



Quality Bus Partnership and Bus Services in the Woking local area

**Surrey County Council
Local Committee (Woking)
21 June 2007**

KEY ISSUE:

To update Members on alterations to the local bus network, and to report on progress with the development of a Quality Bus Partnership in the Woking area.

CONSULTATIONS:

No specific consultations on the report have been carried out.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

None – this report is for information only.

INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

1. Members of the Local Committee have requested an update report on local bus service changes in the Woking local area, and the development and progress with public transport initiatives in the Woking area.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Local Bus Service update

2. In October 2006, Arriva extended their service 436 beyond Brooklands Tesco/Marks & Spencer, to serve the new Mercedes Benz World, including a link from the latter to Weybridge Station. The service level was doubled to every 30 minutes, thereby supplementing existing services through Sheerwater and West Byfleet. New low floor fully-accessible buses are used. The enhanced service is provided through direct funding to Arriva from Daimler Chrysler UK as part of their Developer funding within their Sustainable Travel Plan. Concurrently with this, Arriva decided that the section of the 436 between Woking and Guildford via Old Woking and Send was no longer commercially-viable. The County Council therefore specified some additional journeys on the contracted service 462/463 between those points in order to offer some local recompense for Arriva's decision.
3. Contracts for the provision of various bus services were due for renewal last October, including services 48 (Woking-Farnborough), 71 (Woking-Old Woking), 72 (Woking-Maybury Estate), 73 (Woking-Chobham), 81 (Woking-Barnsbury), 437 (Woking-Addlestone) and 462/463 (Woking-Guildford). Following a competitive tendering exercise, Countryliner retained the work. This company also won the share of services 71 and 81 previously run by Surrey Connect, resulting in all journeys on these routes being operated with low floor vehicles. The level of service on the various routes remains generally unaltered.
4. The closure of Woking High Street/Broadway to through traffic to enable construction of the Canopy continues to be a major concern for the bus companies and their passengers. Since the closure in September 2006, it has been reported that fares revenue has declined and keeping services reliable has been a challenge in view of the diversionary route that most buses are required to follow. The temporary loss of the "Toys R Us" stop and those in the Broadway near the station entrance has meant further walking distances to/from the shopping area. However, the provision of a free shuttle bus by Woking Borough Council is welcomed.

Quality Bus Partnership

5. Both the County Council's Local Transport Plans 2001–2006 and 2006-2010/11 place considerable value on the Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) approach – the County Council working closely with bus operators,

boroughs/districts 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. Within the Woking area Quality Bus Partnership routes include Service 91 (Woking – Knaphill) and Services 34/35 (Guildford – Woking – Camberley). An East Woking QBP has also been developed focussing on the Woking – Sheerwater – Byfleet corridor. The success of the QBP routes can be gauged through the increasing passenger usage and the high satisfaction ratings received in the passenger surveys. These two indicators support the continued development of the partnership approach.

6. 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 effectively and efficiently, including traffic management and infrastructure improvements. Along the QBP routes works have included the installation of new bus stop poles, bus stop flags providing details on routes, direction of travel and destinations, and the provision of bus stop information at every bus stop. A programme of accessibility improvements at stops to make boarding and alighting from the low floor fully accessible buses more convenient has complemented this, supported by suitable traffic management. The bus companies are responsible for operating a high quality bus service with a robust and reliable timetable, providing clean, modern low floor accessible buses, good marketing and ensuring drivers receive customer care training.
7. Working with Arriva, Passenger Transport Group (PTG) extended the County Council's Suretime Real Time Passenger Information system onto services 34/35 and 91. A new radio station commissioned during 2006 has improved reception across Woking and information reliability has increased. Service 436 has also been equipped with Suretime and the system will be further rolled out as funding is identified and secured.
8. The Service 91 Quality Bus Partnership has been in place since 2000, and Service 34/35 since 2002. It is proposed to undertake a review of the existing arrangements and to consider establishing an umbrella Woking Area Quality Bus Partnership. This approach will be consistent with the Regional Transport Hub status and will enable all bus services and operators to participate, recognising that some local bus services changed during 2006, providing passenger benefits across the network.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. No new financial implications as a result of this report.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

10. The development of the Woking Area Quality Bus Partnership seeks to improve the quality of bus services, making it easier for everyone in the community to access everyday facilities.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no Crime & Disorder implications as a result of this report.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12. The introduction of low-floor vehicles will ensure that buses are easily accessible to all potential passengers, including wheelchair users. Suretime's on-bus visual displays ensure enhanced access to information particularly amongst bus passengers who are deaf or partially deaf.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

13. This report is for information only

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Consulted:

Background Papers: None

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