

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 26th March 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

SUBJECT: Policy & Performance Board Work Programme 2011/2012

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the scrutiny of Halton Community Transport as part of the 2011/12 work programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) Members of the Policy and Performance Board endorse the work of the Halton Community Transport (HCT) Working Group and agree the Topic Brief attached as Appendix 1.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Each year, the PPB has the opportunity to identify topics or work areas that it would like to scrutinise in detail as part of its work programme for the year.

3.2. Good practice, based on experience, suggests that 2/3 topics are manageable, however the choice lies with the Board depending on its priorities and commitments. The normal process for scrutiny is that, following their adoption by this Board, the topics selected are worked up as detailed topic briefs and agreed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the PPB in conjunction with the Lead Officer for this Board.

3.3 In considering which are good topics to include in the work programme Members need to keep in mind the Overview and Scrutiny Guide/Toolkit. Guidance on Topic Selection is attached as an aide-memoire. In particular, the Board's attention is drawn to paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 which relate to added value, capacity and resources.

3.4 It should be remembered that much of the work of this PPB will be cross-cutting and will impact on or be of relevance to other PPB's. In the case of the HCT Working Group now under consideration, a report has also been presented to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 14th March 2012.

3.5 It should also be noted that Performance Monitoring of the Reporting Departments (Policy, Planning & Transportation; Economy, Enterprise and Property), will in any case be received by this PPB.

4.0 2011/12 Work Programme

4.1 At the meeting of this Board on 15th June 2011, it was noted that the Waste Management Topic Group needed to be re-established once a Working Group had been set up. At the same meeting, it was also agreed that a Cemeteries Working Group would be established as part of the 2011/12 work programme.

4.2 As part of the budget savings for 2011/12, the grant that the Council award to Halton Community Transport was reduced by £40,000. A further saving is being considered for the 2012/13 financial year. In considering this saving, it was proposed that a Scrutiny Working Group should be established to review HCT's operations and determine whether it is providing the services and value for money that the Council would expect. It was also recommended that because of the cross cutting nature of the topic, the work of the Group should also be endorsed by both the E&UR PPB and the ELS&C PPB.

4.3 Because of the immediate need to establish the Group (as budget savings proposals for 2012/13 are being recommended), nominations from Members were sought. Those subsequently nominated were Councillors Hignett, Gerrard, A. Lowe, Edge, Nolan, Zygadllo and E. Cargill. It follows that 5 of these 7 Members sit on the E&UR PPB whilst 2 sit on the ELS&C PPB. The Group will have met on more than one occasion before the meeting of this Board and a verbal update on progress will therefore be given to Members on the evening.

4.4 A Topic Brief has been prepared for the Group and it is attached as Appendix 1. Members of the Board are now asked to endorse this Brief with the details being agreed by the Chair, Vice Chair and the Lead Officer of the Board.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None at this stage.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None at this stage.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None

7.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

See attached Topic Brief.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

See attached Topic Brief.

7.4 A Safer Halton

None

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

See attached Topic Brief.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 8.1 The overall risk associated with not maintaining current specialised transport service levels is that consideration needs to be given to the Council meeting its duty under S63 (8) of the Transport Act 1985 where it has to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 9.1 Consideration needs to be given to the elderly and disabled residents of the Borough who would be affected by any detrimental impact on current specialised transport service levels.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1 – Topic Brief

Topic title: HCT Scrutiny Working Group

PPB(s) responsible: Urban Renewal / Employment Learning & Skills

Officer Lead: Mick Noone Tel: 0151 471 7370

Support Officer: Jeff Briggs 0151 471 7381

Planned start/end date: Short series of meetings (3 to 4), mid February to late March 2012

Topic description and scope:

A review of the operations of, and services provided by, Halton Community Transport (HCT) including identification of funding streams which contribute towards HCT's operations and service delivery. To consider the potential social and inclusion benefits that the services operated by HCT provide to its users and the impacts on these users should service discontinue.

Terms of Reference

1. To consider the Council's duties and policies for securing the provision of public transport services, including community transport.
2. To consider the role community transport can play in helping the Council fulfil its duties and meet its priorities.
3. To consider the aims and objectives of HCT, the details of its current fleet, the number and type of passengers it carries, and the services it provides to the communities of Halton.
4. To consider the legislation governing the operation of CT services (permit systems, licences, etc.).
5. To consider the service level agreement that exists between Halton Borough Council and Halton Community Transport in terms of levels of service provision, standards of quality required and funding levels.
6. To consider whether HCT, or indeed other community transport operations that may be supported by the Council, can be deemed to be benefitting from an unfair financial and competitive advantage in relation to other transport providers.

7. To consider the potential impacts on users of the specialised transport services that HCT provide should any such service be withdrawn, wholly or in part i.e. less vehicles provided, reduced days/times of operation.
8. To consider other possible transport service alternatives available for users whom rely on existing specialised transport.
9. To consider other potential ways in which alternative specialised transport services could be provided by different transport providers more effectively and/or at reduced cost.
10. To consider the detrimental impact on the Council's duty under Section 63 (8) of the Transport Act 1985 'it shall be the duty of any council, in exercising or performing any of their functions to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled' should specialised transport services be withdrawn in their entirety.
11. To consider the impact of cuts to the supported bus service budget and the impact this is having or could have on the provision of local bus services in certain areas. Demand responsive transport services such as the Council funded Dial-a-Ride provided by HCT, are a fall-back for residents (in meeting the duties as set out above) from areas where there is no alternative public transport provision.
12. To consider the Community Impact Review and Assessment (CIRA) for reduction of funding for specialised transport services and consequential impact on duties as part of the Equalities Act.
13. To consider the potential impact on the Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid application, which includes elements of provision by HCT and could be worth £4.3million over the next three years, should funding levels provided be discontinued.
14. To consider the existing passenger fares and other charge levels made by HCT for services provided for individuals and for affiliated groups.

Why this topic was chosen:

In the current financial climate where major savings are required and every budget line is being closely scrutinised, the HCT scrutiny working group aims to identify the overall effectiveness of the services provided by HCT and to review the current operations of HCT as well as funding levels provided by the Council.

Key outputs and outcomes sought

Outputs:

A clear understanding of –

1. HCT's operations, the services it provides and its sources of funding.

2. The role Community Transport can play in helping the Council meet its statutory duties and its priorities.
3. The service level agreement that exists between Halton Borough Council and Halton Community Transport and it's overall content.
4. The potential impacts on users of the specialised transport services provided by HCT should these services be withdrawn or significantly reduced.
5. Any other possible transport service alternatives available for users and/or potential alternative specialised transport service provision.
6. The Council's duty under Section 63 (8) of the Transport Act 1985 when determining the need to consider the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.
7. The requirement to produce a Community Impact Review and Assessment (CIRA) for any reduction of funding for specialised transport services.
8. The Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid application, HCT's role and how this and other forms of public transport fit with the overall aim of the LSTF bid.

Outcomes:

1. The identification of any significant risks and issues from the review of HCT's activities and operations.
2. The identification of any significant benefits and opportunities from the review of HCT's activities and operations.
3. To reach a conclusion on whether the subsidy provided by the Council to HCT is providing value for money and whether future support should be maintained (subject to availability of funding).
4. A clearer scope and direction for future provision of specialised transport services with knowledge of all of the relevant surrounding information.

Which of Halton's 5 strategic priorities does this topic address and what are the key objectives and improvement targets it will help achieve?

A Healthy Halton, Key Objectives including:

- Responding to the needs of an ageing population, improving their quality of life and thus enabling longer, active and more fulfilled lives;
- Removing barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health by addressing the wider determinants of health;
- Improving access to health services, including primary care

Employment Learning and Skills, Key Objectives including:

- Developing a culture where learning is valued and skill levels throughout the adult population and across the local workforce can be raised;

- Promoting and increasing the employability of local people and removing barriers to employment to get more people into work

Environment and Regeneration, Key Objectives including:

- Providing a well connected, sustainable and accessible borough and ensuring a variety of safe efficient travel and infrastructure options for people

Nature of expected/desired PPB input

Involvement by a small number of Members and officers in a series of working groups, involving approximately 3 or 4 meetings. Working group reports to be considered by PPB as appropriate.

Preferred mode of operation

As above.

Media/Communication implications/opportunities arising from examining this topic.

None at this stage.

Agreed and signed by:

PPB Chair Officer

Date Date