

Transport and Environment Committee

10am, Tuesday, 27 October 2015

Assessing Supported Bus Services; Further Report

Item number	7.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive summary

On 13 January and 25 August 2015, the Committee received reports on the development of a revised system for procuring supported bus services, including a tool to assess value for money and non-financial benefits of these services.

This report provides an update on progress in light of decisions made at those Committee meetings.

Links

Coalition pledges	
Council outcomes	CO9 , CO10 , CO22
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

Assessing Supported Bus Services

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- approves the recommendations on weightings to be applied to the assessment of supported bus services; and
 - notes that there will be a further report to Committee in March 2016.

Background

- 2.1 On 25 August Committee agreed to:
- approve the new assessment methodology to evaluate value for money and the non-financial benefits of supported bus services;
 - hold a workshop for members to consider and finalise the assessment criteria weightings; and
 - receive a further report on the outcome of the assessment of supported bus services.
- 2.2 The workshop took place on 14 September. It:
- considered the weighting of supported bus service criteria in detail; and
 - reviewed outcomes from the Subsam (Supported Bus Services Assessment Module) tool when different weightings are applied to it.
- 2.3 Supported services have evolved over many years, often in response to a demand from communities where commercial services are considered not to meet local needs, or commercial services have been withdrawn or reduced. Support can vary from funding the total cost of a bus service to enhancement of existing commercial services, such as increased frequency or extended operating hours (evenings and weekends).
- 2.4 The supported bus service budget for 2015-16 is £1.17 million. Developer contributions add a further £125,000. Currently there are 16 services including Christmas, New Year and cross-boundary services at a projected cost to the Council of £1.57m (details in Appendix 1). The gap of £275,000 is managed as a pressure within the Transport account.

Main report

- 3.1 On 25 August, the Transport and Environment Committee approved an interim set of weightings. The workshop on 14 September reviewed these. The workshop concluded that the interim weightings overall reflected a desirable balance.
- 3.2 The proposed weightings are set out below.

Criteria	Weighting
<i>Enhancing access and social inclusion (total 45%)</i>	
Access to employment	1%
Early career access	1%
Access to retail	2%
Access to hospitals	2%
Access to GP surgeries	2%
Access to education	2%
Access for older and disabled people	4%
High unemployment in areas served	3%
Social deprivation in areas served	3%
Accessibility and usage (population within 400m of all bus stops on route, annual service usage)	25%
<i>Protecting the environment (total 5%)</i>	5%
Impact on carbon emissions (and other air pollutants)	
<i>Reducing congestion (total 40%)</i>	40%
Travel alternatives (ie absence of alternatives)	
What the subsidy supports (frequency extension/route extension/standalone service)	10%
Although built into the software, this is subtracted from the outcome, as it is not a benefit in its own right	

- 3.3 The total score achieved by any route depends largely on the weighting given to the 'Travel alternatives' (ie the absence of alternatives) criterion. The legislation empowering Councils to provide supported services is intended to provide services where there are few or no alternatives, hence the 40% weighting given to this criterion.
- 3.4 Subsam will allow assessing and re-planning the supported service network. This will be undertaken in consultation with bus operators and communities that depend on supported services. A report on this work will be presented to Committee in March 2016.
- 3.5 The 129 Eve Coaches cross-boundary service, to which the Council's expected contribution this year was £40,200, has already been withdrawn by East Lothian Council.

Services to Ratho

- 3.6 At its meeting on 18 March 2014, following a report on Subsidised Bus Services – Ratho Village and Dumbiedykes, Committee agreed 'that the Acting Director of Services for Communities report back once the new contract has been in place for six months to consider the need for a public transport link to the city centre and a future link to the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena'. Discussions have taken place, and are continuing, with Community Council representatives, to identify an optimum service for Ratho which can be provided for the same or a lower price than the current service.
- 3.7 When there are budgetary pressures which may affect services in some areas, it is difficult to justify expanding them elsewhere, unless there is an overwhelming case for doing so. It is considered that financing a direct bus service from Ratho to the city centre, and a future link to the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, is not such a case.
- 3.8 The Committee will be aware that a review of Community and Accessible Transport services funded by the Council is under way. Those services are generally intended to meet the needs of those who cannot use bus services. However, there is a clear relationship between the ability to use, and the availability of, bus services. It is good equalities practice to ensure wider access to mainstream services, as opposed to providing 'special services' to those whose needs are not currently met.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The Council's investment in supported bus services is targeted at those routes that deliver the greatest social, economic and transport related benefits.

Financial impact

- 5.1 Deploying the Subsam tool incurs no direct cost other than staff time.
- 5.2 The work will inform recommendations to align the costs of supported services with the available budget.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Deployment of the methodology for assessing supported bus services ensures that the services the Council supports align with its strategic transport objectives, and represent value for money.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The outcomes of this report in relation of the ten areas of rights and the delivery of the three Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) have been considered. Any reduction in supported bus services will have negative impacts on these.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties have been considered. Any change to supported public transport provision is likely to affect these elements. The impact of supported bus services on carbon emissions and air pollution is one of the criteria built into the assessment methodology.
- 8.2 Access to health facilities, shopping and employment for older people, disabled people and those from areas of social deprivation and high unemployment are significant factors that have been taken into account in the development of the assessment tool.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Consultation with bus users and stakeholders including bus operators was undertaken on the criteria used in developing the methodology and the tool used for assessing existing Supported Bus Services.

9.2 A presentation took place for elected members on the development of the assessment tool, and a workshop subsequently took place on the weightings given to different criteria.

Background reading/external references

Assessing Supported Bus Services – Transport and Environment Committee, 13 January 2015

Assessing Supported Bus Services - Transport and Environment Committee, 25 August 2015

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Links

Coalition pledges

Council outcomes

CO9 - Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities

CO10 - Improved health and reduced inequalities

CO22 - Moving efficiently – Edinburgh has a transport system that improves connectivity and is green, healthy and accessible

Single Outcome Agreement

SO1 - Edinburgh's Economy Delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all

Appendices

1. Supported service route details

Appendix 1 Supported service route details

Operator	Service	Approx subsidy 2015-16	Approx pax/yr 2014-15 or equivalent	Approx pax/yr two years previously	Contract Route and description	Due to expire
Horsburgh	7	£69,500	Crossboundary		Winchburgh – Queensferry. Links to St John's Hospital when no other direct link. Part commercial, part WLC funded	31/3/16
Edinburgh Coach Lines	13	£202,500	132,000	144,000	Craigleith-Blackhall-Ravelston-West End-New Town-Broughton-McDonald Rd-Dalmeny St-Lochend-Findlay Gdns. Wholly subsidised. Sole public transport to Dean Galleries, and in parts of the New Town	Jan 2016*
First	18	£87,500	163,000	194,000	Gyle - Fairmilehead – RIE. Off-peak links across south Edinburgh to employment, education, leisure, RIE. Commercial in peak	26/7/16
Lothian Buses	20	£154,500	169,000	128,000	Chesser-Wester Hailes-Hermiston Gait. Shopping, employment, leisure, for areas isolated from main network. Provides service outwith main bus routes, connecting to them and out-of-centre activities. Subsidy includes Tesco contribution	Jan 2016*
Lothian Buses	20 extn	£266,000	129,000		Ratho-Gyle. Extension provides link between Ratho and Gyle and services to/from City Centre	31/5/18
Lothian Buses	38	£94,000	299,000	308,000	Granton-WGH-City Centre – RIE. Frequency enhancement ensures commercial viability	Monthly extensions
Lothian Buses	42	£60,500	32,000	39,000	City Centre-Portobello (evenings and Weekend) Evening/weekend journeys	Jan 2016*
Various		£29,000			Xmas/Hogmanay Buses	
Lothian Buses	60	£42,000	8,000	8,000 estimated	Scottish Parliament-Southside-Bristo. Provides a service outwith main bus routes, connecting to them and out-of-centre activities	4/10/18
Lothian Buses	63	£241,500	195,000		Queensferry-Kirkliston-Newbridge-RBS-Gyle-Edinburgh Pk-Stevenson Coll-Hermiston Gait- Sighthill-Hermiston P&R-Riccarton Campus Hourly links to employment, educational, leisure, shopping	27/7/18
Horsburgh	64	£158,500	37,000	32,000	D Mains-Cramond-Maybury-Gyle-Edinburgh Pk Stn. Hourly frequency most of the day. Access mainly to employment, shopping, leisure	Monthly extensions
Waverley Travel	68	£74,000	46,000	50,000	Turnhouse - Gyle- Corstorphine - Parkgrove – Clermiston. Off-peak service, providing shopping opportunities for mainly elderly users. Sole public transport for Turnhouse	31/3/18
Waverley Travel	70	£15,000	5,000	6,000	Balerno-Currie-Riccarton-Gyle. Shopping opportunities, mainly for elderly residents not on a bus route. One return journey Wednesday and Friday, two returns Saturday	Jan 2016*
Horsburgh	40/X40	£7,000	Crossboundary		St John's - Ratho – RIE. WLC contract. 4 return journeys per day Ratho-Hospitals	31/3/16
Blue Bus	24	£50,500	Crossboundary		Currie - St John's Hospital WLC contract. Six return journeys per day	31/3/16

* contracts expired July 2015; extended for six months