KEY ISSUE

This report is for information only and updates the Committee on the operation of bus services along the University of Surrey to Guildford town centre corridor.

SUMMARY

The report summarises the operation of local bus services along this corridor since the withdrawal of Route 100 in January 2004. Specific issues addressed are:

- peak period capacity problems
- the use of Guildford Park Road and University of Surrey Car Park 3
- integrated through ticketing
- real time passenger information on these routes.

Report by
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR

Surrey Atlas Ref.
Pages 108, 109 and 130

GUILDFORD B.C. WARD(S)
FRIARY & ST. NICHOLAS, ONSLOW

COUNTY ELECTORAL DIVISION(S)
GUILDFORD SOUTH & WEST
OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for information only, and follows the report to this Committee on 18th September 2003, and a request from Cllr. Joe Bullock for an update on the situation.

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

1 All Guildford Park and Ride / Link Services operate under contract to the County Council. These services were recently retendered, with the new contracts commencing on 17 January 2004.

2 Prior to inviting tenders for the services, a review of the operation and performance of Park and Ride / Link Services was undertaken. This included conducting extensive passenger surveys and the analysis of passenger information to establish where further improvements could be made to enhance the efficiency of the network and also to take account of changes to the local bus network. A car park survey also formed part of this review.

3 The conclusions of this review were reported to Members at the meeting of the Local Committee on 18th September 2003. At that meeting one specific resolution of the Local Committee was to withdraw the western leg of Route 100 between the town centre and University of Surrey. As part of the changes, officers were requested to address the following issues, working with both Arriva and the University of Surrey:

- to ensure that any peak period capacity problems are addressed;
- to confirm that Arriva services will call at Guildford Park Road car park on weekdays;
- to reach agreement with the University for the continued use of Car Park 3 on Saturdays;
- to introduce an integrated through ticketing scheme for Arriva services and Route 100 eastern leg buses, to facilitate those passengers wishing to travel between the University and Spectrum (3% of Route 100 journeys were through journeys); and
- to further develop real time passenger information on University / Arriva routes.

Peak Period Capacity Issues

4 Before services were changed, the western leg of Route 100 provided a dual function, operating as Park and Ride from the Guildford Park Road and University Car Park 3, whilst also providing a link service between the University and town centre.

5 In 1999 the University of Surrey contracted Arriva to enhance their existing commercial bus network with the aim of encouraging more students, staff and visitors to access the University by means other than the private car. This enhancement of services included the introduction of a 10 minute
frequency service between the town centre and the University in addition to the existing Route 100 Park and Ride / Link Service. Thus, as well as the 5 buses per hour operated on Route 100 Monday to Saturday, Arriva introduced 6 buses per hour in each direction between the University and town centre 08.00 to 19.00, and approximately 2 buses per hour between 19.00 and 23.30. Arriva also introduced Sunday hourly direct and half hourly indirect bus services between the University and town centre.

6 Approximately £100,000 of fare revenue was received through the fare box each year on Route 100 services between the University and town centre. When Route 100 was withdrawn Arriva / University services were positioned to take passengers displaced from Route 100 and the associated fare revenue.

7 Surveys were completed before Route 100 was withdrawn to assess whether or not the commercial Arriva services could accommodate passengers likely to be displaced from Route 100. This work concluded that the Arriva services could take passengers displaced from Route 100, although gaps in service were noted as being likely to arise. Arriva operates 6 buses per hour in each direction between the University and town centre between 08.00 and 19.00 on Monday to Saturday. Officers believe this to be a good level of service. However, they are not every 10 minutes on a ‘clock-face’ frequency, i.e. not 00, 10, 20 30 40 and 50 minutes past each hour. Although reasonably regularly spaced, the occasional gap arises as the high level of service provision between the town centre and University is created from a number of different routes merging at the bus station, which then travel to and from the University. Thus a regularly spaced or ‘clock-face’ frequency cannot be achieved through this combination of routes.

8 At that time one solution proposed was to add an additional bus into the schedule operating between the town centre and University to close any gaps. This had a cost implication to Arriva / University, although the additional fares income from passengers displaced from Route 100 would have more than covered the cost of such an additional vehicle. As yet this option has not been taken up by Arriva / University of Surrey.

9 Since Route 100 was withdrawn recently completed surveys have confirmed that capacity does exist on the commercial Arriva services to cater for current demand. Notwithstanding this, on certain morning peak University bound journeys and evening peak town bound journeys individual bus loadings reach 50 or so passengers. Arriva has advised that total vehicle capacity is in excess of 60, of which 39 can be seated. Therefore some passengers will be standing at peak times. High loadings like this can be caused by traffic congestion in Guildford, which delays buses and bunches them close together. Thus, the first bus to arrive is faced with a higher than normal volume of passengers, with the second bus carrying a lower than normal volume of passengers. This is always likely to happen from time to time, but improvements such as the Onslow Street bus lane will help to improve bus reliability and improve overall journey times.
10 The inclusion of an additional bus into the schedule operating between the town centre and University to close any gaps would help to smooth out the peak loading pressures and provide more of a ‘clock-face’ frequency. However, it is the view of officers that this is a commercial issue for consideration by Arriva and University.

Guildford Park Road and University Car Park 3 Park and Ride Sites

11 Following agreement with Arriva, the bus services facilitating Park and Ride at Guildford Park Road (Monday to Saturday) and University Car Park 3 (Saturday only) have been provided by the many commercial Arriva services operating along the corridor. Thus, the small numbers of passengers wishing to use Park and Ride at Guildford Park Road and University Car Park 3 can do so by paying the Arriva bus fare to travel to and from the town centre. This fare is the same as that previously charged on Route 100 before it was withdrawn.

12 The Saturday only Park and Ride at University of Surrey Car Park 3 is provided with the valued co-operation of the University, which allows use of its car park for Park and Ride use.

13 Recently the University requested a financial contribution from the County and/or Borough Councils for the continued use of this facility. Whilst the principle of a contribution is accepted, the level of the contribution is currently subject to discussion. An update on this issue can be given verbally at the meeting if required.

Integrated Through Ticketing

14 Agreement has been reached with Arriva whereby passengers wishing to travel between the University and Spectrum can do so by interchanging at the Friary Bus Station without the penalty of an increased fare.

Real Time Passenger Information

15 Real Time Passenger Information is being introduced by the County Council across Guildford borough including the University / Arriva bus routes. This project has been funded through the award of £1.3 million of Supplementary Credit Approval to the County Council by the Department of Transport for 2002/3 and 2003/4, coupled with approximately £200,000 of County Council’s Local Transport Plan funding.

16 Discussions are continuing with the University regarding the location and funding of additional real time passenger information displays within the University campus.
CONCLUSIONS

17 As part of the review of Park and Ride / Link Service and prior to inviting tenders for the replacement service, discussions were held with all the stakeholders, namely officers of Guildford Borough Council, Guildford’s Local Transportation Director and Passenger Transport Group officers, the management of Spectrum Leisure Centre and representatives of University of Surrey and their consultants.

18 The County Council has acted upon each of the issues raised within its control. It is the view of your officers that the inclusion of an additional bus into the schedule operating between the town centre and University to close any gaps in order to help smooth out peak loading pressures is a commercial issue for consideration by Arriva and University.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Guildford Park and Ride Survey Report 2003