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

**Date: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Subject: Bus Update**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To inform the Business, Economy, and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) of the scope of the item Bus Update at their meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Business, Economy, and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) are recommended to:
- 1) Consider the information presented in this briefing note and at the meeting.
  - 2) Identify areas and issues of concern from bus users to be considered as key lines of enquiry at the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
  - 3) Identify case work or representatives of groups to be invited to the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

## **3 Background and Information**

- 3.1 Members had raised concerns about bus service provision in Coventry, especially for vulnerable user groups such as school children and older people. It should be noted that bus services within Coventry are operated by private sector companies within a legislative framework set by national government. The West Midlands Combined Authority is the Strategic Transport Authority with responsibility for the Bus Service Improvement Plan, a responsibility that is discharged through their transport delivery arm, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).
- 3.2 It was agreed by the Chair that it would be useful to invite representatives of those groups to a meeting where representatives of TfWM and bus operators could be present to respond to concerns and questions.
- 3.3 In order to prepare for that meeting, it was agreed that an item on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 would be used as an initial scoping item, where Members could be briefed on the current position of bus services, as well as identify key areas and issues for further consideration at the meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
- 3.4 Members are invited to identify any case work as examples of concerns or groups and organisations who would be able to provide evidence for the key lines of enquiry.

## **4 Current Bus Provision**

- 4.1 Bus services within Coventry are primarily operated by National Express and by Stagecoach. Those services operated by Stagecoach are primarily cross-boundary services linking Coventry with communities within Warwickshire. Those operated by National Express are primarily those that operate within the city boundary or which provide cross-boundary services to Solihull and Birmingham. Both companies have been invited to attend this Scrutiny Board meeting.
- 4.2 TfWM have the day-to-day responsibility for setting the bus policy framework for the West Midlands. That includes the preparation and implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan. TfWM have also been invited to attend the Scrutiny Board meeting to brief Members of the Board on TfWM's role and responsibility,
- 4.3 The bus industry is facing significant challenges at present, with patronage remaining below pre-pandemic levels and costs having escalated significantly. These means that fewer bus services are now commercially viable, and that greater public subsidy will be required to maintain the bus service network at its current level. Colleagues from TfWM and the bus operators will brief Scrutiny Board Members on these challenges at the meeting.

## **5 Health Inequalities Impact**

- 5.1 Health inequalities are linked to poverty and physical activity. Better walking, cycling and public transport links to employment centres are essential. Air pollution is also a concern, with traffic jams a major cause. Improved public transport is part of encouraging active travel and addressing health inequalities.

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