

CAMBRIDGESHIRE FUTURE TRANSPORT INITIATIVE
(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Following an announcement by the County Council at the beginning of 2011, that by April 2015, all public transport subsidies would end across Cambridgeshire, partners have been looking at alternative ways of meeting county-wide transport needs.

1.2 A Transport Summit was held at March Town Hall in February 2011, and broad agreement was reached amongst those involved in the delivery of passenger transport and with an interest in transport outcomes, to work collaboratively to see what could be achieved working across organisational boundaries. Following the Summit, the partners agreed an ambition to join up resources, priorities, people and journeys, together with transport operators to achieve wider community benefits through a more efficient, effective and co-ordinated approach to passenger transport.

1.3 In total around £34m is spent annually on passenger transport in Cambridgeshire, including:

- ◆ Statutory home to school transport
- ◆ Special Educational Needs transport
- ◆ Social Services transport including adults with learning disabilities and Looked After Children
- ◆ Concessionary Travel Scheme
- ◆ Subsidised bus services
- ◆ Community Transport
- ◆ Health transport

The County Council provides by far the largest resource - around £30 million, although health is also significant (£4.6 million) and contributions of around £0.5 million are provided by the City and District councils. The current Hunts DC budget for Rural Transport support in 2011/12 is £83.5K.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 A cross-authority member led Governance group is overseeing this work and includes the County Council, NHS Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire ACRE, with Hunts DC also represented on this

Group. It is supported by a Solutions group of representatives from across all sectors, including transport operators, who have developed a possible delivery model with support from consultants, Blue Marble and funding from Improvement East. Again, Hunts DC officers have been involved in this work. The key design principles emerging are:

- The creation of a single point of focus and contact for all county-wide passenger transport policies and outcomes
- separate out decision-making on county-wide universal outcomes from local tailored priorities
- create local consortia that are owned by communities and are legally accountable for delivering county-wide outcomes (including statutory requirements)
- create a light-touch joint strategic commissioning entity that brings together resources from the funding bodies; this entity to be focused on wider community outcomes such as access to jobs, skills, services, shopping, health and leisure
- determination of local transport priorities to become the responsibility of the local consortia
- local consortia to be granted incentives to financially generate other improved service accessibility and transport innovations, particularly from any savings that result from the new arrangements when compared to those that exist at present

2.2 The actual nature of the local transport consortia is yet to be finalised but current work is piloting a small number of 'Pathfinder Projects' that should allow different approaches to be tested. The three work-streams being pursued are:

1. Testing the local transport consortium approach through:
 - a) An internal grass roots review of all transport services in the northern part of Cambridgeshire, including linkages to neighbouring counties such as Lincolnshire and Norfolk, and;
 - b) an external review of transport in the west of Cambridgeshire to determine potential benefits of moving to a social enterprise model, again including linkage to other parts of the County as well as cross-boundary including Northants and Peterborough
2. Testing of private enterprise micro-franchises for possible services anywhere across Cambridgeshire where needed to provide additional capacity in locations of greatest need and to complement and support existing provision
3. Testing how a joint strategic commissioning body, 'Transport for Cambridgeshire', could provide the focus for a new governance model and county-wide support functions, including:
 - the governance model needed to support alignment of statutory priorities and budgets

- supporting development and commissioning of transport enterprises
- single point of customer contact and shared support, including procurement

2.3 Work is ongoing to develop the strategic business case for this new approach to try and determine the potential benefits of the model and the results of the Pathfinder work.

2.4 Health partners from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) are members of the project. However, as this work has implications beyond the life of the PCT, work will be undertaken to ensure that GP Commissioners (or their final equivalent) are engaged in future discussions, agreements and final decisions on the overall Business Case.

3. THE WAY FORWARD

3.1 It is anticipated that one or more of the Pathfinders will go live by the end of the year and that roll out of local transport consortia will take place over the next few years. Meanwhile, work will be undertaken to develop the strategic business case for future consideration.

3.2 Following consideration by all the partners across the County, work is programmed to continue as set out below and will be coordinated through the Governance Group

Aug- Sep 2011	<p>Refine Pathfinder pilots and develop the concept of 'Transport for Cambridgeshire' with partners.</p> <p>Development of a single point of customer contact.</p> <p>Test market appetite for and pre-piloting of a micro-franchise Pathfinder.</p> <p>Continue work on developing local transport consortia Pathfinders</p> <p>County Council Cabinet (27 Sept. 2011) to seek final approval for Pathfinders and micro-franchise trial</p>
Oct- March 2011	<p>Launch Pathfinders – in Fenland/North Cambs and Hunts/West Cambs and ountywide micro-franchise scheme.</p> <p>Early 2012 - Final Business Cases and partner decisions on roll out.</p>
April 2012	Roll out across Cambridgeshire

3.3 The Governance Group considers that bold steps are needed in moving this work forward so that real change in passenger transport can be delivered as soon as possible. As Passenger Transport Authority for Cambridgeshire, the County Council Cabinet is being

asked on 5th July 2011 to approve the following recommendations for further development:

- a) The principle of establishing a 'Transport for Cambridgeshire' partnership to oversee the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project and enter into discussions with partners to develop this concept further.
- b) Invite the passenger transport funding partners in Cambridgeshire to enter into discussions regarding the sharing of their passenger transport budgets to deliver more effective transport services
- c) Develop Pathfinder projects for local passenger transport consortia as set out in this report.
- d) Invite expression of interest from businesses and organisations wishing to contribute to the provision of local passenger transport.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following bullet points set out details of implications identified to date:

- Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most - The new model would allow the partnership to explore the potential to innovate and improve service accessibility through a more integrated and efficient approach to delivering transport in line with statutory and discretionary policies
- Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities - It is anticipated that Cambridgeshire Future Transport will be able to deliver wider community outcomes through identifying practical, achievable and sustainable solutions that will achieve greater value for money.
- Developing the local economy for the benefit of all - The new model aims to stimulate market innovation and response as well as open opportunities to create new joint community ventures. The model should enable the partnership to support enterprise, accelerate improvements and deliver more services in addition to those of a statutory nature through incentivising local providers to offer responsive and efficient services.

4.2 The key principles of the model will mean local consortia will be owned by communities and will be legally accountable for delivering county wide outcomes (including statutory requirements). The joint strategic commissioning entity will bring together resources from the funding bodies to provide procurement and business support for local

consortia; this entity will be focused on wider community outcomes such as access to jobs, skills, services, shopping, health and leisure.

4.3 In terms of resource and performance implications, the proposals are dependant on the outcomes of the Business case and the 'sharing' of relevant County transport budgets as well as those of the NHS, Districts and City, and others. Support from Improvement East has facilitated the progress of the work and the successful recruitment of a Co-ordinator on a one-year contract means that the momentum of the project can be maintained. Overall the project is designed to deliver substantial savings in transport budgets.

4.4 There are Statutory, Risk and Legal implications as follows;

- A 'Transport for Cambridgeshire' partnership would signal a new approach to shared delivery across sectors and provide a basis for coordinating the Pathfinders and sharing resources
- The voluntary sector and neighbouring authorities have also been engaged throughout the development of the model
- The model will encompass Statutory countywide policies including Special Educational Needs children, Looked after Children, Home to School, Concessionary fares and Non-emergency Passenger Transport policies.
- It will be necessary to fully understand any statutory transport provision for which policy does not exist in order to avoid ambiguities and uncertainties among the Local Transport Consortia or other transport delivery bodies (for example, within existing arrangements, many precedents evolved over time which are not enshrined in formal County policy)
- The model will also cover discretionary countywide policies such as support for community transport, subsidised bus routes and times and any extension to statutory provision.

4.4 In terms of engagement and consultation, this will take place with service users and communities as part of the ongoing work on a Community Impact Assessment under the auspices of the Governance group in order to identify the potential impacts of any changes to policies, services and functions. The opportunities and potential arising from a new delivery model will also need to be integrated into the wider consultation planned, which will be seeking views on the principles of making cuts to bus subsidies and the impact of this on specific routes.

5.0 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

5.1 As outlined in this report, we have been actively involved in this work to date at a Governance and Solutions level and have been supporting the aims and objectives of this work in seeking to secure better overall levels of accessibility and transport service provision for the residents of Huntingdonshire.

- 5.2 For many years, the Council has financially supported Community transport based services across the District in terms of the types of key services that are run in order to meet crucial day to day needs of residents as well as providing grant funding to support vehicle replacement, support for back office functions and the support and development of these charity-based organisations.
- 5.3 Under the new arrangements if they come to fruition, this situation should be reinforced and provide improved, locally based and tailored key services to meet local needs. Our current budget to contribute to these forms of initiative is £83.5K per annum and under these suggested arrangements from 2012/13 onwards, we would agree to align this budget with other partners as part of the wider scheme objectives.
- 5.4 It is however important to note that in agreeing to align this budget, the District Council would still seek to ensure that a suitable mechanism is in place to protect our local interests and needs and to also ensure that current services delivered through Service Level Agreements are either maintained or replaced by new arrangements in order to ensure, as far as practicably possible, that no service provision currently provided is lost as a result of these new emerging arrangements.

5. RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED to;

- a) **Note and support the on-going development of the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Initiative and the Governance and Solutions Groups work and;**
- b) **Agree the principle of aligning the current District Council Rural Transport budget with other Cambridgeshire partners within the Future Transport Initiative in order to deliver more effective transport services, subject to the protection of existing services or their replacement as part of the overall project.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Governance and Solutions Groups papers

Contact **Stuart Bell – Transport Team Leader**
Officers: **Barry Louth – Transport Planning Officer**
 ☎ (01480) 388387/388441