



**To: Business Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

**Date: 2nd November 2016**

**Subject: Bus Usage**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To provide the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) with the current position and background to bus usage in the city.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) are recommended to:
- (i) Note the contents of the report.
  - (ii) Identify focussed key lines of enquiry for the Board's Select Committee meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

## **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 Bus services in Coventry are coordinated by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the transport arm of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Until recently this role was fulfilled by Centro and the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority (WMITA). These organisations both transitioned into the WMCA on 17th June 2016.
- 3.2 TfWM is responsible for installing new and maintaining existing bus infrastructure in the West Midlands metropolitan area (excluding buses themselves) including bus shelters, bus flags, timetables and, in Coventry, the 20 stand Pool Meadow bus station.

## **4 Background to Bus Services in Coventry**

- 4.1 Bus services in Coventry are provided by private operators who are free to set their own routes, timetables and fares.
- 4.2 National Express Coventry is by far the largest operator in Coventry, with around 160 buses operating on 39 routes. Other operators include Stagecoach, Mike DeCoursey Travel, Johnsons Coach and Bus and Central Buses.
- 4.3 Where these commercial operators do not provide a bus service link that is deemed to be socially necessary then it can be subsidised.
- 4.4 In the West Midlands the obligation to provide subsidy rests with TfWM. The decision on which bus services are eligible for subsidy is taken by TfWM using the policies set by the WMCA, which are in turn aligned with the constituent Authority policies of Coventry City Council.

- 4.5 While the vast majority of bus services in Coventry are provided without any public subsidy, TfWM's expenditure on supporting bus services in the city is £1.33 million in 2016-17. This compares with £1.08 million in 2015-16. The single biggest cause of this increase is the end of a £489,000 Section 106 agreement with the NHS.

## **5 Bus Infrastructure**

- 5.1 TfWM owns and is responsible for all of the 13,000 bus stops across the West Midlands. Of these there are around 1,430 in Coventry with around 550 of them having a passenger waiting shelter. Of these 550, 31% have Real Time electronic passenger information, with all other stops having paper based timetable information.

## **6 Bus Usage**

- 6.1 Overall bus usage within Coventry stands at around 30.4 million passenger journeys a year which has remained fairly constant over the last few years. TfWM's (formerly Centro) Transforming Bus Travel initiative,
- 6.2 Bus reliability in Coventry currently stands at 98.0%, which is above the West Midlands' average of 96.7%.
- 6.3 In Coventry, bus punctuality is 79.3% (the percentage of services operating no more than 1 minute early and 5 minutes late), which is slightly below the West Midlands average of 80.4%. The large amount of road works in place across the city may be affecting this statistic however.
- 6.4 Overall bus customer satisfaction in Coventry is 81% who are satisfied or very satisfied with the bus network.

## **7 Private Operator Investments**

- 7.1 National Express Coventry has invested heavily in renewing its bus fleet over the last few years, with 45% of its 160 buses now being under 4 years old.
- 7.2 It has introduced a number of ultra-low emission buses in Coventry, including 18 new vehicles on its 900 service to Birmingham and representing a £4 million investment.
- 7.3 National Express has also launched a 'Platinum' service on the 900 service, offering passengers Wi-Fi, USB charging and leather seating.
- 7.4 The other bus operators in Coventry have also invested in recent years with both Johnsons Coach and Bus and Central Buses introducing brand new buses onto Coventry bus routes they have won under contract to TfWM in the last 12 months. Stagecoach are currently taking delivery of a number of brand new double decker buses for use on their bus routes to the University of Warwick.
- 7.5 In addition to new buses, National Express has launched a new 12X service between the city centre, Coventry railway station and the University of Warwick.

## **8 Bus Infrastructure Improvements**

- 8.1 In recent years a number of improvements and investments have been made to improve bus infrastructure in Coventry, coordinated between the City Council, TfWM/Centro and partners across the city, including:
- The opening of a new bus interchange at University Hospital in March 2016, increasing the number of bus stands from 5 to 9 and providing new passenger shelters with Real Time information displays

- The opening of a new 7 stand bus interchange at the University of Warwick in 2015
- Installation of a Real Time bus departure board at Coventry railway station to provide passengers with onward bus service information
- Improvements to the Trinity Street bus interchange by renewing bus shelters, realigning stops to improve bus access and widening pavements to improve pedestrian access
- A comprehensive public realm improvement project coordinated by the City Council, introducing pedestrian only areas, shared spaces and a holistic 20mph speed limit. This has reduced private car use in the city centre and dramatically improved bus accessibility and service reliability.
- Digital information totems have been introduced across the city centre providing large touchscreen displays, helping users to locate shops, visitor attractions, restaurants and businesses. This has improved wayfinding across the city centre, including to bus services and public transport.

## **9 Future Infrastructure Improvements**

- 9.1 As part of the Coventry Station Masterplan, a major new bus interchange is planned adjacent to the station, also complementing the Friargate project.

## **10 Bus Network Changes and Future Proposals**

- 10.1 The City Council and TfWM are working together on a Bus Network Development Plan for the city which will map out the future bus network aspirations over the next 5 to 10 years to meet projected changes in land use and demands.

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