

Committee: Transport & Highways
Date: 11 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 3
Title: Local Service Agreement for the Highways and
Transportation Service for Essex – Progress Report
Author: Jeremy Pine (01799) 510460

Summary

- 1 This report sets out the progress that is being made with the preparation of the Local Service Agreement. The report follows on from those made to the last two meetings of the Committee. The County Council's Head of Highways and Transportation (Tony Ciaburro) and the Cabinet Member for the same (Councillor Bass) will be attending this meeting to update Members on progress with the LSA and to answer questions. Subject to hearing the presentation and being satisfied with its content, Members are asked for their agreement to the proposed County Route / Local Road split and for their agreement that the emerging draft LSA document can proceed to sign-up. The completion of the LSA is one of the actions contained in the Council's Quality of Life Corporate Plan (P.7.1).

Background

- 2 In a letter to this Council dated 17 February 2004, Essex County Council's Chief Executive advised that:

"The new local service agreements, to be discussed and agreed, will replace the current arrangements for highways agencies and directly maintained districts. Therefore, in accordance with the resolution of Cabinet on 27 January, I am writing to give your Council formal notice of termination on 31 March 2005 of the Highway arrangements that exist between our two Councils. It is our intention to continue with negotiations for an agreement for Decriminalised Parking Enforcement separately from the new Local Service Agreement.

The existing agency arrangements will be replaced with a Local Service Agreement for Highways and Transportation services which will be within the broad principles agreed by the Essex Local Government Association at its meeting on 29 January 2004 and which will come into operation from 1 April 2005. The detailed content of the Local Service Agreement will be developed through discussions with your Council's members and officers over the coming year. I am confident that the new arrangements will bring about significant improvements to the Highways and Transportation Service for the citizens and travelling public of Essex."

Progress

- 3 The agreement continues to be drawn up via one-to-one sessions between County and District / Borough officers and Members as required, but mainly via a joint officer working group comprised of one officer from each District / Borough and the County's project management team. Separate discussions between the County Council and the Districts and Boroughs have been taking place regarding staffing and financial matters relating to the new LSA.
- 4 The aims of the new agreement are to:
- Provide a seamless service to the public
 - Provide a more responsive service to meet the needs of customers
 - Improve the cost effectiveness, efficiency and the quality of the service
 - Improve decision-making and allow strategic and local decisions to be taken by those best placed to do so
 - Make best use of resources where the service is delivered by those best placed to do so

The agreement is an opportunity for closer working with Essex County Council on highways matters and for more local accountability in decision making on local roads.

- 5 The working group is discussing a wide range of issues. Agency Districts and Boroughs have legitimate concerns over both the future role and location of existing highways staff under the new agreement and the effect of any changes on current levels of service. To keep staff informed, the County Council produces a monthly LSA Bulletin. A copy of the last edition (September 2004) is attached for information. This District has no in-house highways staff, but the Road Safety Officer and her assistant do work under an agency agreement and will be affected.
- 6 The next officer liaison group meeting to discuss the emerging draft LSA document will be on 1 November, unfortunately just after this report will have been finalised. The emerging draft document has, however, helpfully been received in advance of that meeting, and a copy is attached for information. The copy is fax quality, so some of the tables and diagrams are not very clear, but clearer copies will be provided later. However, it is considered important that Members have early sight of the emerging document before the Committee meeting. Officers have also just received the highways network plan showing the proposed finalised split between County Routes and Local Roads. As anticipated, this is a broadly 50-50 split. ECC has asked that agreement to this split be given no later than 12 November, given the timescales for implementation of the LSAs. The plan will be displayed at the meeting.
- 7 At ECC's request, a meeting has been set up on 17 November with between UDC officers and officers from the County Council's Highways & Transportation, Finance and Human Resources departments to deal with outstanding questions and any unresolved issues. Subsequently, a Member and Lead Officer meeting will take place on Tuesday 23 November to discuss and finalise the LSA Agreement content for agreement to sign up.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the progress that is being made with the preparation of the LSA. Subject to hearing the presentation from the County Council's Head of Highways & Transportation and Cabinet Member, and being satisfied with its content, to agree to the County Route / Local Road split and to the emerging draft LSA document proceeding to sign-up.

Background Papers: Quality of Life Corporate Plan

Committee: Transport & Highways
Date: 11 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 4
Title: Letter from Uttlesford Area Access Group re Accessible Parking for People with Disabilities in Saffron Walden Town Centre
Author: Jeremy Pine (01799) 510460

Summary

- 1 This report, which has been prepared at the Committee's request, recommends that Members agree a reply to a letter that the Chairman has received from the Uttlesford Area Access Group (UAAG).

Background

- 2 At the last meeting of this Committee on 8 September, officers reported that the Chairman had received a letter dated 2 September from the UAAG. Members agreed (Minute TH18) that a full report be made to the next meeting. The UAAG is concerned that none of the recommendations made following the town centre traffic management meeting on 19 February 2004 were subsequently included in the Committee's on 21 June 2004. That resolution (Minute TH6) stated that:

1) Essex County Council be asked to provide two Blue Badge spaces on the existing taxi bay in Market Street, with either a single taxi bay relocated immediately to the south or to a position in the High Street

2) The proposal to allocate the Rose and Crown Car Park for Blue badge holders should not be proceeded with

Subsequently, and following representations from local taxi drivers, it has been clarified that part 1 of Minute TH6 should include a reference to the action being subject to statutory consultation procedures as set out in the officers' report. The omission of that reference in the Minute was an error.

- 3 A copy of the UAAG's letter is attached to this report.

Town Centre Traffic Management Meeting

- 4 The purpose of this meeting was to discuss 2 specific issues highlighted in the results of questionnaires of local residents and businesses undertaken early in 2003. One of these issues was a lack of dedicated parking spaces for Blue Badge holders (people with disabilities) within the Controlled Zone, as reserved parking bays are only available in King Street, but not when the road is closed on market days. The second main issue was loading / unloading times within the allocated bays. Related issues of enforcement and

pedestrianisation were also discussed.

5 The meeting recognised that there was limited capacity within the area for additional Blue Badge parking, especially with the market day street closures. However, it was agreed that there might be scope to form additional Blue Badge bays in front of the library, in Market Row and at the “four corners” of the existing parking area in the centre of Market Place. Looking beyond the Controlled Zone, it was considered that there might be merit in dedicating the Rose & Crown car park solely to Blue Badge holders on market days.

6 The outcome of the meeting was reported to the Environment & Transport Committee on 2 March 2004 which resolved (Minute ET60) that:

1) the technical feasibility of forming additional Blue Badge bays within the Controlled Zone as detailed in this report be investigated by Essex County Council

2) this Council considers whether to dedicate the Rose & Crown Car park to Blue Badge holders on market days

3) this Council publicises the existing restrictions prior to decriminalisation, and that upon the introduction of decriminalisation that the controlled parking zone is enforced

4) the Saffron Walden Town Centre Traffic Management Working Group (SWTCTMWG) with representatives of other stakeholders and in liaison with the Decriminalisation Task Group be convened to consider feasibility options for pedestrianisation / semi-pedestrianisation of King Street and Market Place

5) further reports on items 1), 2) and 4) be made to this Committee at its next meeting.

SWTCTMWG Meetings

7 At its first meeting on 5 May 2004, the Group specifically considered the report to the E&T Committee on 2 March 2004. The Group did not favour the option of additional Blue Badge spaces in the “four corners” of the existing parking area in Market Place, for the main reason that these spaces would not be available on market days, rather than any issues re future pedestrianisation. Essex County Council did not favour Blue Badge parking in Market Row due to the narrow width of the road and the extra bay width required for spaces for people with disabilities, causing manoeuvring difficulties. The option of using the Rose & Crown car park was also not favoured, because the spaces would not be as conveniently located as others in the Controlled Zone and there would be loss of revenue for the District Council which was not, in any case, the freeholder. It was considered that there might be merit in providing spaces in front of the library if there was some way they could be accessible on market days, and a suggestion was also made (subject to relocation) about using the taxi rank in Market Street, which was locally perceived to be underused, but which was not in an area that was closed off on market days. The Group also appreciated that the allocated Blue Badge parking in King Street was often abused due to lack of

enforcement of the restrictions, but this could change following decriminalisation.

- 8 The Group recommended that further consideration be given to additional Blue Badge spaces at the taxi rank and outside the library, and that the feasibility of allowing vehicular access within the Controlled Zone for Blue Badge holders on market days be investigated.
- 9 At the second SWTCTMWG meeting on 3 June 2004, Essex County Council presented a number of options on 1/500-scale plans. Having seen the plans, the Group did not favour extra parking in front of the library because they could interfere with vehicles manoeuvring into and out of the 3 adjoining free spaces in the centre of Market Place. The Group continued to favour the use of the taxi rank, with taxis relocated to locations either on the east or west side of the High Street in the vicinity of Saffron Walden Motors. A further suggestion was made that it might be possible to provide a replacement taxi space immediately to the south of the existing rank opposite Market Row, as Market Street is relatively wide in that location.
- 10 The comments of the SWTCTMWG were subsequently considered by the E&T Committee at its meeting on 21 June 2004 (see paragraph 2 of this report).

Current Position

- 11 Subsequent to the E&T Committee resolution of 21 June 2004, it was confirmed at the last meeting of the Uttlesford Taxi Drivers Association that any proposal to relocate the taxi rank would require a new or amended Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which would be subject to normal statutory publicity and consultation by Essex County Council, and that any options suggested by the Association would be welcomed. In the meantime, Essex County Council confirmed that it would not be commencing statutory TRO procedures until after the onset of decriminalisation and an assessment of its effectiveness. It is intended that there will be further discussions on options at the next Association meeting on 23 November 2004.

Conclusions

- 12 The views of the UAAG as expressed at the meeting on 19 February 2004 have been taken into account, but there are clear reasons why additional Blue Badge spaces in Market Place and Market Row are not favoured. It is recognised that the proposals would result in only two additional Blue Badge spaces, but decriminalisation may result in better utility of the existing spaces. UAAG's point about taxi rank availability is noted, but it was local perception that the existing rank was underutilised. Relocation of the taxi rank to the High Street is only one option. In any event, Members would be asked to review their resolution in the light of any objections received in respect of a TRO.

RECOMMENDED that officers draft a reply for the Chairman to send to the UAAG based on the explanation given in this report.

Committee: **Transportation and Highways**

Date: **November 2004**

Agenda Item No: **5**

Title: **Amended Travel Plan**

Author: **Bronwen Stacey (01799) 510363, on behalf of the Travel
Plan Working Group members:
Cllr W Bowker, Denise Greenwood, Jeremy Pine, Mary
Rowe, Jan Sanders, Bronwen Stacey, Alex Stewart.**

Summary

- 1 The initial findings and Report of June 2004 of the Travel Plan Working Group (TPWG) have been separated into two Reports, this and a Report to Resources Committee.

Please refer to the Report to Resources Committee of June 2004, for details of the initiating surveys and their findings, and the related issues identified therefrom.

- 2 This Report identifies and specifically addresses the issue of:
 - 2.1 the need to attempt to increase other modes of travel
 - 2.2 to decrease/reduce personal travel and work-related travel,

with particular reference to the dissemination of information and accessibility of public transport;

making recommendations for immediate implementation and others for subsequent review on a six-monthly basis.

Background

- 3 The rural nature of the district means that the average travel-to-work distance (one way) for Council employees is 12.5 miles, but of even greater significance is the finding that the two largest groups of respondents, totalling 48%, live between 10 and 30 miles away from their work-base.

In addition, although over 40% of visitors to the Council live locally in Saffron Walden, only 11% currently walk to the Council Offices. Members of the public who do not drive to the Council Offices tend to be older people who have time to walk, or perhaps who do not have a car. Those who drive are likely to be busy people who are time-impoverished.

As Uttlesford is part of Essex, where an integrated transport system is not yet in place, efforts should be concentrated on accessibility of up-to date

information on public transport services for Uttlesford users.

4 Public Transport

Use of public transport by employees, Members and members of the public, should aim to be increased (even if only occasionally), but this will be dependent upon availability and frequency of bus services. The need for an improved integrated transport system, which works to serve the local community and workforce, has become a key objective of Uttlesford District Council's Travel Plan.

- 4.1 The link between the Rail and Bus services lacks co-ordination, and, with a view to an improved service, particularly at peak times, a work needs to go on with partners or new partners.

5 Leaflets

ECC have produced a comprehensive up-to-date transport information leaflet specifically on Uttlesford, entitled 'Uttlesford passport to Travel', which has already been distributed to all households in the Uttlesford District. In addition, ECC provided UDC with a number of these, which have already been made available for members of the public at the Reception and CIC/TICs. More of these leaflets have been requested from ECC, with a view to distributing these to all team leaders for dissemination to all employees via team meetings, and additional supplies to go to the relevant reception areas, as/when necessary. There are limitations on this publication as a result of the cost of printing re-runs at ECC. Therefore if any funds are available for transport services information, it may be that this is used to pay for the cost of a re-print of this ECC leaflet.

6 Hyperlink

ECC have a dedicated team of staff who deal with transport issues, and access to transport information is accessible via various web links. Uttlesford District Council's Web Manager has been asked to create links between all relevant ECC sites and the UDC Web-site and UDC Intranet, in order to improve access by members of the public, employees of UDC and Members to up-to-date information.

RECOMMENDED that Members agree the following:

- 1 Access to information on current public transport services should be improved via the web and leaflets.
- 2 A Member and Officer be identified to lobby via ECC Highways, in order to promote:
 - 2.1 An increased frequency of local public bus services especially at peak times. In conjunction with this, a bus shelter, specifically close to the Council Offices could be provided and consideration be given to the provision of real time information at bus stops and possibly in the Council foyer.
 - 2.2 Consider the initiation of a shuttle service (source of funding, timetable and practicalities to be agreed) to run between Swan

Meadow Car Park and Audley End Station, via the Council offices.

That the following, be reviewed on a six-monthly basis, with a view to considering its implementation:

- 3 In due course, following the development of enhanced service provision, consider schemes for season ticket loans.

Background Papers: Report to Resources Committee, 24 June 2004 ref RE21

Committee: Transport and Highways
Date: 11 November 2004
Agenda Item No: 7
Title: Draft Capital Programme 2005-06
Author: Nick Harris (01799) 510313

Summary

- 1 In previous years it has been the practice to report the capital programme and funding details only to the Resources Committee. This year, individual Policy Committees have the opportunity to comment on and propose changes to the draft programme.
- 2 This approach is consistent with resolution of the Resources Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2004 that a review of the Capital Programme takes place and a report be taken to all relevant Committees in the November cycle of meetings.

Capital Strategy

- 3 Members will be aware that the Council is required to prepare a Capital Strategy setting out the framework within which the use of capital resources – both financial and physical assets – can be co-ordinated and allocated in accordance with the Council's key objectives. Council approved the Strategy for submission to the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) in July 2003. GO-East assessed the Strategy as "Good" meaning that the Council will not have to submit a Strategy in the future.

Prioritisation

- 4 The Capital Strategy requires all capital bids to be evaluated by a Capital Strategy Officer Group. Proposed capital schemes and projects are assessed by the Group against

- The Council's key objectives and priorities.
- Service Plans and Best Value Reviews.
- The Prudential Code for Capital Finance.
- Public Consultation Responses.

The Group are also required to consider:

- Whether the scheme is affordable.
 - Whether the capital investment is prudent.
 - Whether the project outcome is sustainable.
- 5 The prioritisation described above has not yet been applied to the bids identified in this report but it is considered that seeking input from Members at a relatively early stage will inform the process and help to minimise late submissions.

Asset Management Plan

- 6 Items relating to the acquisition of or improvement to Council buildings and other facilities are also included in the Asset Management Plan, a preliminary draft of which has been submitted to Go-East for initial appraisal.

Proposed Draft Programme

- 7 The detailed figures are attached at Appendix CP1.

Currently there are no new schemes proposed for this Committee

RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers its 2005-06 capital programme and indicates any schemes and projects that it wishes the Capital Strategy Officer Group to evaluate.

Background Papers: Service Plans, Draft Asset Management Plan