to see a coordinated procurement process for all its new contracts if possible. The review will also allow for consideration of the contribution that could be made by flexible and/or demand responsive transport as appropriate.
5. As the outcome of this review is very likely to impact on both Bristol and South Gloucestershire's contracted services and to a lesser extent on North Somerset's

and Bath & North East Somerset's, its conclusion is necessary before the contracted services can be finally determined. With this in mind, together with the timescale involved for the EU procurement process, it is proposed to adopt as far as possible a common termination/renewal date of September 2011 for all Bristol's passenger service contracts. This would also coincide with the termination/renewal date of the University of the West of England's network of services and present a further opportunity for coordination of services.

6. South Gloucestershire Council also administers a number of contracts that form an integral part of the Bristol bus network and to which Bristol City Council provides a financial contribution. All but one of these contracts is due for renewal in July 2010 (the other is in August 2014) therefore consideration will need to be given as to how these services can best be maintained until September 2011.
7. At an initial meeting between First and officers of Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils, the draft objectives of the review were discussed. It is proposed that these are to: -
 - Increase patronage and improve the bus network's share of passenger journeys
 - Improve the profitability of the network and reduce the level of public financial support required
 - Improve customer satisfaction.

To be achieved by:

- A comprehensible, marketable network that meets current needs and demands whilst being responsive to change, e.g. to new developments such as Southmead Hospital and Hengrove Park.

8. The proposed timescale is therefore as follows: -

Dates	Actions
February 2010 to June 2010	Public consultation & surveys, data analysis, review forms of contract. First determine their commercial network. Consultation with other service providers, eg other commercial operators, councils, UWE. Prepare proposals for supported network.
July/August 2010	Political approval for services to be tendered.
Autumn 2010	Tender process begins.
September 2011	New contracted services commence.

Recommendation

9. That the proposed objectives and timetable be agreed.

Author:

Geoff Mills, Service Manager - Passenger Transport, Bristol City Council
Telephone: 0117 92 22397, E-mail: geoff.mills@bristol.gov.uk