



Business Efficiency Board

**Wednesday, 6 September 2006 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W. R.'

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Arthur Cole (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Martha Lloyd-Jones (Vice-Chairman)	Labour
Councillor John Bradshaw	Conservative
Councillor Ron Hignett	Labour
Councillor Mark Dennett	Labour
Councillor David Findon	Conservative
Councillor Christopher Inch	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Shaun Osborne	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin	Labour
Councillor Christopher Rowe	Liberal Democrat

*Please contact Caroline Halpin on 0151 471 7394 or e-mail
caroline.halpin@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Wednesday, 8 November 2006*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.	
3. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS - KEY REVIEW OUTCOMES	1 - 6
Copies of the Final Report of the Best Value Review of Transportation and Access are available on request.	
4. IDEA EFFICIENCY REVIEW	7 - 8
PART II	
ITEMS CONTAINING “EXEMPT” INFORMATION FALLING WITHIN SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
<p><i>In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public but, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is RECOMMENDED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.</i></p>	
5. 2006/07 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN – QUARTER 1 PROGRESS REPORT	9 - 24

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

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REPORT TO: Business Efficiency Board

DATE: 6 September 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Best Value Review of Transportation and Access - Key Review Outcomes

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The review commenced in September 2005 and focussed on the provision of passenger transport services within the Borough. The aim of the Review was to ensure that the policies and strategies for the provision of passenger transport and access within the Borough optimise the resources available for tackling the changing needs of communities in the Borough. Therefore, the purpose of the report is to set out the key messages from the Review for consideration by the Business Efficiency Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the report is received by the Board;
- (2) any comments and observations of the Business Efficiency Board be referred to Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board for consideration; and
- (3) the Business Efficiency Board receives a follow up performance assessment of the progress towards implementing the Improvement Plan.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The main areas of focus for the review included ways to improve quality and accessibility of public transport, local bus network development, the quality of transport information, transport for post 16 learners, environmental issues and internal service organisation. The key sectors of the Council affected by the review include Children and Young People and Health and Community Directorates as well as Environment Directorate (Transport Co-ordination).
- 3.2 The Best Value Review Final Report contains a range of recommendations that have been grouped around a number of key themes to improve benefits to current patrons and those people who may be passengers in the future. The Improvement Plan sets out the

timetable for delivering the recommendations and identifies the officer(s) responsible for their implementation. The key themes include:

- ***Improving the quality and accessibility of public transport services within Halton, by the introduction of a single integrated booking system.***

The Review Team examined the results of a number of public consultation exercises, in particular the confusion over transport booking arrangements. An integrated 24/7 booking and scheduling system is proposed which will provide one point of contact about the full range of services available. This will include the 'Job Link' and door-to-door services and will be linked to the Contact Centre. More travel choices will be made available by increasing and standardising the hours of operation for accessible services and dual-purpose vehicles will replace the in-house fleet.

These improvements are also designed to encourage independent passenger travel and will be supported by travel training and individual journey planning. It is envisaged that there will be increased public satisfaction with information about choices that are available, leading to increased patronage and, ultimately, the social, economic and environmental benefits, which result from a modal shift.

- ***Developing the local bus network within the Borough.***

The Review Team noted the views of transport users and challenged current service provision, taking into account also cost and service quality in comparison with similar authorities and recognised best practice. It was concluded that a number of improvements could be made, by a variety of methods. A major recommendation is the development of formal Quality Partnership Agreements within the Borough. These will be a partnership and funding arrangement between the Council and one or more commercial operators, supported by the Department for Transport.

The Quality Partnership Agreement will provide for extending passenger facilities at bus stations and implementing a programme of improvements to the infrastructure. Ticketing arrangements will be enhanced, such as the 'Halton Hopper' scheme and through bus/rail, increased frequencies and hours of operation on key routes, bus priority routes and other measures to ensure reliability as well as the provision of better links to hospitals. These measures will further improve the experience and benefits of users, including:

- Increased patronage and reduced congestion, improved co-ordination and integration of services.
- Increased accessibility particularly for people who are currently poorly served by public transport services.

- Fully accessible vehicles.

- ***Improving the quality of passenger information, including the further development of real time passenger information.***

A major public concern for some time has been a perceived lack of easily accessible information about which public transport services are available. The Review Team compared current service provision with other providers and again took note of best practice nationally. The review therefore recommended improved provision of more simplified information on site about travel options, including provision of audio information, real time information at bus stops, a developed web site and SMS text facilities. The role of the Transport Advisory Committee will also be strengthened and widened to include all passenger groups. These measures will further assist all current and non-current users, in particular those with special needs, to access public transport.

- ***Improving further the provision of good quality and accessible transport for post sixteen learners.***

The Merseyside Learning and Skills Council carried out a Strategic Area Review (StAR) of post 16 learning facilities in Halton in 2005. This revealed that a major hindrance for this social group to accessing further education was the lack of access to the colleges in the Borough by public transport and concurred with research carried out as part of the Review.

The current situation affects those living in the 5 most deprived wards in particular. The Review Team recommended that all post 16 Campus sites be served by conventional public transport. Improving these services will involve closer partnership working with the commercial bus companies to better integrate existing post 16-learner transport, including new ticketing arrangements and the integration of the Bridgewater Campus Shuttle Bus within the mainstream bus network. These measures will go some way in creating the conditions to facilitate an increase in student numbers.

- ***Reducing the environmental impact of passenger transport within Halton.***

Members who were part of the Review Team informed the review of local concerns about poor air quality in the area, which could be partly contributed to by public transport vehicle emissions. It was therefore agreed that a bid would be submitted to the EU Commission for funding under the STEER programme, in order to develop an innovative demonstration project for the use of environmentally friendly fuels and technology. The use of biofuels should realise major benefits for the community in terms of contributing to better air quality, health and sustainability of the public transportation network.

- ***Internal service improvements.***

Through extensive consultation with user Departments the Review Team identified a series of improvements designed to clarify relationships and increase effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability. Transport Co-ordination will continue to organise and procure the Council's passenger transport services within a revised organisation structure in order to meet the challenges identified in the review. Quality, delivery and budgetary control will be improved by agreement of clear and robust Service Level Agreements between Transport Co-ordination and the Children and Young People and Health and Community Directorates. There will be a nominated Lead Officer in each Directorate with responsibility for budgets.

The current mixed economy of in-house and private service provision will be retained. In-house fleet unit costs will be driven down by improved fleet utilisation and integration into a holistic passenger transport service. Efficiency savings of over £75,000 during 2006/07 were realised as a result of the restructuring exercises and more may be possible when all of the Council's passenger transport vehicles are procured, maintained and licensed through the Fleet Management Service. This is in line with good practice as recommended in the Corporate Procurement Strategy.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Best Value Review's recommendations will support the second Local Transport Plan, the Bus Strategy and the Access Strategy covering the period 2006 - 2011.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Most of the recommendations contained in the Improvement Plan will be implemented using existing resources. However some, such as improving the effectiveness of the Job Link service will use HBC Priorities Funding and others, mainly to develop the local bus network, will be met by external funding. These funding sources include the Urban Bus Challenge, the 'Kickstart' scheme, the EU STEER Programme and LTP/developer funding.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 It is important that the review recommendations are implemented in accordance with the agreed timescales. Failure to do so would mean that recommended improvements to Transportation and Access would not be realised and there would not be noticeable improvements for the public. Implementation will be monitored via the service planning process, reporting on performance via Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board and quarterly performance monitoring reports.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The service improvements will ensure that all sections of the community benefit from good quality transport choices, with a special emphasis to ensure that access to key facilities is improved especially for socially excluded people.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Final Report of the Best Value Review of Transportation and Access	Best Value and Performance Management Division, Municipal Buildings, Widnes.	Les Unsworth Best Value Advisor Ext. 1162

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AGENDA ITEM NO.

REPORT TO: Business Efficiency Board

DATE: 6th September 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: IDeA Efficiency Peer Review
and Efficiency Strategy

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Board will recall that the IDeA had recently carried out an Efficiency Peer Review of the Authority. Indeed, members of the Board may well have met some members of the review team.
- 1.2 At the time of writing, the final version of the report from the IDeA was still awaited.
- 1.3 The Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy will update members at the meeting and report on progress in relation to developing an Efficiency Strategy for the Authority.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That progress be noted.

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