

Report To: Partnership Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 7 November 2013

Lead Members: Lead Member Public Realm

Report Author: Corporate Director: Economic & Community Ambition

Title: Transforming Transport – Regional Passenger Transport Collaboration project - Update

1. What is the report about?

In May 2013, Cabinet took the decision to approve the Outline Business Case for the Regional Passenger Transport Collaboration project and support exploration of a phased approach to implementing a single integrated unit for the delivery of passenger transport services in North Wales. This report provides an update on progress.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

This report provides an update on progress for Partnerships Scrutiny.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Partnerships Scrutiny is invited to note progress and comment accordingly.

4. Report details.

4.1 Shortly following approval of the Outline Business Case, a regional project manager was appointed to take forward the more detailed examination of the proposed regional model. The project manager post has been funded through European Social Fund (ESF). As a reminder, the Project Scope is attached at Appendix 1.

4.2 A revised project plan has been agreed by Strategic Directors from all 6 Councils. Instead of developing a comprehensive business case for collaboration on all transport issues, some areas for early implementation have been identified, as follows:

- A joint approach to CRB (DBS) checks
- A joint approach to Concessionary Fares and Concessionary Passes
- Review and joint procurement of passenger information to include time tables and other paper information, and electronic information including Real Time Information.

- 4.3 The areas were chosen on the basis of opportunities to improve efficiency and resilience across North Wales within service areas that were largely similar. The work is focusing on areas of best practices, anomalies and the potential scope for improvement in the chosen areas.

CRB (DBS) Checks

- 4.4 All authorities require CRB/DBS checks for drivers of school, college and social care transport, however, each authority obtains the checks separately. There are some cases where drivers are subject to multiple checks as a result. In investigating the processes in each authority it became clear that there was some inconsistency between schemes.
- 4.5 It is considered that there are clear benefits from a joint approach to CRB Checks. These include:-
- A more efficient system by procuring checks regionally
 - A more robust approach that avoids inconsistencies
 - An approach that frees up current staff to undertake other work within the department
 - A more consistent approach to eliminate 'loopholes' in the checking process
 - A more 'business friendly' approach for operators, eliminating the need for duplication of checks between authorities.

Concessionary Fares and Passes

- 4.6 In 2002, Welsh Government introduced an All Wales Concessionary Fare scheme and currently each authority administers the scheme separately.
- 4.7 Since the 1 April 2013 quarterly financial claims for the scheme are now being coordinated regionally by TAIH. In effect this has had the result of creating a seventh claims process each quarter. Operators also have to submit claims to each authority and in some cases are submitting six separate claims each time. It is believed there is scope to rationalise the number of claims and invoices produced by operators, and the consequent paper work for each authority.
- 4.8 It is proposed that proposals are developed for a new method of administering the regional concessionary fares scheme with a joint approach to managing the new method. Benefits from doing this are:-
- Reducing duplication in processing multiple claims from bus operators leading to efficiency for operators and local authorities.
 - One consistent approach across all 6 LAs will make the system more robust.
- 4.9 Each authority also process applications for new cards and administers the concessionary pass scheme in their area. There are currently over 161k passes in circulation in N Wales. All six authorities have at least one member of staff processing applications, administering the scheme and issuing passes for at least part of their time. Each authority also has, as part of the concessionary fares scheme, its own application

form and marketing literature, although the application process is virtually identical across all authorities

4.10 It is believed that there is scope for efficiency and better resilience through developing a single service delivery for the scheme. Potential benefits would include:-

- Consistency for users, with one application form and requirements could save a lot of time with queries.
- Frees up some staff to be completing other tasks to add benefit to the service
- Reduced need for equipment with consequential reduced maintenance costs

Passenger Information

4.11 The provision of travel information for bus users varies considerably across the region. Effective timetable and other information is crucial to encouraging modal shift and use of public transport and also that passengers have adequate information to support bus usage.

4.12 The provision of bus information at bus stops and bus timetables is not standardised and there are different systems and software for monitoring and developing information for users. There are also new opportunities to use technology to deliver consistent information through smart phones or other mobile devices, and a system that links all methods of information together to ensure consistency would be simpler and less costly to operate.

4.13 Whilst there has been significant investment in Real Time Information (RTI) in North Wales over the past decade, the current systems are now becoming old and technology has moved on since the systems in use were procured. There are currently two systems in place, one for Anglesey, Gwynedd and Conwy and one for Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. It is clear from the work done to date that neither of these systems is operating effectively. Existing maintenance contracts have (or are close to) ended and renewal of the contracts for equipment that no longer serves the use of passengers would not be an effective use of scarce resource.

4.14 As part of the wider review of passenger information, the use of RTI, as part of a mix of passenger information will be considered, and best practice across the UK and Europe reviewed to identify solutions for North Wales that are practical and affordable.

Other Potential Proposals

4.15 In addition to the projects listed above, the Transforming Transport project is also supporting further work on development of Community Transport options across North Wales and closer collaboration on Road Safety works and programmes.

Timescale

4.16 The original timescale for the project was as follows.

Approval to develop Final Business Case

May 2013

Development of FBC
Approval to Implement
Implementation starts

May to Oct 2013
Oct to Dec 2013
January 2014

There has therefore been some slippage. An update report is due to be presented to Directors in early November.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Transport services are integral to a number of the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, including Developing the Local Economy, Improving Performance in Education and Protecting Vulnerable People.

Collaboration opportunities can also help to deliver efficiencies and this will be tested as the Final Business Case is developed.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The current project work is funded through ESF, although officer time from all 6 Councils is also required to participate in workshops and develop proposals.

Full financial implications for all Councils will be explored as the Full Business Case is developed.

7. What consultations have been carried out and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?

Officers from Passenger Transport Teams across all 6 Councils are participating in the workshops developing the proposals outlined in this report. Strategic Directors from all 6 Councils are monitoring progress and providing guidance as the project develops.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There remain uncertainties around the costs and possible savings for this project. The Outline Business Case did not provide sufficient depth to enable a full financial assessment to be made. These issues need to be addressed as the Full Business Case is developed.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

A Risk Assessment has been carried out through the Project Work to date and was detailed in the Outline Business Case

10. Power to make the Decision

s111 Local Government Act 1972
s105(5) Local Government Act 1972

Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Discharge of Functions) (Wales)
Regulations 2002

Article 6.1 of the Council's Constitution

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