



OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)

QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIPS IN WAVERLEY

14 December 2007

KEY ISSUE

To report on the development of Quality Bus Partnerships in Waverley.

SUMMARY

Members of the Local Committee have asked for a report on the development and progress of Quality Bus Partnerships in Waverley and this report provides an update.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to note the contents of the report.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members of the Local Committee have asked for a report on the development and progress of Quality Bus Partnerships in Waverley.
- 1.2 The County Council's Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/11 places considerable value on the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) approach – the County Council working closely with Boroughs/Districts, bus operators and other stakeholders such as major employers and trip generators to improve bus services within the prescribed area with the common aim of increasing passenger usage. The success of the QBP can be gauged through the increasing passenger numbers and the high satisfaction ratings received in passenger surveys. These two indicators support the partnership approach. This approach is also enshrined within the Transport Act 2000.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 As Highway Authority the County Council is responsible for all on-street works and will implement a range of measures to enable bus services to operate reliably. This can include appropriate traffic management such as bus stop clearways, bus priority lanes, parking/stopping restrictions and Intelligent Bus Priority at traffic signals. Infrastructure improvements have included the installation of new bus stop poles, flags and timetable cases at every stop, and accessibility improvements at stops to make boarding and alighting from low-floor fully-accessible buses more convenient have complemented this, supported by suitable traffic management.
- 2.2 Good passenger waiting facilities are fundamental to the success of any QBP. Traditionally the provision of bus shelters has been a function of the Boroughs/Districts, and Parish and Town Councils. The County Council works closely with these stakeholders to assist with a bus shelter improvement programme.
- 2.3 The bus companies, as public transport providers, are responsible for operating a high-quality bus service with a robust and reliable timetable, using clean, modern low-floor accessible vehicles. Good marketing and ensuring drivers receive customer care training are also important.

3 OPTIONS

- 3.1 Within Waverley, the County Council has been developing Quality Bus Partnerships on the following routes:
 - Services 4/5 Farnham – Aldershot
 - Services 53/63 Ewhurst /Cranleigh – Guildford
 - Blackwater Valley Umbrella QBP

- 3.2 **Services 4/5 Farnham - Sandy Hill/Upper Hale – Aldershot:** Working with Stagecoach a bid to the Department for Transport “Kickstart” initiative successfully secured £240,000 funding over three years. Through this Stagecoach committed to deliver an improved 10 minute frequency bus service, operated by 9 new low-floor fully-accessible midi-buses. These are route-branded and bespoke publicity has been produced. The County Council has to date invested in new bus stop infrastructure along the route and has identified a number of key bus stops that will benefit from accessibility improvements. These are scheduled for 2008/09. Funding has been allocated to Farnham Town Council for bus shelters at these bus stops. Adult passenger usage on these services has increased by almost 30% since the improvements have been introduced.
- 3.3 During July 2007 460 face-to-face interviews were conducted with passengers using these services. 84% of passengers thought the buses were reliable and clean, 96% felt the journey to the bus stop was safe while 98% said the buses are easy to board. However, only 53% agreed that the fares offered value for money and 59% said the bus stop waiting facilities were adequate.
- 3.4 **Services 53/63 Ewhurst/Cranleigh – Guildford:** The County Council (Passenger Transport Group and Local Transportation Service), Waverley Borough Council, and the bus company Arriva, started developing this Quality Corridor during 2003. Arriva operate a commercial service, every 20 minutes during the day and the very fact that a largely rural route can still perform without any financial support from the County Council demonstrates the value of the Quality Bus Partnership concept. Initial improvements included new bus stop poles/flags/timetable frames along the route and upgraded passenger waiting facilities. Arriva undertook a bespoke marketing campaign and upgraded the bus fleet to low-floor accessible vehicles. More recently some of the key bus stops have had the County Council’s Suretime Real Time Passenger Information system installed. Further work will include additional new shelters and boarding/alighting improvements at bus stops. These services will also benefit from the proposed bus lane along the A281 Millmead, Guildford.
- 3.5 During March 2004 393 face-to-face interviews were conducted on passengers using services 53/63. 96% of passengers felt that the journey to the bus stop was safe and that the buses are easy to board. 75% said the bus stop facilities were good however only 34% felt that facilities at Guildford Bus Station were adequate.
- 3.6 **Umbrella Blackwater Valley Quality Bus Partnership:** In June 2004 Surrey County Council, Hampshire County Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Wokingham District Council signed the Umbrella Blackwater Valley QBP with the three major bus companies in the country – Arriva, First and Stagecoach. This over-arching agreement covers the extent of the Blackwater Valley from Bracknell Forest and

Wokingham in the north down through to Farnham. It is through this agreement that further successful QBPs have been introduced on route 1 (Aldershot – Camberley), route 3 (Aldershot – Camberley – Yateley), route 4/5 (Farnham – Aldershot) and route 6 (Farnborough – Prospect Estate).

- 3.7 Future Quality Corridor/Partnership initiatives under consideration in Waverley include the Godalming – Guildford route and developing the umbrella Blackwater Valley QBP to include additional Farnham-based services. The opportunity to engage further with Waverley Borough Council, public transport operators and Parish/Town Councils will be pursued.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Face to face passenger interviews have been carried out on Services 4/5 (Farnham – Aldershot) and 53/63 (Ewhurst/Cranleigh – Guildford).

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Passenger Transport Group Local Transport Plan Capital funding is used to deliver the QBP related improvement schemes and are subject to a value for money assessment. This capital investment to encourage more passengers to use bus services assists with maintaining a healthy, commercial local bus network and reduces the need for County Council revenue support intervention to retain a core local bus network.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Bus stop boarding/alighting improvements and low-floor vehicles will ensure that buses are easily accessible to all potential passengers, including wheelchair users.
- 6.2 All initiatives relating to a Quality Bus Partnership will be subject to an Equalities and Diversity Audit.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Crime and Disorder implications as a result of this report.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The success of Quality Bus Partnerships can be gauged through increasing passenger usage, attracting external investment through the bus operators and passenger satisfaction. In Waverley we are able to meet all these criteria.
- 8.2 The Local Committee is asked to note this report.

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 This report is for information only.

10 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

10.1 Subject to Passenger Transport Group securing Local Transport Plan Capital funding for 2008/09 a programme of bus stop improvements will be implemented, in consultation with Surrey Highways, local members and the bus operators.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None