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| NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | Communities Scrutiny Committee |
| DATE OF MEETING | 26 SEPTEMBER 2019 |
| TITLE | Strategic Review of the Public Transport Service |
| AUTHOR | Dafydd Wyn Williams, Head of Environment Department |
| CABINET MEMBER | Councillor Gareth Wyn Griffith |
| PURPOSE | To update the Committee on the progress to date |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Environment Department submitted a report to the Leadership Team on 9 October 2018 outlining the challenges that have been with bus services, which has affected travellers in Gwynedd since 2014. The report identified risks, and the main risk, given the history, was over-dependency on bus companies. The main impact of this risk, amongst others, was the increase in public transport costs in Gwynedd, thus reducing the number of available services for users.
- 1.2 In order to mitigate these risks, the Department stated its intention to undertake a comprehensive review of the Public Transport provision and to consult with communities to address the following:
- Identify the need
 - Assess the social value
 - Prioritise services
 - Offer public transport by being innovative and getting more for our scarce money.
- 1.3 A further report was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 4 April 2019 (Appendix 1) offering an update, and specifically outlining the aim of the Public Transport review and the implementation method.
- 1.4 It was explained that the review would consider the existing Public Transport Network and would assess whether it was fit for purpose, with the intention of establishing a network that was safe, reliable and cost effective for the future.
- 1.5 This will be achieved by undertaking seven following steps as follows:
1. Identify the public need; not only the demands of those who currently use public transport but also what would encourage other members of the public to use public transport. This will be done by means of engagement and consultation
 2. After establishing the need, the current network will be reviewed to ensure that it can meet the needs of the travelling public. This will include making any changes required to the network
 3. Having established the network, there will be a need to consider what type of provision will be the safest, most reliable and most cost effective. This is where we will need to draw on the experiences of other authorities and experts in order to evaluate the options

4. Consult with communities to share the results of the review and the timetable for establishing the new network before commencing the tendering process
5. Commence the tendering process
6. If the funding is insufficient to meet the need, the priorities of the bus routes will be based on the Social Return on Investment,
7. Commence the new service.

1.6 The review will also give the Council an opportunity to trial alternative ways of meeting transport needs by means of, e.g. using community transport methods, on-call services, mini-buses, taxis, etc.

1.7 The timetable for action was outlined (Appendix 2) and it is now time to report on the progress so far to the Leadership Team and also to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

1.8 Therefore, the main purpose of this report is to update you on the progress as well as the next steps that the Department will be implementing.

2. UPDATE

2.1 You can see from the timetable that considerable time and effort has been invested in gathering information in order to ensure that our decisions are based on the need and are prioritised according to social value. The necessary information was gathered by asking our residents to complete questionnaires (Appendix 3)

2.2 951 paper questionnaires were received, which were mainly gathered from community events arranged in advance at 13 locations across the county, or officers travelling on a bus or at a bus stop and completing the questionnaires with users. 1,070 on-line questionnaires were received, and the success of obtaining such a large number of responses was down to a number of members and officers marketing the need to respond.

2.3 A wealth of information has been gathered - some of it quantitative and some of it qualitative.

2.4 Initial analysis work was carried out on the 2021 completed questionnaires, which gives a flavour of the type of detail we can expect. From the initial information, it appears that 40% of users have an 'advantage card' and 33% of the users are over 60 years old. Approximately 60% of travellers are female, and approximately half of the travellers travel every day, with approximately 37% using the bus every week.

2.5 The main reason for using the bus (it was possible to choose more than one option) is socialise (56%) and shopping (52%). The use of bus to work is 23% and for medical appointments 21%, with the use of transport to exercise at 13% and 10% as access to education.

2.6 What is interesting that 31% stated that they would not undertake the journey if the transport was unavailable. 20% outlined that they would have to rely on friends and family and others would attempt to use a taxi (17%), walk (12%), or drive with a personal vehicle (9%).

- 2.7 In terms of how public transport enriches the lives of those travelling, 88% felt that this offered them greater independence and freedom, and enabled them to see others, socialise (76%) and shop (70%). The ability to attend medical appointments was something that public transport enabled residents to do (44%) and gain access to their work (32%).
- 2.8 Here are some examples of the responses when we asked the following question: *'If the buses didn't run, how would this affect your life?'*
- *"You may as well put me in a box. My life would not be worth living, I have no family."*
 - *"I'd be stuck at home. I would not be able to go and visit my wife who's in a home in Pwllheli, as taxis are too expensive."*
 - *"I wouldn't be able to travel to the job centre, which would mean losing my benefits and then losing my home as I would have no benefits coming in."*
 - *"I'd lose my independence. I'd have to rely on family and friends to take me shopping."*
 - *"Unable to reach appointments at Ysbyty Gwynedd."*
- 2.9 140 responded that they did not use the bus, and explained the main reasons for this, as follows:
- The service is not frequent enough
 - No service at all
 - Too expensive
 - Too many stops

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 Assessment work to consider all questionnaires is currently underway, and based on the responses we will proceed three main perspectives, namely:
- Review the suitability of the existing transport network
 - Ensure that we meet the need in the most cost-effective manner (and reduce over-dependency on bus companies)
 - Prioritise the journeys/routes based on social value
- 3.2 The existing network (image attached in Appendix 4) has developed over decades, and there is no evidence that it has been comprehensively reviewed during this time.
- 3.3 The aim here is to ensure that the network meets the need. This is technical work and the department is working with officers from Transport for Wales to attempt to set up a network that meets the need. This work is nearing completion, and we intend to have parts of the network ready for the next step, namely tendering journeys to ensure that we meet the need in the most cost-effective way. The Department intends to tender all Public Transport journeys in the Arfon area so that the new Services commence in the area in April 2020. It is expected that the process of re-tendering using alternative transportation to buses will enable the Department to introduce the necessary public transport services within the available budget.

3.4 Another extremely important part of the work that is underway is the element of identifying the social value offered by every public transport service, and we will prioritise the journeys based on Social Rate of Return. Of course, if there are insufficient funds to meet the cost of providing the service, then the services that introduce the lowest Social Rate of Return may be cut, or the 'social value' evidence could be used to seek additional funding.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Appendix 2: Report to the Communities Scrutiny Committee 04.04.19

Appendix 2: Timetable

Appendix 3: Questionnaire