

Report of the Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation)

Report to the Director of City Development

Date: 18 December 2018

Subject: DEPUTATION TO COUNCIL – Wetherby Transport Group

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Wetherby	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. At Council on 11th July 2018, a deputation was received from local representatives of the Wetherby Transport Group.
2. The deputation is requesting greater investment in bus services serving the Wetherby area.
3. This report sets out the response to this Deputation and the activities being undertaken to support and develop bus services in the city in conjunction with the bus operators and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Recommendations

4. The Director of City Development is requested to:
 - i) note and agree the contents of the report as a response to the Deputation; and;
 - ii) welcome the continued input and interest from the Wetherby Transport Group in this key area of transport policy.
5. Council is requested to:
 - i) Note the content of this report;

- ii) Acknowledge and thank the offer of help and support from those bringing the deputation.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the deputation made to Council on 11th July 2018, requesting investment in bus services.

2. Background information

- 2.1 A deputation was received by Council on 11th July 2018 by the Wetherby Transport Group, who represent the parishes of Bickerton, Bramham, Boston Spa, Clifford, Collingham, Thorp Arch, Walton and Wetherby.
- 2.2 The deputation from the Wetherby Transport Group raises the lack of direct and indirect services from the area they represent which create difficulties for people to access Leeds and York.
- 2.3 Specific mention was made of;
- i) The difficulty for elderly residents to access NHS appointments in district hospitals.
 - ii) The limited number of services of daytime services and no evening services.
 - iii) The limited connections to the Thorp Arch business park
- 2.4 The deputation calls for “Councillors to make a fairer distribution of the funding available to provide transport to areas which have inadequate or no public transport and to encourage WYCA to maximise the opportunities afforded by the Bus Services Act (2016) to deliver usable bus services to the outer north east area.”

3. Main issues

- 3.1 As part of the Leeds Transport Strategy and the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy (including the Bus Strategy) the Council is committed to achieving high quality bus services in the city. The Council is investing through the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme (LPTIP), which includes £173.5m of funding from the Department for Transport and through the West Yorkshire Transport Fund, in major programmes of improvement of the transport infrastructure to benefit both bus and rail. The scope of this funding is to deliver improvements to public transport infrastructure and cannot be used to subsidise the running of bus services.

Link to Leeds Transport Strategy report:

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Leeds%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>

- 3.2 The responsibility for liaising with bus operators and the provision of socially necessary bus services is held by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority who provided the following statement;
- 3.2.1 *The West Yorkshire Combined Authority are responsible for the provision of socially necessary (but not commercially viable) bus services funded from a levy on the five District Councils of West Yorkshire. Funding for these bus services is planned to reduce from £19.1m in 2017/18 to £15.8m by 2020/21. Guidelines have been adopted to ensure that this funding is good value for taxpayer's money.*
- 3.2.2 *In the Wetherby area, the Authority supports evening services (hourly) between Wetherby and Leeds (also serving Bramham, Clifford, Boston Spa, Thorp Arch, Walton) which then continue on a commercial basis to Harrogate. During the day*

there is a half hourly service linking Leeds, Wetherby and Harrogate and villages in between. (770, 771, X70, X71, X72, X73, X74).

- 3.2.3 *From Wetherby to York (412) and Tadcaster (X70) there is a two hourly daytime service to both destinations. Both these services are operated on a commercial basis without public support from North Yorkshire County Council (North Yorkshire has withdrawn support for cross boundary services over the last few years). Given that the daytime demand only warrants a two hourly service, it would not meet our value for taxpayer's money guidelines for the Combined Authority to introduce an evening service to these destinations, especially at a time of reduced funding being available.*
- 3.2.4 *Should external funding be available to improve the service or additional funding become available, the Authority would review the provision of evening services.*
- 3.3 The deputation concluded their council address by requesting increased service from the villages to Tadcaster, which would enable an interchange onto the Coastliner services. WYCA approached the operator of the X70 service, Connexions, as to the feasibility of this. Unfortunately the operator has stated that they do not believe that this would be commercially viable and they will not extend the timetable to run an additional later service per day.
- 3.4 With regard to those residents who live in remote locations and have limited mobility, if they are struggling to attend booked hospital appointments they should consult their GP who may be able to recommend them to the Patient Transport Service.
- 3.5 There exists a charity group, Wetherby in Support of the Elderly (WiSE) who run a volunteer service that can assist elderly residents in travelling to appointments in the Wetherby Area. The website is <http://www.w-ise.org.uk/transport/>
- 3.6 The Combined Authority in liaison with the Council is currently investigating options to encourage and support the commercial development of Demand-Response Transport (DRT). The concept is similar to that of Uber Taxis of using a mobile app to request a taxi. DRT would operate as a public transport service and take a longer route but serve a larger number of passengers than a taxi. Servicing remote communities such as those represented by the Wetherby Transport Group would be an ideal area for operation. Unfortunately this is still in the investigative stage and there is no timescale for deployment.
- 3.7 Wetherby Bus station is on a list of sites awaiting review with the goal of improving the passenger experience and the interchange between services. This is subject to funding becoming available.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 There is no specific need to consult on the recommendations arising from this report, beyond the primary need to respond to the residents who brought the deputation to Council.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening is not required as there is no new or revised policy being considered.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.3.1 The Best Council Plan 2017/18 has transport and infrastructure as a priority. Good and reliable bus services are essential to connect people and communities to employment, social and leisure locations along with reliable connections to local amenities (including medical appointments) and is aligned with the Leeds Interim Transport Strategy that was published in December 2016. Improvements are prioritised on a value for money basis.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 There are no financial implications to Leeds City Council.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications.
- 4.5.2 There is no exempt or confidential information.
- 4.5.3 The decisions are not eligible for call-in.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 There is no specific risk to the Council arising from this report.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 There is currently no funding available to subsidise additional bus services.
- 5.2 When developing new proposals the council will consider all road users and develop proposals that are in line with the projects and wider Council's aims and objectives.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Director of City Development is requested to:
- (a) note and agree the contents of the report as a response to the Deputation; and
 - (b) welcome the continued input and interest from the Wetherby Transport Group in this key area of transport policy.
- 6.2 Council is requested to:
- (a) note the content of this report; and
 - (b) acknowledge and thank the offer of help and support from those bringing the deputation.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.