

SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD – COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

Meeting date: 10 March 2023

From: Angela Jones, Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure

Bus service provision

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides an update on bus service provision across the county.

2.0 Issues for Scrutiny

2.1 Members are asked to note the report and provide comments which will be relayed to Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council who will assume the Local Transport Authority (LTA) function from 01 April 2023 for their respective areas.

3.0 Background

3.1 On 21 October 2021 Cumbria County Council's Cabinet considered a report from the Cabinet Working Group – Transport in Cumbria (appendix 1 and 2). The report and its associated appendix were based on witness sessions held by the Group, national and local policy context and research. Having considered the contents of the Group's report a response was provided by the Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure (appendix 3) which was considered by Cabinet.

3.2 Alongside the report of the Cabinet Working Group, on 21 October 2021 Cumbria County Council's Cabinet also approved the organisation's first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) (appendix 4). This fulfilled the requirements of the Department for Transport's (DfT) National Bus Strategy for England which required LTA's to work with bus operators and other relevant stakeholders to improve bus services in their locality.

3.3 The BSIP included a request to secure £64m of Government funding to deliver a range of improvements to local bus services across Cumbria. While 31 councils were successful in attracting additional funding over 40, including Cumbria County Council, were not. Despite this disappointing news the aspirations of the plan and the measures proposed within it still remain and officers will continue to work with partners to explore other potential

sources of additional funding to help the new authorities realise their ambitions to improve public transport and public transport infrastructure.

- 3.4 The BSIP is currently being reviewed and this will be utilised to reiterate the ambitions to the DfT and hopefully secure funding in future years. The Council will also be shortly be agreeing an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (EPP&S) with the county's bus operators which will formalise the content of the BSIP. In due course it is likely that the 2 new authorities will publish their own BSIPs and develop their own EPP&S. These activities will involve engagement with Members and a wider group of stakeholders.
- 3.5 As Members will be aware Cumbria County Council has secured £1.5m funding from the DfT as part of its Rural Mobility Fund. In Summer 2023 a series of digital demand responsive transport solutions will be launched as pilot schemes serving the rural areas surrounding 4 of Cumbria's market towns. These will cover a 15 mile radius of Penrith and Wigton and a 10 mile radius of Egremont/St Bees and Ulverston.
- 3.6 The schemes will serve rural areas surrounding the above stated towns currently with little or no scheduled bus services. It is anticipated that the transport will improve access to education, healthcare, employment and the leisure and retail offer in addition to supporting the night time economy. Engagement will be undertaken with Members and the wider community in advance of the pilot scheme launch and during the subsequent evaluation exercises. It is hoped that if the schemes are successful and self-financing they can be implemented in other areas of the county.
- 3.7 As Members will be aware the Cumbria County Council has received £0.381m funding from the DfT as part of its Funding for Supported Bus Services initiative. Following dialogue with Members it was suggested that a series of scheduled bus services were introduced serving areas with little or no current provision.
- 3.8 It was proposed that the services would run on a selected number of days during the week and be delivered by the Council's in-house transport delivery team, Cumbria Transport Operational Team (CTOT). This would provide a service for local communities and better utilise the CTOT vehicles which are predominantly only used for home to school transport and adult day opportunities routes.
- 3.9 The routes initially identified were as follows:
 - Appleby to Kendal and return.
 - New Hutton to Kendal and return.
 - Moor Row to Egremont and return.
 - Broughton-in-Furness to Millom and Haverigg and return.
- 3.10 Officers will shortly be reviewing the above stated routes as, since the initial suggestions were submitted, some are now served with scheduled bus services. Members will be consulted should any changes to the initial plans be envisaged.

- 3.11 Alongside this work; further research into options around the development of improved rural accessibility is also being undertaken through a rural mobility framework. This will consider options to improve access in different types of rural places, including the role of local transport hubs, electric vehicle roll out, smart technology, walking and cycling together with further options for the delivery of improved rural transport services. This will be complete by May 2023 and will support the implementation of the current Local Transport Plan (the Cumbria Transport and Infrastructure Plan) alongside the development of successor plans by Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils.
- 3.12 Members are asked to consider paragraphs 3.1 to 3.11 inclusive of this report and provide comments which will be submitted to Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council for further consideration.

Angela Jones
Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure
01 March 2023

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Cabinet 21 October 2021 - Cabinet Working Group: Transport in Cumbria.

Appendix 2 – Cabinet 21 October 2021 - Cabinet Working Group: Transport in Cumbria – Findings and Options.

Appendix 3 – Cabinet 21 October 2021 - Response of the Executive Director – Cabinet Working Group: Transport in Cumbria.

Appendix 4 – Cumbria County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Previous Relevant Council or Executive Decisions

Cabinet – 21 October 2021.

Background Papers

No background papers.

Contact: Austin Shields, Senior Manager – Transport Services
07974 327131 and austin.shields@cumbria.gov.uk

Michael Barry, Senior Manager – Economy and Place
07733 302913 and michael.barry@cumbria.gov.uk