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| REPORT TO: | Environmental and Development Services Committee | AGENDA ITEM: |
| DATE OF MEETING: | 28th August 2008 | CATEGORY: |
| | | DELEGATED |
| REPORT FROM: | Chief Executive | OPEN |
| MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: | Paul Spencer (Ext 5722) | DOC: |
| SUBJECT: | Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Public Transport Review | REF: |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | All | TERMS OF REFERENCE: |

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That the Committee receives the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report, following its review of public transport.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To report to the Policy Committee the outcome and findings from the Scrutiny review of public transport.

3.0 Detail

3.1 During the 2007/08 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme included a review of public transport. At its Meeting on 27th June 2007, initial consideration was given to the Work Programme and two project areas were proposed around bus services and the Willington train station. It was agreed at that time to invite an officer from Derbyshire County Council's Public Transportation Unit to attend a subsequent meeting, to brief Members on public transport issues generally. This did not prove possible, as the County Council was preparing for its own review of this service.

3.2 A briefing note was prepared on public transport matters and this was submitted to the Committee's Meeting on 1st August 2007. A copy of that briefing note, including an appended overview of public transport issues in South Derbyshire may be accessed by the following link: <http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/55679FEB-57A3-4E93-B5B9-8F918E10073C/0/01080710.pdf>. As further background, the resultant Minute extract from the August Committee is attached at Annexe 'A'. It was agreed to seek input from Environmental and Development Services Committee, to respond to Derbyshire County Council on the scope of that authority's review.

3.3 Further consideration was given to public transport at the Meeting on 12th September 2007. This provided feedback, following the consultation with the Policy Committee, leading to a response to the County Council on the scope of its review.

- 3.4 The remainder of the review focussed on train services and more particularly the Willington Station. At the Committee's Meeting on 5th December 2007, representatives of Willington Parish Council were in attendance and contributed to this review. From the discussion with these representatives, it was apparent that the principal concern was the review of the rail franchise and proposals by the new operator, Arriva to severely reduce the frequency of passenger rail services at Willington Station from December 2008. Attached at Annexe 'B' to the report is an extract of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes from 5th December 2007. From this Meeting it was agreed to seek contributions from public transport authorities and rail service providers, amongst others, to discuss the frequency of services and integrated transport links.
- 3.5 It was subsequently agreed to invite these representatives to attend the Committee's Meeting on 7th May 2008. In attendance at that Meeting were Kevin Williams, an Officer from the Public Transport Unit at Derbyshire County Council, together with Gavin Bostock and Julia Mapp from Cross Country Trains. Apologies had been received from representatives of East Midlands Trains, Staffordshire County Council, Derby City Council and Brian Lucas, the County Council's Cabinet Member for Environmental Services.
- 3.6 A series of questions had been compiled and were submitted to the contributors. Details of the questions had also been circulated to the Scrutiny Members, together with the responses received from the representatives of Staffordshire County Council and East Midlands Trains. Presentations were made by the County Council representative and the representatives of Cross Country Trains. After this, there was significant discussion about the Cross Country franchise, with particular reference made to Willington Station. An outline was given of the consultation process undertaken on the service review, the previous lobbying undertaken and particularly the surveys conducted to assess usage of the Willington Station. It became apparent from the discussion, that despite concerns over the accuracy of surveys and the anticipated population growth in this part of South Derbyshire, there was a significant shortfall in the number of passengers needed boarding or alighting from the Station, before additional services would be provided by Cross Country.
- 3.7 Further questions were submitted about whether the line adjacent to Willington Station could be designated as a 'community rail line', but this was unlikely, as it did not meet the specific criteria required. A suggestion was made to establish a 'Friends of Willington Station' group to provide a dialogue and notify of minor issues at the station, giving a valuable local liaison mechanism. Such groups had been successful at a number of other stations within the County.
- 3.8 At the Scrutiny focus session on 29th May 2008, the Committee gave consideration to its future work programme. There was a consensus that future work on public transport should focus more specifically on community transport issues and this review area is programmed to commence in December.
- 3.9 The Committee concluded this review and received a draft review report and at its Meeting on 25th June. Scrutiny Members were disappointed that Cross Country Trains had not responded to the pre-circulated questions and wished this to be included in the report to the Policy Committee.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 As a review area, public transport has a very broad scope. This review evolved over time, concentrating mainly on the Willington Station and the review of franchise arrangements. The concerns of the community and those of the Council on the reduction in rail services from the Willington Station are clear. However, it became apparent that service providers could not be influenced to increase or even retain the current frequency of rail services after December 2008. Indeed, a letter was received from East Midlands Trains, stating that “The new East Midlands Trains’ franchise did not require us to continue to provide peak hour services between Burton-on-Trent, Willington and London and we have chosen not to do so, in order to provide additional capacity on our core Sheffield to London route”.
- 5.2 One potential opportunity is to pursue the establishment of a ‘Friends of Willington Station’ group and/or to seek the designation of a local community rail service.
- 5.3 It is proposed to have a more focussed review under the public transport heading, relating to community transport, during the 2008/09 municipal year.

6.0 Background Papers

- 6.1 Reports and Minutes of previous Committee Meetings.