

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member and Advisers for Regeneration and Development
2.	Date:	Monday 7th October 2013
3.	Title:	Rotherham Voluntary Bus Partnership Agreement
4.	Programme Area:	Streetpride

5. Summary

To report the progress of discussions between Rotherham Borough Council, the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTe) and major public transport operators regarding improvements to the bus offer in Rotherham through the potential to enter into a voluntary agreement to form a partnership.

6. Recommendations

Cabinet Member is asked to resolve that

- (i) **The principle of entering into an agreement in respect of a Bus Voluntary Partnership for Rotherham is supported.**
- (ii) **Consultation procedures are commenced and a further report is considered by Cabinet Member following the consultation process.**

7. Proposals and Details

Buses play a key role in supporting economic growth by linking people to key facilities, education and job opportunities. This is particularly relevant in South Yorkshire where there is a dispersed population and relatively low levels of car ownership. The potential to enter into a voluntary bus partnership with the SYPTe and transport operators would seek to improve the bus offer in Rotherham. This would be achieved principally through network design changes, new ticketing products and the agreement from bus operators involved in the partnership to adopt minimum standards for vehicles operating on the agreed network in Rotherham.

Research indicates that customers are seeking an acceptable bus product that is simple to understand, easy to use, reliable and delivers the right customer experience. In Rotherham, the current situation is variable in its delivery of these service attributes. Overall, the objective is to offer a stable network of bus services across the town which broadly matches the existing whilst better matching resource to demand and offering customers an improved experience in using the bus alongside affordable, cost competitive, value for money fares and ticketing products. Bus operators in the partnership would only be able to make changes to the network coverage on agreed pre-determined dates.

These measures will encourage existing customers to continue using the bus and encourage people who travel by other modes to switch voluntarily to the bus, thereby helping reduce congestion and the associated negative environmental impacts. The purpose of a bus partnership would be to:

- provide a quality transport option for those without a car
- provide a quality choice for those with use of a car
- increase the overall volume of people using bus services in Rotherham
- reduce the environmental impact of travel
- create a stable bus network in Rotherham

It is proposed to undertake consultation regarding the opportunity to form a voluntary bus partnership for Rotherham in the next 3 months and report the findings of the consultation exercise to a future meeting of Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development; consultation will also include briefings and/or presentations to Council Members as appropriate. Should the findings of the consultation exercise be supportive and there is acceptance that a voluntary bus partnership would be a positive way forward in improving the bus offer for the people of Rotherham, it could become operative as early as April 2014.

8. Finance

At the development stage it is proposed that each potential partner in the voluntary agreement would absorb their own costs in terms officer time. The costs incurred in terms of the consultation exercise would be met from the South Yorkshire Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) and the Local Transport Plan fund allocations 2013/14.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Should the consultation exercise not produce positive feedback and Cabinet Member resolves not to progress with a voluntary bus partnership agreement for Rotherham, then costs incurred for the consultation exercise would be abortive.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The scheme accords with the policies contained in the South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2015, the Sheffield City Region Transport Strategy and the Traffic Management Act 2004.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Consultation has taken place with the Director of Financial Services.

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