

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	17 th May 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Supported Bus Services
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/093
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise Members on the options for implementing two supported bus services. The first is an evening bus service operating Monday to Sunday, between Craigiebuckler / Airyhall and the City Centre. The second is a daytime bus service operating three times per day between Peterculter and Asda Garthdee via Milltimber, Bielside, Cults, Airyhall and Mannofield.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) Approve implementation of an evening supported bus services between Craigiebuckler/Airyhall and City Centre as detailed in appendix 1 and 2 to the report.
- (b) Approve implementation of a three times daily supported bus services between Peterculter and Garthdee as detailed in appendix 1 and 2 to the report.
- (c) Approve the fare level on both services for both adults and children, as detailed in this report.
- (d) Request Officers to report back to the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee on the level of use and performance of both services.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Funding for supported bus services has been identified as part of the 2016/17 budget setting process. A budget of £83,000 will be allocated to Communities, Housing and Infrastructures' revenue budget. A full

breakdown of the proposed budget spend is detailed in appendix 2 to the report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any supported bus service must adhere to guidelines set by the Traffic Commissioner and appropriate legislation. The vehicle used on the service is required to be accessible to all persons, for this reason it should be wheelchair accessible in order that the Council meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Bus Services in Airyhall, Craigiebuckler and Lower Deeside

- 5.1.1 The local bus service network in Aberdeen City is primarily operated on a fully commercial basis. Under the conditions of the Transport Act 1985 and the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 operators have the freedom to set their own routes, timetables and fares. Local Transport Authorities have a duty under sections 63-64 of the Transport Act 1985 to secure the provision of public transport in its area that it deems required.
- 5.1.2 First Aberdeen amended their bus network in September 2012. As part of this review, First Aberdeen registered changes to bus services in Airyhall and Craigiebuckler, whereby the service would cease to operate at approximately 7pm in the evening, leaving the area with no bus service after this time.
- 5.1.3 In response to this change Stagecoach Bluebird introduced an hourly evening bus service on the 17th September 2012 in Airyhall and Craigiebuckler. It was indicated, at the time, that the service would run on a 6 month "use it or lose it" basis. If the service was under-utilised, Stagecoach Bluebird noted that they would then review the service provision.
- 5.1.4 Stagecoach Bluebird following 7 months of running the service withdrew its operation with effect of 15th April 2013. Stagecoach Bluebird stated the reason for this was due to consistently low patronage which has meant that the service was not commercially viable.

- 5.1.5 As aforementioned, Local Authorities have a duty under legislation to supplement transport provision in areas where services may not be commercially viable, and there is a perceived social need for a service to operate. It could be argued that areas, such as Airyhall and Craigiebuckler, in which First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird have withdrawn services, could fall under this category.
- 5.1.6 Alternative evening bus services are currently available on Queen's Road and St John's Terrace. For those in Craigiebuckler the nearest bus services would be accessible on Queen's Road, this would be a walk of approximately 1km for the properties in Craigiebuckler furthest away from Queens Road. For those in Airyhall the distance between Queen's Road and St John's Terrace is negligible with a walk of approximately 1.5km for the properties furthest away in Airyhall.
- 5.1.7 Airyhall and Craigiebuckler are large residential areas where potential bus passengers may need to negotiate steep footpaths to reach alternative bus routes that people with limited mobility and elderly people may find difficult. Many residents would have to rely upon a taxi, which costs significantly more than bus travel.
- 5.1.8 Without a replacement service the residents of these areas will continue to have high frequency alternative services on the main corridors of St Johns Terrace and Queens Road. However the topography of the residential estates and the distance will make access by foot difficult for elderly and people with mobility problems and for those who do not feel safe walking this distance in the dark evenings. Feedback received at recent public meetings has highlight the demand for an evening bus service and that many have experienced social isolation as a result of there being no evening bus service.
- 5.1.9 In September 2015, First Aberdeen amended their bus network further in the Airyhall and Craigiebuckler areas, whereby two separate 30 minute frequency bus services, Service 5 serving Craigiebuckler to Balnagask via Union Grove and City Centre and Service 15, servicing Airyhall to Beach, via Mannofield and City Centre were combined to a revised 30 minute frequency Service 15 serving Craigiebuckler to Beach via Airyhall, Union Grove and the City Centre.
- 5.1.10 The impact of the change has been slightly extended journey times for residents in both areas. However feedback received to the Public Transport Unit and at public meetings has advised that the loss of a direct link to the Mannofield area has had a negative impact on residents in Airyhall who utilise the community facilities at Mannofield. Although the revised service 15 does provide connections to alternative facilities, these require a considerable bus journey to access.

- 5.1.11 The Lower Deeside area of Aberdeen presents a number of difficulties for bus users. There is a high number of bus services which operate along North Deeside Road. However the topography of the area presents a number of challenges for many residents trying to access these bus services as they are required to negotiate steep footpaths to reach bus routes that people with limited mobility and elderly people have advised they find difficult.
- 5.1.12 Aberdeen City Council in recognition of the difficulties have in the past supported two separate bus services, the latter being the service 93, which operated three times per day and carried over 60 passengers per day, however this service was removed in 2012, as a result of budget pressures.

5.2 Proposed Airyhall / Craigiebuckler Evening Bus Service

- 5.2.1 At Full Council on 25th February 2016 a budget allocation was provided for a supported evening bus service between Airyhall and Craigiebuckler and Officers have prepared a proposed bus service for committee approval.
- 5.2.2 It is proposed that the supported service, service 15a, will follow the route of the First Aberdeen service 15 from Craigiebuckler to Union Street via Airyhall. The service will then serve Market Street, Guild Street and Bridge Street and then travel in reverse back to Craigiebuckler. The route in the City Centre has been designed to take into account the primary night time economy areas along Union Street and at Union Square.
- 5.2.3 The service will operate hourly in both directions between Craigiebuckler and the City Centre commencing after the final First Aberdeen service 15, departing Guild Street at 20:00 and the final journey from the City Centre to Craigiebuckler and Airyhall will depart Guild Street at 23:00. The same timetable will operate Monday to Sunday.
- 5.2.4 The Council has committed, through the Aberdeen City and Shire Fares and Ticketing Strategy, to set fares on supported bus services to broadly reflect the fares on the commercial bus services and for child fares to be set at half the Adult fare. In addition where services are predominantly subsidised return journeys should be charged at 1.5 times the cost of a single journey. Accordingly fares have been set in line with these requirements. As the service provides an evening only link it is proposed to accept any First Aberdeen Day and Season tickets on the service to prevent passengers having to pay for two separate services. In addition all Council supported bus services are party to and will accept Grasshopper multi-operator Travelcards and these services will gain a revenue share from the Grasshopper scheme.

5.2.5 The fully detailed proposed timetable, route and fares are detailed in Appendix 1.

5.2.6 Officers put together a service specification on the basis of the proposals detailed in Appendix 1 and sought quotes from 15 external bus providers. The bidding for this closed on Friday 22nd April 2016. 2 bidders returned submissions. The submissions have been evaluated and full details of the bids received are detailed in Appendix 2 to the report. A summary of the outcome is detailed as follows.

1. Lowest bid at fixed cost

Under this option the Council would pay the service provider a fixed fee and the fare income would be retained by the service provider. A total of 2 bids were received.

2. Lowest bid at fixed cost for Revenue Shortfall (Quoted price less fare revenue collected on service and Concession tickets at reimbursement value)

Under this option any fare revenue taken on the service would come back to the Council to off-set the cost of supporting the service. A total of 2 bids were received, it is recommended not to undertake this option given the estimated low volume of passengers travelling, and as such the return and risk on the Council may not be worthwhile. The cost for the service up to 31st March 2017 would exceed the budgetary provision for this service with both bids and the estimated income to be generated on the service is not anticipated to greatly off-set these costs.

3. Alternative Bid

One tenderer submitted an alternative bid of charging their commercial fare structure on the service as opposed to the fare structure suggested by the Council. This option would meet the requirements of the service and be achievable within budget.

5.2.7 Once a service has been introduced it will operate up to 31st March 2017. This will be closely monitored in terms of use, along with a cost analysis. The service provision will then be reviewed following the year with a report being presented to the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee.

5.3 Proposed Lower Deeside, Airyhall and Mannofield Bus Service

- 5.3.1 At Full Council on 25th February 2016 a budget allocation was provided for a supported bus service for the Lower Deeside area and to link Airyhall and Mannofield. Officers have prepared a proposed bus service for committee approval.
- 5.3.2 It is proposed that the supported service, service 95, will operate between Johnston Gardens North in Peterculter and Asda Garthdee. The route will take in residential streets in Peterculter, Milltimber, Bielside and Cults before travelling along Craigton Road to Airyhall, where the service will then operate to Great Western Road before terminating at Asda Garthdee. The service will operate in reverse on the outbound journey.
- 5.3.3 The proposed service will operate three times per day, Monday to Friday in both directions between Peterculter and Asda Garthdee commencing in Peterculter at 09:30 and the final journey from Asda Garthdee to Peterculter will depart at 15:20.
- 5.3.4 The Council has committed, through the Aberdeen City and Shire Fares and Ticketing Strategy, to set fares on supported bus services to broadly reflect the fares on the commercial bus services and for child fares to be set at half the Adult fare. In addition where services are predominantly subsidised return journeys should be charged at 1.5 times the cost of a single journey. Accordingly fares have been set in line with these requirements.
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3. Alternative Bid

Both tenderers submitted alternative bids. Tenderer one submitted an alternative bid of operating the service using a Council vehicle which would be managed and maintained by the tenderer. This option would not be viable as this would exceed the budgetary provision and also there is no suitable Council vehicle available as these are fully utilised. The second tenderer submitted an alternative bid operating the service from 30 mins earlier in the day and terminating the final journey at Airyhall instead of Peterculter. This option would meet the majority of requirements of the service and would be achievable within budget.

- 5.3.7 Once a service has been introduced it will operate up to 31st March 2017. This will be closely monitored in terms of use, along with a cost analysis. The service provision will then be reviewed following the year with a report being presented to the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience –

Transport affects every individual in Aberdeen and by providing supported bus services where there is a deemed social need, assists in meeting customer expectations and ensuring services meet the needs of customers.

Improving Staff Experience –

These services will allow staff to deliver on their duty to provide socially necessary bus services.

Improving our use of Resources –

A consistent approach to delivery of public transport in the City will ensure that local environmental factors, changing priorities and customer needs are considered as well as available budgets are taken into account on a reviewed basis

Corporate -

The development of supported bus services links to the Community Plan vision of creating a *sustainable City with an integrated transport system that is accessible to all.*

The Smarter City document sets out that we will provide and promote a sustainable transport system, which reduces our carbon emissions and that we will work with our partners to seek to reduce the levels of inequality in the city.

The actions in the Action and Delivery Plan assist in the delivery of actions identified in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2013, in particular the Thematic Priority – Older People (*Older people in Aberdeen have increased independence*) and the Multi-lateral Priority – Integrated Transport (Aberdeen is easy to access and move around in) and the Underlying Principle – (A presumption for community based access to services (Services are accessible to all citizens in the ways which meet their needs)

The provision of supported bus services will assist delivery of the 5 year Corporate Business Plan, in particular the Community, Housing & Infrastructure Directorate's aims to *Support the delivery of a fully integrated transport network.*

Public –

The proposals contained within the report are intended to bring about a substantial change in the operation of transport services for the communities detailed. This report may be of interest to the public as the citizens of Aberdeen have a vested interest in the public transport network and accessibility to services.

As these services should be improving accessibility, an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) has been completed.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The implementation of supported bus services has been developed as a result of feedback from members of the public and stakeholders. The services will be monitored on an ongoing basis with annual reporting to demonstrate where Council funding, priorities and resources are being invested.

Risk of raising expectations of running service for one year should funding not be available next year. Officers and Members will work in collaboration to establish budgetary resources for continuation of services following any review.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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