



OFFICER REPORT TO WOKING LOCAL COMMITTEE

Quality Bus Partnership and Bus Services in the local Woking area

31 October 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.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for information only.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members of the Local Committee have asked for an update report on local bus services in the Woking area and the development and progress with public transport initiatives in the Woking area.

2 ANALYSIS

LOCAL BUS SERVICE UPDATE

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 Contracts for the provision of various bus services fell 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.
- 2.3 The closure of Woking High Street/Broadway to through traffic to enable the construction of the Canopy caused significant operational issues for the bus companies and their passengers. Fares revenue declined and the reliability of services was affected.

QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

- 2.4 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. 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 can be gauged through the increasing passenger numbers and the high satisfaction ratings received in passenger surveys. These two indicators support the partnership approach.
- 2.5 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 printed bus timetable information at every 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, using clean, modern low floor accessible vehicles. Good marketing and ensuring drivers receive customer care training is also important.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 The Service 91 QBP has been in place since 2000, and service 34/35 since 2002. It is proposed to carry out 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 Hub status and will enable all bus services and operators to participate.

3 CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 PTG carry out regular face to face passenger qualitative surveys and meet with the bus operators.

4 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no new financial implications as a result of this report.

5 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 All initiatives relating to QBP's will be subject to a Equality and Diversity audit.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

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

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