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| Committee | Cabinet |
| Date | 24 June 2003 |
| Report By | Director of Transport and Environment |
| Title of Report | Bus Information Strategy for East Sussex |
| Purpose of Report | To seek Cabinet approval of the Bus Information Strategy and authority to update this in future |

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1. approve the Bus Information Strategy for East Sussex for inclusion as an Appendix to the East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP) Annual Progress Report; and**
 - 2. authorise the Director of Transport and Environment in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport and Environment to endorse any changes to the approved Strategy following continuing discussions with bus operators and other interested parties, and in light of the emerging Bus Strategy.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 It should be possible to implement the strategy using approximately £170,000 per annum from the existing Passenger Services Group revenue budget. The intention is that efficiency savings from reducing the frequency of service changes will offset increases in expenditure on providing timetables at more bus stops. From time to time additional capital funding will be required through the Local Transport Plan for items needed to deliver the regional Traveline service and real time information (£30,000 in 2003/04). Other funding sources, such as the Government's Urban and Rural Bus Challenge Funds, may be appropriate for future initiatives.

1.2 The implementation of the strategy will help the County Council to secure external funding from:

- commercial bus operators, through powers to recover certain costs;
- the Government, through delivery of a key Local Transport Plan and Best Value target.

1.3 The County Council does not intend to place heavy financial burdens on bus operators so the risk of them withdrawing commercial bus services should be minimal. Public transport information is a rapidly evolving field; as and when new initiatives are proposed the costs, benefits, risks and funding sources can be evaluated as details become available.

2. Supporting Information

Introduction

2.1 The Transport Act 2000 gives local transport authorities certain responsibilities and powers in relation to bus information. These can best be exercised through the adoption of a public transport information strategy (renamed Bus Information Strategy on the recommendation of Scrutiny Committee).

2.2 The East Sussex Local Transport Plan commits the County Council to develop a public transport information strategy, and includes targets for improving public satisfaction with local public transport information and for increasing bus passenger numbers.

2.3 The draft strategy set out proposals for the sort of public transport information that should be provided locally and appropriate ways for this to be done, consistent with the policy aims set out in the Local Transport Plan and the resources available. It built on the County Council's existing practice and aimed to deliver national plans for more detailed public transport information plus a local target for increased availability of information at bus stop level. An executive summary is attached as Appendix A to this report. A copy of the Strategy has been circulated separately. Appendices to the strategy are in the Members' Room.

2.4 It also sought to clarify the respective responsibilities of the County Council and commercial bus operators, including funding, with the aim of achieving best value.

2.5 During consultation on the draft strategy, responses were received from a number of major bus companies, town and parish councils, other organisations and individuals. The main points made have been summarised as follows:

- Target new bus users through new technology (e.g. internet and mobile phones) and by working with large organisations through green travel plans
- Improve basic paper information (at bus stops, in booklets) for existing bus users who often rely on these sources of information
- Improve the accuracy of the regional Traveline telephone enquiry service
- Agree clear responsibility for bus stops and their timetables, including prompt updating and responding to vandalism
- Support in principle for a limited number of dates when services change
- Integrated public transport information e.g. about buses at rail stations and ferry ports
- Role for local communities (Parish Councils and Community Transport Groups)
- Need to inform passengers about service changes and disruption – important to maintain confidence of users, especially elderly and disabled people and children
- Information is not just one way – need for clear system for receiving and responding to complaints and other input from the public

2.6 These are all helpful and constructive points, many of them already covered by the draft strategy, although it has been revised to include or emphasise others. Many of these objectives will require detailed discussions with bus operators and others in order to agree practical working arrangements. There are also ongoing developments which will impact upon the bus information strategy, notably the Bus Partnership Forum's recently published Code of Conduct on Service Stability and the County Council's draft bus strategy which is currently out to consultation. The Bus Information Strategy will therefore need to be updated from time to time and authority is sought for this to be done by the Director of Transport and Environment in consultation with the Lead Member.

3. Environmental Issues

3.1 The strategy is intended to improve public transport information in East Sussex, which is an essential part of promoting the use of public transport as an environmentally friendly alternative to the car.

4. Community Safety Issues

4.1 Better information about bus services has the potential to reduce waiting time at bus stops and hence exposure to insecurity.

5. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

5.1 The strategy aims to achieve the policy aims of improving bus information and increasing passenger numbers, within the resources available. It sets a broad framework for working with bus operators and others to deliver information in a way that is useful to both existing and potential bus passengers. This is a complex task that will require detailed discussions with bus operators and others. Public transport information is a rapidly evolving area of work and the Strategy will need to adapt in line with changing circumstances.

BOB WILKINS

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16 June 2003 CABINET: C24June-BusInfo

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Extract from Transport Act 2000 (Sections 139-141)

Extract from East Sussex Local Transport Plan (Appendix F)

Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) papers:

- "Bus Services: Provision of Information"
- "Printed Public transport Information: a Code of Good Practice"

Bus Partnership Forum: Code of Conduct on Service Stability

BUS INFORMATION STRATEGY – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bus Information Strategy outlines the importance of good information about bus and other public transport services. Section 1 sets out the County Council's responsibilities under the Transport Act 2000 to determine – following public consultation - what information is required locally and the appropriate way it should be made available. It describes the County Council's plans to work with operators to ensure appropriate information provision and, as a last resort, the County Council's powers to require bus operators to co-operate in this task.

Section 2 provides an overview of information requirements and describes the “hierarchy of information” with information considered at four levels:

- General information about the network
- Options for the journey
- How to travel
- During the journey and other details

Section 3 sets out the required information and the appropriate way it should be made available:

- Maps and diagrams to show route network and stops
- Timetable booklets and leaflets
- Bus stop information
- Bus stations and interchanges
- Telephone enquiries
- Internet enquiries
- Real time information
- On-bus information
- Fares and ticketing
- People with disabilities and special needs
- Disruption to services
- Rail, coach and ferry services

Section 4 sets out practical arrangements for the supply, maintenance and updating of information and the standards to be met. This covers:

- Bus service registrations
- Bus stop names
- Route numbering
- Service change dates
- Public holidays
- East Sussex bus timetable database
- Presentation and content
- Deadlines for updating information
- Distribution of information

Section 5 describes the arrangements for implementation and funding. It sets out the proposed division of responsibilities – principally between the County Council and bus operators – for providing and funding the different aspects of bus information. This includes powers to charge operators, in the last resort, for reasonable information provision about their services including the Traveline telephone information service. Achieving best value also depends on keeping bus services as straightforward and stable as is reasonably possible - complexity and frequent changes increase information costs and undermine public confidence. The County Council will have a monitoring and enforcement role in respect of information provision.

Finally, Section 6 summarises the consultation responses received and how these have been taken into account. It also sets out how the strategy will be kept under review, because public transport information is a rapidly evolving area of work and the strategy will need to adapt in line with changing circumstances.