

## CABINET

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| <b>Date of Meeting</b> | Tuesday, 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2020  |
| <b>Report Subject</b>  | Bus Network Review Update   |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>  | Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside |
| <b>Report Author</b>   | Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)                                  |
| <b>Type of Report</b>  | Operational   |

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2018, Cabinet approved a new transport model for bus services in the County which comprised of a financially supported Core Bus Network, supported by sustainable Local Travel Arrangements (L.T.A's) which would serve the Core Network from all other areas of the County.

Subsequently, the existing supported bus services were reviewed and L.T.A's were successfully introduced in several areas of the County. In 2019, a number of commercial services were withdrawn by operators, which led to a further review of the existing LTA services across the County in order that the services could be better utilised to provide vital transport links for residents impacted by the loss of these commercial services.

This report provides an overview of the new LTA's across the County following the review and details the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the service and sets out the plan for the full recovery of these services.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1. | That Cabinet approves the outcome of the review of Local Travel Arrangements which has been necessary due to the pandemic and the further loss of local commercial bus services. |
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## **REPORT DETAILS**

| <b>1.00</b> | <b>BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSALS</b>   |
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| 1.01        | <p>There is no statutory duty upon the Council to provide local bus services or any other form of public transport, however, the Council does have a statutory duty under the 1985 and 2000 Transport Acts to keep the bus network under review, and to intervene where it feels appropriate.</p>  |
| 1.02        | <p>The approved core bus network structure is characterised by a number of key destinations across the County (hubs), such as main towns or public transport interchanges / railway stations with direct, high frequency bus services operating between the hubs and on some cross-boundary corridors to link passengers to key destination hubs for access to education, employment, shopping, health, social and leisure opportunities.</p> <p>The core network predominantly consists of commercial bus services; however, some support has continued to be provided to ensure that connections are maintained and that regular, high quality services continue to link the key hubs along the network.</p>   |
| 1.03        | <p>In 2019, a number of commercial services that provided transport links along the core network were withdrawn. This triggered a review of the existing LTA services and the introduction of new subsidised bus routes to ensure the continuation of transport provision for those communities affected by the cessation of these commercial services.</p>  |
| 1.04        | <p>New timetables were produced and publicised on the F.C.C website and press releases and Twitter feeds were released prior to the launch of the new services.</p> <p>Officers met with Town and Community Councils in the communities directly affected by the changes and local members have also supported the changes by publicising the new services and timetables on community media platforms.</p> <p>Leaflets and timetables were also produced and distributed at the Community Council meetings.</p>   |
| 1.05        | <p>On March 25<sup>th</sup> 2020, and following Government guidelines in relation to the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic, all LTA's were subsequently suspended until further notice.</p> <p>Notices were distributed to the respective local communities and information was available on the Flintshire County Council website advising passengers of these changes. In order to mitigate the effects of the LTA suspension, the Council's DRT arrangements have remained operational throughout the pandemic providing an essential service for key workers who were impacted by the loss of transport services.</p> <p>The effects of the pandemic also resulted in a reduced service being provided by commercial operators and passengers were informed (via the</p> |

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|      | <p>Council's website) to refer to individual commercial operators web pages for up to date timetable information prior to onward travel.</p>  |
| 1.06 | <p>Following the easing of lockdown restrictions on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the LTA'S were subsequently reinstated. However, given the requirement to operate in accordance with strict physical distancing guidelines, services were only able to operate on a 25% passenger capacity basis.</p> <p>In order to mitigate the reduced passenger capacity on vehicles, revisions were made to a number of timetables to allow for passenger requirements to be accommodated for which recent surveys indicate that passenger demand is currently being met.</p> <p>As can be expected, patronage levels are very much in the process of recovery, operators have reported a rise in confidence amongst transport users and it is anticipated that the recent revision of social distancing measures, combined with Welsh Governments announcement of 'Ramp-up Funding' (which will support Operators ability to increase frequency of services), should result in a continuation of this trend.</p>  |
| 1.07 | <p>Whilst the Council's progress on the revision of LTA's has unfortunately been hindered by the recent Covid 19 pandemic, it is important to note that the review of the Council's LTA's is an ongoing process and as such, the following immediate proposals (next steps) have been highlighted;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Funding has recently been secured from the Welsh Procurement Alliance and Saltney Ferry Town Council which will enable the introduction of a scheduled service to provide residents with access to existing commercial services on the Core Network which will enable onward travel to key services such as employment, education and healthcare. In an attempt to maximise vehicle utilisation, the service will be provided using one of the existing LTA vehicles.</li> <li>(ii) A review of the existing LTA services in Holywell and surrounding communities is due to commence shortly for which proposals will include the optimisation of existing routes and the introduction of TFW's Fflecsi Service, which aims to provide a similar provision to Flintshire's DRT. A copy of TFW's Fflecsi Service presentation is enclosed within <b>Appendix 2</b> for information. The arrangement will be monitored with a view to bringing the existing DRT into the Fflecsi service in the long term.</li> <li>(i) The Council have also been successful with securing Welsh Government Grant Funding for the provision of two Electric Bus Vehicles which are to be utilised on the LT7 and LT4 services. It is proposed that the vehicles will be stationed at the Council's Standard Recycling Yard in Buckley and will be powered by the Council's own energy source from the nearby Solar Farm. A procurement exercise is currently underway in order to acquire the most appropriate vehicles and associated charging infrastructure.</li> </ul> |
| 1.08 | <p>As highlighted previously, the Council's review of the LTA's is an ongoing process of continual review and as such, further proposals for the</p>  |

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|  | forthcoming 6 months are currently being explored for which have been detailed within <b>Appendix 3</b> for information. |
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| <b>2.00</b> | <b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>   |
| 2.01        | The requirement for larger vehicles to provide fully disabled accessible services that can operate on key strategic transport corridors and accommodate larger passenger numbers.  |
| 2.02        | Investment to establish Quality Partnerships on each core network route to ensure ongoing stability of the network is being provided by WG.  |
| 2.03        | The Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG) and its predecessor equivalents have been intended to supplement Council's own expenditure, not replace them. Welsh Government has indicated that it is the duty of each Council to determine how to spend its own un-hypothecated funding. Nevertheless, reflecting the fact that BSSG exists to Council's own expenditure, and Welsh Ministers' discretion in relation to the scheme, it should be expected that future BSSG allocations, from April 2019, will be determined to reflect in part Council's own expenditure on supporting bus and community transport services. Any potential reduction in Flintshire's own revenue support funding could therefore result in a reduction of the grant received from Welsh Government. |

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| <b>3.00</b> | <b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>  |
| 3.01        | There is no legal requirement for Bus operators to consult with Local Authorities before they introduce, change or withdraw a local bus service. Should further services be withdrawn from the core network, the Council will have limited resource to replace. |

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| <b>4.00</b> | <b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>   |
| 4.01        | With Cabinet Member (Streetscene and Countryside).<br>Consultation with Elected Members.<br>Consultation with Town and Community Council.<br>Consultation with members of the public and community groups and forums.<br>Consultation with bus operators.<br>Consultation with neighbouring Authorities.<br>Consultation with Welsh Government. |

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| <b>5.00</b> | <b>APPENDICES</b>                            |
| 5.01        | Appendix 1 - Buckley DRT Information Leaflet |
| 5.02        | Appendix 2 -TFW Fflecsi Service presentation |

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| 5.03 | Appendix 3 – Flintshire County Council’s LTA Action Plan for forthcoming 6 months. |
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| <b>6.00</b> | <b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b> |
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| 6.01 | None. |
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| <b>7.00</b> | <b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b> |
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| 7.01 | <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Stephen O Jones,<br/>Chief Officer, Streetscene and Transportation<br/> <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 704700<br/> <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk">stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p> |
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| <b>8.00</b> | <b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b> |
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| 8.01 | <p><b>Demand Responsive Travel (DRT)</b> – A form of transport where vehicles alter their routes based on particular transport demand rather than using a fixed route or timetable. These vehicles typically pick-up and drop-off passengers in locations according to passengers needs and can include taxis, buses or other vehicles.</p> <p><b>Local Travel Arrangement (LTA)</b> – Shorter public bus service that runs to a set timetable utilising smaller vehicles (such as minibuses) and transport passengers to a ‘Hub’ enabling onward journeys via commercial services.</p> <p><b>Hub</b> – A Town Centre or bus stop on the core network to be utilised as a transport interchange for connecting passengers to commercial bus services.</p> |
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