



# PASSENGER TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Incorporating  
Aberdeenshire Council's  
Public Transport Policy Statement

2014

**ABERDEEN  
CITY AND  
SHIRE**

| *a brighter  
outlook*

Moving  
Aberdeenshire  
Forward

**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



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# 1 Introduction

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Aberdeenshire Council have developed a new Passenger Transport Strategy which replaces the previously published Public Transport Policy Statement.

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## 1.1 Introduction

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The Draft Passenger Transport Strategy (PTS) sets out the Council's objectives for passenger transport services in the Aberdeenshire area. It sets out the overarching approach of Aberdeenshire Council, and is supported by relevant Council policies. Further information on each policy included within the PTS can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website, or by contacting the Public Transport Unit (contact details are provided in Chapter 7). Whilst developing this PTS, existing passenger transport policies have been reviewed against examples of best practice from elsewhere in the UK.

For the purposes of the PTS, the term 'passenger' refers to users of road based 'public' transport such as fixed route local bus services, community transport and demand responsive transport schemes along with those using both Council school transport and social work transport services.

The Council's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the

Scottish Government, 2013 – 2023, identifies five local priorities including Transport with another two priorities having direct links to transport provision: Older People and Community Care, and Supporting Communities and Volunteering. These were identified by the Community Planning Partnership having undertaken a strategic assessment and priority-setting exercise. The delivery of the Passenger Transport Strategy will facilitate the delivery of medium and long term outcomes highlighted in the SOA.

## 1.2 Partnership Working

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The successful delivery of the PTS is dependent on partnership working. To this end, the Council is committed to its continued involvement in the Quality Partnership for Public Transport. The Council first entered into this voluntary partnership in 1998 with Aberdeen City Council, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird. The Partnership was successfully re-launched in October 2005, and Nestrans joined the partnership in October 2007. The principal

aim of the Quality Partnership is to enhance the quality, image and availability of bus services across north east Scotland. Significant progress has been achieved to date and a programme of further initiatives, linked to the delivery of the Nestrans Bus Action Plan, will address such issues as delivery of passenger information, fleet provision, development of park and ride services and improved passenger waiting facilities. The Quality Partnership for Public Transport therefore plays a fundamental role in regard to the delivery of the objectives set out later.

Aberdeenshire Council will also continue to work with a range of other partners including our Community Planning partners, local communities, community transport operators, taxi and bus operators and other local authorities, including the neighbouring Angus and Moray Councils which are both outwith the Nestrans area, but are key partners for the successful delivery of passenger transport services in Aberdeenshire.



Partnership working brings added value and benefits to both service operators and also local and regional transport authorities. Collaborative working has many benefits including greater efficiencies, joined-up thinking, and an integrated approach towards achieving a common goal of improving the experience for passengers. This common goal is itself the principal benefit of partnership working.

### 1.3 Statutory Duties

#### Transport Act (1985)

The Council has a duty, under sections 63 – 64 of the Transport Act 1985, to secure the provision of such passenger transport services as it considers appropriate to meet any public transport requirements in its area which would not, in its view, be met apart from action on its part. The Council also has a duty to formulate and publish, from time to time, general policies as to the description of services it proposes to secure.

When formulating policies for the purposes of securing passenger transport services, the Council must consult with other Councils affected by its policies and with persons operating passenger transport services in its area, and/or with operators' representative organisations. The policy statement must also be made available for inspection by the public. This PTS has been developed to fulfil these obligations.

#### Transport (Scotland) Act 2001

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 provides a framework which allows local transport authorities to enhance the provision of local bus services. The Act provides a toolkit of options regarding Quality Partnerships, Quality Contracts, the provision of local bus service information and joint ticketing schemes. Statutory consultation requirements for these are also set out.

#### Equalities Act

The Equality Act 2010 was established to consolidate all anti-discrimination legislation in Great Britain. It requires equal treatment in access to employment as well as private and public services, regardless of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender, race,

religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Any new services and infrastructure resulting from the policies set out in the PTS will have due regard to the requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010.

This PTS is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

#### Procurement

Aberdeenshire Council follows the procurement legislation set out in the EU tendering regulations for larger contracts. This aims to ensure that contracts are awarded in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory way. The European Directives are implemented by a number of regulations, which set down the procedures that local authorities must follow when selecting tenderers and awarding contracts.



## 1.4 Strategy Context

The PTS sits within a much wider local, regional and national policy context. It has been developed to complement each of these, and help towards achieving their aims and objectives. A summary of the links between the PTS and each local, regional and national strategy is provided below.

### Local Transport Strategy

Aberdeenshire Council published a revised Local Transport Strategy (LTS) in 2012. The LTS sets out how the Council aims to cater for the needs of all transport users across the region, ensuring that existing resources are used and developed to their full potential.

The LTS was developed to support the delivery of a range of wider strategic transport objectives and priorities as set out in the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy and its associated action plans, and the National Transport Strategy, all of which are summarised briefly below. The LTS was developed taking into account the results of extensive public and stakeholder consultation which considered the problems and opportunities that should be addressed over the next three to four years.

### The aims of the LTS are to:

- Reduce non-sustainable journeys;
- Increase active travel;
- Make travel more effective;
- Improve health; and
- Reduce carbon emissions from transport.

It is clear that passenger transport services can play a vital role in the achievement of these aims, and the policies set out in this PTS have been developed in accordance with this.

Similarly, the LTS contains a number of more detailed objectives, and this PTS will play a key role in their delivery, namely to:

- **Promote Sustainable Economic Growth** – maximise the effectiveness of the transport network, services and facilities.
- **Promote Social Inclusion and Accessibility** – improve connections within and between communities, increasing accessibility of the transport network.
- **Protect the Environment** – remove barriers to active and sustainable travel, helping to improve health and reduce emissions.
- **Improve Safety** – enhance the safety of all users of the transport network.
- **Improve Integration** – develop and improve integration between all forms of transport and improve connectivity within and beyond Aberdeenshire.

Travelling effectively is included as a key method for delivering the LTS, where vehicular travel is necessary. This includes making the most of passenger transport as it is one of the most efficient methods of travel and a specific objective is included:

To work in partnership with local transport operators and communities with the aim to deliver improved services and address perceived barriers relating to public transport.

### Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy and Bus Action Plan

The purpose of the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) is to take forward strategic transport improvements that support and improve the economy, environment and quality of life across Aberdeen City and Shire. The RTS outlines a series of measures to improve bus services across the region, one of which was to produce a Bus Action Plan which would include a review of current challenges, and establish a detailed programme of the actions needed to achieve the measures set out in the RTS.

The Bus Action Plan summarised a range of key issues that were associated with the passenger transport network, a number of which have already been addressed. The identified issues relevant to Aberdeenshire are listed below, and these represent many of the challenges that this strategy and its associated policies will aim to address.

- limited journey options on non-city radial routes in the region;
- restricted service availability at certain times, particularly in more rural areas;
- congestion hotspots and their impact upon service reliability and public perception of the bus network;
- the bus network could be better promoted;
- insufficient interchange opportunities;
- high fares;
- 'real time' information not widely available;
- bus priority is lacking in areas;
- changes in traffic flows throughout the region due to the AWPR which will have a major impact on the bus network;
- public transport does not link some housing and industrial areas adequately;
- the transport network providing access to healthcare is highly complex;
- current financial pressures on the industry is placing severe constraints on network growth/development;
- integration of services between scheduled buses, rail, airport, and ferry could be improved; and
- integrated / multi-operator ticketing arrangements are limited.

Following discussion of the issues facing passenger transport in the Nestrans area, the Bus Action Plan goes on to set out key actions to address these. These actions include:

- Support and reinvigorate the existing Bus Quality Partnership;
- Focus on reliability through a specific punctuality improvement partnership;
- Targeted roll out of information based upon the Bus Information Strategy;
- Development of a regionally consistent range of fares and tickets, compliant with competition legislation;
- Continued support for investigation of smart card applications which may simplify the provision of seamless ticketing;
- Improved bus infrastructure, tailored according to an objective hierarchy of needs and requirements;
- Develop and improve interchange hubs at key locations across Aberdeen City and Shire;
- Focus bus services on feeding the network hubs, with co-ordinated timetables and through ticketing;
- Develop a core public transport network; and
- Develop and support Bus Priority – including new bus lanes and bus priority at key signal junctions.

A number of actions have already been taken to address the identified issues; however all policies set out in this PTS are in-line with the above actions, and focussed towards the same objectives as the Nestrans Bus Action Plan.

The Nestrans RTS also included an action to develop a Health and Transport Action Plan (HTAP), focussed around three key themes: Promoting Active Travel; Transport and Public Health; and Access to Healthcare.

In regard to Promoting Active Travel and Transport and Public Health agendas, the priorities set out in the HTAP reflect those of Aberdeenshire Council, and the Council will continue to work with Nestrans to aid their implementation.

Whilst the Council recognises access to healthcare as a key issue, and supports the vision set out in the HTAP, it may give rise to difficulties in regards to satisfying transport needs given disparate travel demands and associated potential high costs of service delivery.

Patients access health-care by a variety of modes including private car, scheduled public transport, Scottish Ambulance Service patient transport services, demand responsive transport services, taxi, and with assistance from friends and family. NHS Grampian is providing more health-care in community settings, reducing the importance of travel to acute centres.



In general, this will reduce journey lengths and therefore will likely improve accessibility for many people. However, for some, particularly those reliant on passenger transport and the Scottish Ambulance Service, it may create new travel challenges. The Scottish Ambulance Service has reviewed the eligibility criteria for the non-emergency patient transport services which they operate which, in turn, is placing potential increased demand on local passenger transport, and particularly demand responsive transport services.

There are concerns regarding whether local authorities and the community transport sector have sufficient resources to meet these new emerging travel needs.

### National Transport Strategy and Action Plan for Buses

The Scottish Government published the National Transport Strategy (NTS) in 2006. The NTS contains five high level objectives, as follows:

- Promote economic growth by building, enhancing managing and maintaining transport services, infrastructure and networks to maximise their efficiency;
- Promote social inclusion by connecting remote and disadvantaged communities and increasing the accessibility of the transport network;
- Protect our environment and improve health by building and investing in public transport and other types of efficient and

sustainable transport which minimise emissions and consumption of resources and energy;

- Improve safety of journeys by reducing accidents and enhancing the personal safety of pedestrians, drivers, passengers and staff; and
- Improve integration by making journey planning and ticketing easier and working to ensure smooth connection between different forms of transport. Following these objectives, the NTS is focussed on three strategic outcomes:
- Improve journey times and connections, to tackle congestion and the lack of integration and connections in transport which impact on our high level objectives for economic growth, social inclusion, integration and safety;
- Reduce emissions, to tackle the issues of climate change, air quality and health improvement which impact on our high level objective for protecting the environment and improving health; and

- Improve quality, accessibility and affordability, to give people a choice of public transport, where availability means better quality transport services and value for money or an alternative to the car.

Passenger transport services in Aberdeenshire do not only operate internally, many services provide essential access to neighbouring authorities and other areas of Scotland. It is therefore clear that the PTS has a recognisable role to play in the delivery of these national objectives and outcomes, and the policies contained within have been developed with this in mind.

Scottish Government guidance on delivering many of the key bus aspects of the NTS and the associated sister document 'Moving into the Future: An Action Plan for Buses in Scotland' emphasises the importance of partnership working between bus operators and transport authorities. Aberdeenshire Council remains committed to such an approach.









## 2 Challenges

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The demographic profile and geography of Aberdeenshire presents a set of challenges for the provision of passenger transport services.

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### 2.1 Introduction

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The demographic profile and geography of Aberdeenshire presents a set of challenges for the provision of passenger transport services. The key challenges are discussed below to provide a context for the policies included in the PTS.

### 2.2 Geography

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The Aberdeenshire Council area covers 6,313km<sup>2</sup> and is a varied landscape consisting of mountains, agricultural lowlands and rugged coastline. The area is predominately rural with no major urban areas. The population is spread across the whole area, with five towns having a population greater than 10,000. The total population however, almost 227,000 in 2011, is growing rapidly and is predicted to increase by 22% by 2033 to 295,350. The biggest increases will be for those aged over 75 and, by 2023, the population aged 75 or older is expected to have increased by 75% to 30,165.

Both the geographic spread of the area, and its growing population, present key challenges and place increased

demands on the transport network. It will become increasingly important for this predominately rural, ageing population that access to health, local services, employment opportunities and education is maintained and improved. To do so, existing passenger transport access opportunities need to be maintained, and new services, including community transport and demand responsive transport, need to be developed as appropriate to support accessibility and social inclusion across the region.

### 2.3 Finance

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The Council has a commitment to the local population to ensure that it continues to provide and maintain essential services whilst achieving best value. Like all Councils across the UK, Aberdeenshire Council has faced significant budget reductions in recent years and this presents an ongoing challenge for the delivery of passenger transport services, particularly when set against fuel price inflation and other cost increases facing the bus industry. It is critical therefore the Council monitors

spending carefully and ensures that when funding decisions are being made, that an objective framework is used to determine its choices.

### 2.4 Car Ownership

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Census data (2001) shows that the area has high levels of car access, with only 17.9% households having no access to a car. This is the lowest in Scotland and is not to be entirely unexpected given the geographic spread of the Council area.

In addition to this, the area also has the highest level of multiple car ownership in Scotland, with 37.3% households having 2 or more cars compared to the national average of 22.4%.

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## 2.5 Travel to Work

The Aberdeenshire area has a high percentage (66.7%) of people travelling to work and/or education as either a car driver or car passenger, compared to only 6.9% travelling by bus. This presents a challenge for the viability and sustainability of public transport services, and it is therefore critical that passenger transport services are available and offer an attractive mode of transport.

Substantial numbers of Aberdeenshire's working residents commute outwith the Council area, with the region experiencing the highest ratio of outbound long-distance commutes in Scotland. Although primarily to Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire residents also regularly commute to other neighbouring authorities such as Angus and Moray.

**“For  
passenger  
transport to  
be successful  
it must be  
competitive  
with the  
private car”**

## 2.6 Passenger Transport

The provision of a comprehensive bus network across Aberdeenshire is challenging as the geography of the area presents a difficult market for passenger transport operation. Long distances in rural areas with low levels of bus patronage make services expensive to operate, and there are low levels of passenger transport dependency, largely due to the high levels of car ownership seen. It is therefore also likely that many potential users have little detailed knowledge of the passenger transport available as they are not reliant upon it. For passenger transport to be successful it must be competitive with the private car and, given the geographic spread of the area and the low density population, this will be difficult to achieve.

A major challenge and, in turn, opportunity, is to build upon and complement the commercial bus network. Passenger transport in Aberdeenshire is focussed on six key corridors radiating to and from Aberdeen. These mainline corridors are as follows, and are also illustrated in the figure below:

- Kincardine and Mearns Corridor;
- Deeside Corridor;
- Donside Corridor;
- North Corridor;
- Banff Coastal Corridor; and
- Buchan Corridor.

Services along these corridors are classed as mainline services and it is important that Quality Corridors are developed for passenger transport to be recognised as an attractive mode of transport. This includes



Figure 2.1 Mainline Bus Corridors (Strategic Route Network)





enhanced services, good infrastructure and efficient and attractive interchange facilities, including 'min-hubs' aimed at providing access to the public transport network by other transport modes. A key challenge for passenger transport is to fill any gaps in service provision along and between the mainline corridors and provide appropriate, reliable, attractive and convenient services which feed into each of the mainline corridors. Such feeder services should also provide access to local services located in settlements along the mainline bus corridors and to rail stations.

Given the size of Aberdeenshire, and the long distances which are often travelled, train services also offer a good, alternative mode of transport for many people. There are six rail stations across the area, located in key settlements served by other passenger transport modes. Whereas buses alone may not always be able to compete with car travel, train services often can and it is therefore desirable that rail and road based passenger services are integrated to maximise their use.

## 2.7 Deregulated Market

Passenger transport in Scotland is provided in a deregulated market place, with most bus services across Scotland provided on a commercial basis by private companies. Essentially operators can provide services on any route and with any timetable, as long as they have registered the service with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.

Local authorities have a duty to ensure that within their areas travel needs are accommodated and therefore they may provide support for services that are not provided commercially. However, the Council has limited funds at its disposal and it is therefore essential that there are robust mechanisms in place to assess the benefits that are derived from supported services and that in delivering supported services best value is achieved. Further information on Aberdeenshire Council's assessment mechanisms are provided in Chapter 4.

Many of the aspirations for passenger transport in the Aberdeenshire Council area relate to a desire for increased integration between services and also in regard to the availability of multi-operator ticketing and the provision of comprehensive information provision. This however presents a number of challenges, in particular, given the deregulated market place, continued adherence to European and domestic competition legislation.

## 2.8 Conclusions

Aberdeenshire Council set out a commitment in the Local Transport Strategy to promote the role of passenger transport and improve services across the region. In order to increase passenger transport usage, there are a number of challenges to be faced, most noticeably the high levels of car ownership and car dependency which, in turn, can affect the viability of public transport. However the policies set out in this PTS are designed to address these challenges, and by setting appropriate ambitions and targeting resources in the right areas, service improvements can be made and passenger transport can become a more attractive option for a variety of journeys across the region. In doing so, patronage growth through modal shift can be achieved, increasing the viability and sustainability of commercial and supported services, whilst access opportunities can be improved and social inclusion enhanced.



260 Peterhead  
via Ellon & Hatton

Stagecoach

53215

SV54 EKY

the Buchanan

# 3 Objectives

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“Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland”

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## 3.1 Introduction

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The PTS sets out all the key policies required to achieve the passenger transport aspirations in the Local Transport Strategy. The LTS sets out a series of wider transport objectives that support the Council's overarching strategic vision.

Aberdeenshire Council aims to ensure that residents and visitors can access services and recognises the role that passenger transport plays in achieving this. As such, it is important that there are clear objectives for passenger transport services to aim towards.

## 3.2 Passenger Transport Strategy Objectives

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There are already a number of relevant objectives contained within existing policies and strategies, such as the Local Transport Strategy, the Regional Transport Strategy and the Quality Partnership for Public Transport. Those set out in the LTS collate the aspirations of the other documents and provide a set of overall strategic transport objectives for the area.

Within an overall LTS objective “to work in partnership with local transport operators and communities with the aim to deliver improved services and address perceived barriers relating to public transport”, the specific Passenger Transport Strategy objectives are, working with our partners:

- to support and deliver services and facilities that improve the quality of life of those without private means of travel;
- to increase the attractiveness and use of passenger transport services, aiming to increase their share of the total travel market;
- to address perceived barriers to passenger transport through the provision of high quality services and facilities, that are accessible, reliable and user friendly;
- to achieve best value and ensure cost effective and efficient service delivery, aiming to maximise the benefits of integrated passenger transport service provision;
- to address issues of affordability for the travelling public;
- to provide existing and potential passengers with information that is accurate and appropriate to their needs;
- to understand our customers' needs and expectations, through consultation and market research; and
- to monitor and review the effectiveness of our policies and our ongoing service delivery performance.







# 4 Passenger Transport Policy Framework

Passenger transport plays many different roles in the community.

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out Aberdeenshire Council's strategic approach and policy framework to deliver these roles across Aberdeenshire and help deliver the PTS objectives set out in the previous chapter. Policies will be updated as and when the need arises to ensure that they continue to reflect the challenges of the area, and help to achieve the ambitions set out. Specific policies are itemised in Appendix 1.

The table below sets out each PTS objective along with the passenger transport policy tools and commitments that are in place to help achieve them. This is followed by more detailed information on the specifics of these.

Objective	Policy Tools and Commitments
To support and deliver services and facilities which improve the quality of life of those without private means of travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimum Service Provision</li><li>• Supported Fixed Route Services</li><li>• Supported Demand Responsive Transport Services</li><li>• Community Transport Funding</li><li>• Public Transport Infrastructure Investment</li><li>• Provision of Social Work transport services</li><li>• Provision of School Transport services</li></ul>
To increase the attractiveness and use of passenger transport services, aiming to increase their share of the total travel market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality Partnership for Public Transport</li><li>• Public Transport Infrastructure Investment</li><li>• Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership</li><li>• Bus Information Strategy</li><li>• Marketing and Promotional Initiatives</li><li>• Fares and Ticketing Strategy</li></ul>
To address perceived barriers to passenger transport through the provision of high quality services and facilities, that are accessible, reliable and user friendly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Customer Engagement</li><li>• Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership</li><li>• Multi-operator Ticketing Arrangements</li><li>• Public Transport Infrastructure Investment</li><li>• Integration commitments</li></ul>

Objective	Policy Tools and Commitments
To achieve best value and ensure cost effective and efficient service delivery, aiming to maximise the benefits of integrated passenger transport service provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall Strategic Approach</li> <li>• Network Typology</li> <li>• Performance Management</li> <li>• Partnership Working</li> <li>• Best Value Procurement</li> <li>• Network and Vehicle Integration commitments</li> </ul>
To address issues of affordability for the travelling public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Fare Initiatives</li> <li>• Fares and Ticketing Strategy</li> <li>• Concessionary Travel Schemes</li> </ul>
To provide existing and potential passengers with information that is accurate and appropriate to their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus Information Strategy</li> </ul>
To understand our customers' needs and expectations, through consultation and market research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Engagement</li> <li>• Area Bus Forums</li> </ul>
To monitor and review the effectiveness of our policies and our ongoing service delivery performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Management Framework Model</li> <li>• Performance Indicators</li> <li>• Customer Engagement</li> <li>• Benchmarking</li> <li>• Passenger Satisfaction Surveys</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Network Typology

Passenger transport services (excluding dedicated school and social work transport services) vary in nature and may be categorised based on the geographical area that they serve. These services which cater for strategic and local travel needs may be delivered in a variety of different ways and by different types of operators. The table below sets out the anticipated method of service delivery but is not intended to be prescriptive as the most appropriate method in each instance will be determined by local circumstances such as operational constraints, market conditions and local travel needs.



“addressing issues of affordability for the travelling public.”

Category of Service	Description	Service Delivery	Operator
Mainline service	Services on principal corridors linking urban areas and rural service centres.	<b>Commercial fixed route services</b> Supported fixed route service enhancements (e.g. additional journeys / journey extensions)	<b>PCV</b>  PCV
Rural Feeder Service	Rural services with dual role: providing inter-change opportunities with mainline services; and, providing access to local facilities.	<b>Supported DRT services</b>  Supported fixed route services	<b>PCV</b> <b>Taxi/PHC</b> Bus Taxi/PHC Council Community Transport
Cross-Country	Catering for circumferential travel demands precluding the need for travel into and out of Aberdeen City. Cross-country services can also act as feeder services.	<b>Supported fixed route services</b>	<b>PCV</b> <b>Taxi/PHC</b>
Rural Services	Providing local access where specific travel needs have been identified.	<b>Supported fixed route services (including joint local bus/school transport services)</b>  Supported DRT services	<b>PCV</b> <b>Taxi/PHC</b> <b>Council</b> <b>Community Transport</b>  Taxi/PHC Council Community Transport
Town Services (population 4000 – 7999)	Town services with dual role: providing inter-change opportunities with mainline services; and, providing access to town centre.	<b>Supported DRT services</b>	<b>PCV</b> <b>Taxis/PHC Council</b>
Town Services (population 8000+)	Town services with dual role: providing inter-change opportunities with mainline services; and, providing access to town centre and peripheral employment / service locations.	<b>Commercial fixed route services</b> <b>Supported DRT services</b> Supported fixed route service enhancements (e.g. additional journeys / journey extensions)	<b>PCV</b>  <b>Council</b>  PCV

As indicated, the services listed above will be provided by a variety of modes including conventional fixed route bus services and DRT (including community transport). The Council will assess the requirements of each service and will use the mode and means of service delivery which provides the best value solution to meet identified travel needs. All supported services will be open to the general public unless legislation requires the service to be operated on a restricted basis.

Where commercial services are provided, the Council will work with the private operator, where possible, to maintain or enhance the viability of the service. In doing so the Council will pay due regard to all aspects of competition legislation.

In the case of supported services, the solution adopted will reflect: local needs and available vehicle resources; and, will take into account legislative and other operational constraints.

### 4.3 Supported Service Provision

Aberdeenshire Council will exercise its powers under sections 63-64 of the Transport Act 1985 to secure the provision of passenger transport services to meet needs which are not otherwise met. The Council shall monitor the evolving commercial bus network provision and performance of our supported services and, taking into account the financial resources at its disposal and value for

money, shall seek to maintain the existing travel opportunities and achieve the following minimum level of service provision.

#### Settlement Population

Population <100:  
minimum frequency = 1 – 3 days/week

Population 100 – 400:  
minimum frequency = daily

Population 400 – 750:  
minimum frequency = 2 – 3 buses/day

Population 750 – 2500:  
minimum frequency = 2 hourly

Population 2500 – 4000:  
minimum frequency = hourly

Population 4000 + :  
minimum frequency + a town service

#### Application of maximum walking distance standards of:

- 400 metres in urban areas (population over 4000)
- 1000 metres in rural areas.

The minimum service level targets for each settlement relate to the provision of a service from the settlement to the nearest town or to an interchange point providing transfer onto a mainline bus service.

### Performance Management Framework Model

Aberdeenshire Council aims to provide the above levels of service provision across the region and will consider supporting services, where possible, to achieve this. Limited funding and competing demands for resources however means that there has to be a clear method of evaluating the benefits of supporting each service compared to other identified needs. There is also a requirement to evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of existing supported services to determine whether support should be continued.

A Performance Management Framework Model has been developed to appraise the relative performance of





supported services and help analyse funding priorities. The framework model allows for fair comparisons to be made between services, and provides the Council with a robust methodology to appraise each service and determine which provide the best value for money whilst endeavouring to deliver the minimum service levels detailed above.

The model allocates scores to individual supported services according to a number of criteria, including:

- Operational period of the service;
- Minimum supported service standards;
- Average cost per passenger trip;
- Average number of passengers per journey or equivalent service period;
- Local availability of commercial public transport;
- Index of multiple deprivation;
- Primary purpose;
- Car ownership levels;
- Compatibility with social inclusion and modal shift objectives;
- Main function of the service; and
- Number of people with restricted mobility.

In terms of primary journey purpose or purposes, services are ranked in the following order of priority:

1	Employment;
1	Further education and vocational training;
2	Shopping and personal business;
2	Health care;
3	Social and leisure, including travel to/ from after school clubs;
4	Non-entitled nursery, primary and secondary education; and
5	Seasonal or tourism.

The Performance Management Framework Model is used to compare services and rank the level of benefit that they provide. Should a service score poorly within the model other local factors will be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to fund the service, for example whether the withdrawal of the service would leave a settlement with no public transport. The final decision on awarding new or continuation bus service contracts lies with the Policy and Resources Committee.

### Supported Services

Where Aberdeenshire Council considers that passenger transport objectives justify the provision of additional services to fill any gaps in the commercially provided network, the Council may, through negotiation with commercial operators and/or through exercise of the statutory tendering system, secure the provision of services.

Where commercially operated passenger

transport services are to be withdrawn or reduced, the Council will seek to work with operators to find an appropriate way for the service to be provided. The Council will, as a last resort and in appropriate circumstances, consider supporting the introduction of replacement services to satisfy transport needs of the communities affected.

In securing the provision of supported bus services the Council shall only enter into subsidy agreements with suitably qualified operators.

When securing supported public transport services the Council will seek to integrate services with other passenger transport services, including school transport services, in order to achieve best value. In doing so, the Council will aim to achieve improved fleet utilisation. Such arrangements may include running conventional passenger transport services with school transport, and using the same vehicles for both Demand Responsive Transport and Social Work services. Services will be integrated where possible in a manner which achieves the most efficient application of the financial resources at the Council's disposal, whilst also having regard to the needs of those served, the achievement of passenger transport aims and objectives and any legislative constraints which influence the service delivery options at the Council's disposal.

The integration of school transport and social work transport demands with commercially operated passenger transport

provision will be considered, for example through the purchase of season tickets, where such arrangements achieve value for money to the Council, taking into account the needs of users.

The Council shall secure supported passenger transport services in accordance with the requirements of the Service Subsidy Agreements (Tendering) Regulations 1985 (SI 1921), as amended. The Council will also exercise its powers to enter into negotiated subsidy agreements with suitably qualified operators, where such action represents best value and/or offers passenger benefits.

Supported services shall be specified to satisfy identified unmet social needs and/or strategic transportation objectives, as appropriate. All supported services will be monitored closely to ensure that the specifications are being met. A penalty point system will be applied when contract compliance issues are identified. Financial penalties will be used as

appropriate and, if a predefined penalty limit is reached, the contract will fall liable to termination.

In determining the award of contracts for the operation of supported services the Council shall seek to achieve best value within the resources at its disposal and, in addition to price, will take account of the ability of prospective operators to deliver services efficiently and effectively along with the quality of service which operators propose.

The provision of supported cross-boundary services shall be secured on the basis of negotiated agreements with adjoining Councils and shall take account of the respective policies and priorities of each funding authority.

#### 4.4 Flexible Services

Given the rural geography and low population density across the region, traditional timetabled and/or fixed route services may not always be the most effective way of providing a passenger transport service.

Aberdeenshire Council will endeavour to encourage and/or make available non-conventional services for people in areas where traditional public transport is not the most appropriate solution. Such situations include passengers with mobility problems who cannot reach their local bus route, or people who live in remote areas with limited timetabled services. There are circumstances, for example in order to cater for people who are unable to access conventional fixed route services, where it is appropriate to provide services which are not open to the general public. Such services may operate as an additional layer in addition to public transport, where there is a need for such services and sufficient resources are available to permit such complementary provision.

#### Community Transport

Community Transport is a term used to describe services that are established and operated by community groups on a not-for-profit basis. These services are commonly, but not necessarily, operated by groups of volunteer drivers.

Community transport provides an invaluable service in many localities. There are currently various flexible community transport services operating in Aberdeenshire including dial-a-trip, voluntary car schemes and community buses. The Council, in partnership with local communities, will continue to support these services and consider further



flexible passenger transport services where appropriate.

Aberdeenshire Council provides funding through the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Initiative (ACTI) for local transport schemes such as dial-a-bus services, volunteer car schemes and minibus hire for community groups. Aberdeenshire Council will continue to support the community transport sector through the provision of advice and, where appropriate, will enter into service level agreements with groups to encourage the operation of passenger services.

The Council also provides concessionary travel reimbursement to this sector, enabling the provision of free trips for holders of Scotland-wide free travel passes on scheduled community transport services. The Council will continue to fund concessionary fares on these services, unless the Scottish Government introduces a national concessionary travel scheme for community transport.

The Council is also committed to its ongoing administration of the Aberdeenshire

Community Transport Forum, which was established to improve communication between the Council and local community/voluntary transport operators and provide a forum to exchange best practice.

### **Demand Responsive Transport**

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services are on-demand, flexible (for example door-to-door) passenger services that must be booked in advance, rather than operating on a timetable basis. DRT services can be provided in a number of ways. They are often a form of community transport, or they may be operated or procured by the Council.

Aberdeenshire Council currently supports a number of DRT services under the banner Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus, some of which are contracted and available to all members of the public, and some of which are operated with 'in-house' vehicles and are for use by people with mobility problems, or people who live in areas with limited passenger transport provision. DRT services are critical in

an area like Aberdeenshire and are focussed on providing access to local amenities and services. Where possible, services will connect to mainline corridor services, however this is not always possible and where necessary priority will be given to accessing local services.

In delivering Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus services, the Council operates a travel despatch centre, taking passenger trip bookings and e-scheduling services. The travel despatch centre is primarily for Council 'contracted-in' or 'in-house' services but is a facility available to community transport groups should this be required.

Fares on Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus services are set in line with commercial bus fares, with elderly and disabled passengers travelling for free.

## **4.5 Fares and Ticketing**

Individual commercial bus operators offer different fares and ticket options and there is evidence that the current system is not well understood by bus users. There is a multiplicity of fare levels, fare structures and ticket types, and passengers, or potential passengers, are often not aware of the best value ticket type for their journey.

Aberdeenshire Council will, in partnership with operators, Aberdeen City Council and Nestrans, work towards a more simplified and integrated fare and ticketing



system, as set out in the Fare and Ticketing Strategy for Aberdeen City and Shire.

In particular, the Council will endeavour to promote, in partnership with commercial operators, the availability of multi-operator travel-cards and, where appropriate, transfer tickets, such as the existing Aberdeenshire Connect ticket.

Fares on supported services will normally be set to accord with commercial pricing in the area. In the event that commercial fare levels are considered by the Council to exceed a level consistent with meeting public needs and/or strategic transportation objectives, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, exercise its powers to secure alternative service provision at appropriate fares.

The Council expects that operators will, as a matter of commercial judgement, offer free travel to accompanied children under the age of 5 years, and reduced fares to children between the ages of 5 and 15 years inclusive.

The Council shall continue to operate a policy of free travel for accompanied children under 5 years of age, and half-fare for children 5 to 15 years inclusive, on all supported passenger transport services.

To encourage entry into the local bus service market and assist in the delivery of multi-operator ticketing arrangements, the Council will operate an electronic ticket machine (ETM) back-office for its own operational

requirements and to assist operators of supported services.

## Concessionary Travel

As indicated above, Aberdeenshire Council will continue to promote a concessionary travel scheme covering community transport services, enabling the provision of free trips for holders of Scotland-wide free travel passes on scheduled community transport services.

The Council will also continue to promote a TaxiCard scheme providing discounted taxi and rail travel for the severely mobility impaired, and in doing so assist those residents for whom the

use of conventional bus services may be challenging or impossible due to their disability.

The Council will explore options to provide discounted fares to young people, over the age of 15 and therefore not eligible to child fares. One example is the partnership working between the Council, Stagecoach Bluebird and Bain's Coaches, whereby passengers aged 16-20 are entitled to half-fare multi-journey tickets on services operating on the Banff Coastal corridor. Schemes like this will, subject to available funding, be promoted to help people enter, and stay in employment.





## 4.6 Reliability and Punctuality

Aberdeenshire Council conducts regular customer satisfaction research on Aberdeenshire bus services. The results have shown that reliability and punctuality are two of the most important priorities for existing and potential passengers.

Bus passenger transport provides an alternative to car travel. However, for it to be an attractive option that encourages modal shift in line with the Council's strategic objectives, it must be competitive with car travel and offer passengers high levels of service reliability and punctuality.

Under the auspices of a Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership (BPIP) with Aberdeen City, Nestrans, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird, the Council will continue to work towards achieving the targets set out in the Quality Partnership for Public Transport and associated BPIP Agreement regarding journey times, reliability and punctuality standards.

In terms of bus service reliability and punctuality the Council will also, where practicable, work with and assist the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and the Scottish Traffic Commissioner, as the regulator of local bus services.

## 4.7 Customer Satisfaction and Communication

Satisfied customers are critical to the success of any transport service, but even more so in areas where services have to compete with high car ownership levels and long journey times.

The Quality Partnership for Public Transport sets out a requirement for the partners to undertake an annual customer satisfaction survey and Aberdeenshire is committed to continue to undertake a Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis. This survey allows for detailed benchmarking of various aspects of bus service delivery and provision, and therefore the quality of services will continue to be monitored consistently and on a regular basis. Aberdeenshire Council will continue to strive to achieve consistently high ratings from the satisfaction surveys and, in particular, the Council will seek to maintain an overall satisfaction rating of 90% or greater.

Furthermore, Aberdeenshire Council currently consults with members of the public and the wider community about passenger transport matters via its Area Bus Forums. Area Bus Forums were established in 2000 in each of Aberdeenshire Council's six administrative areas. The Forums are used independently by both the Council and service operators to act as the principal focus for consultation on passenger transport matters.

The principal objectives of the Forums are to:

- Discuss and review supported and commercial local bus services;
- Provide community and bus operator awareness of public transport needs and developments;
- Allow informed public scrutiny of existing and proposed service provision;
- Deal with requests for public transport infrastructure; and
- Consult on public transport policies and proposals.

The six Area Bus Forums are held on weekday evenings, approximately every six months, and are grouped over a period of four to six weeks to allow decisions to be made on an equitable basis across Aberdeenshire.

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**“Satisfied customers are critical to the success of any transport service”**

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The Forums are open to the public and are attended by:

- Community Councils;
- Local business representatives;
- Youth groups;
- Senior citizen groups;
- Disabled interest groups;
- Councillors;
- Community Transport providers;
- Operators of commercial and supported bus services;
- Bus users; and
- Any other individuals/groups expressing an interest in passenger transport.

The Council is fully committed to improving passenger transport services and will continue to consult the Area Bus Forums regularly. The Forums are the Council's main source for disseminating information to the community and for discussions to be held in regard to passenger transport services, and service operators will be encouraged to continue to do the same.

In addition, The Council will undertake a Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis, in partnership with Aberdeen City Council and Nestrans, to gauge customer satisfaction with all aspects of fixed route bus service delivery.

## 4.8 Information and Publicity

Local authorities have a statutory duty under Sections 33-35 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 to ensure that local bus information is readily available.

The Aberdeenshire Council Bus Information Strategy which was published in 2010 sets out the standards and responsibilities for information provision that will be provided within the Aberdeenshire area. The strategy aims to provide minimum acceptable levels for the provision of information about:

- Fares, routes, location of stops and timetabling of local bus services;

- Facilities for people with other needs such as access, travel concessions etc; and
- Connections with other transport services and all other matters of value to passengers and potential passengers.

The Council will continue to work with all of its partners, including those in the Quality Partnership for Public Transport, to support and implement the actions set out in the Bus Information Strategy.

In doing so, the Council will work with its partners to deliver a Real Time Passenger Information System covering all fixed route bus services in Aberdeenshire. The Council



will also explore the opportunities afforded by new technologies, such as near field communications, and social media to disseminate passenger information.

In partnership with First Aberdeen, Stagecoach Bluebird and neighbouring authorities, the Council will endeavour to maintain a consistent and high standard of bus stop information displays across north east Scotland.

Where appropriate the Council will work with operators and other partners to deliver marketing campaigns and other initiatives designed to promote the public transport network and encourage patronage growth.

## 4.9 Infrastructure

In order for passenger transport services to be an attractive option, it is important that the infrastructure utilised on the network, in regard to vehicles, stops, shelters bus stations and interchanges is of high quality and appropriate for all passengers.

### Vehicles

Section 40 of The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 gave the Secretary of State a power to make regulations to ensure that public service vehicles are accessible to disabled people. The Government used these powers to bring the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) into force on 30th August 2000.

The PSVAR sets out the timetable by which buses must be fully accessible, as follows:

- by 31 December 2000 – all new buses and coaches were required to be fully accessible;
- by 1 January 2016 – all single deck buses must be fully accessible;
- by 1 January 2017 – all double deck buses must be fully accessible; and
- by 1 January 2020 – all coaches must be fully accessible.

The choice of vehicles used for passenger services is an operational matter largely at the discretion of individual bus operators. However, where services are supported by the Council, the Council may stipulate certain criteria in regard to the vehicles utilised on the route, in particular with regard to vehicle accessibility and engine emissions. Where passenger services are operated with 'in-house' vehicles, the Council will endeavour to ensure that the vehicles deployed accommodate passenger needs and will consult with customers to this end.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to continue to encourage operators to meet these accessibility regulations in advance of the above timetable. The Council will also encourage operators to deploy high quality, low emission, vehicles.

### Bus Stops and Interchanges

Aberdeenshire Council has powers under Section 63 of the Transport Act, 1985, to provide passenger transport infrastructure for the convenience of customers and to encourage the use of available services. The Council will exercise these powers and seek to ensure that all passenger transport infrastructure is provided and maintained to the highest standard possible within the resources at its disposal.

The Council will seek to work in partnership with operators and other appropriate agencies in order to secure the provision of high quality passenger infrastructure in the interests of encouraging greater provision and usage of passenger transport services.



All new bus stops will be of a standard design, unless prevailing local circumstances dictate otherwise. This design comprises an information panel, boarding kerb and, where justified on existing demand, or to encourage modal shift, a cantilever bus shelter. When new bus shelters are installed these will, unless local circumstances dictate otherwise, include the provision of solar powered lighting. This standard approach takes into consideration the needs of elderly, disabled and other passengers, will help to ensure that services are as accessible as possible, and ensure that stops comply with accessibility legislation and follow the Department for Transport's guidance Document 'Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure'.

Consultation on all proposed new 'on-street' infrastructure will be undertaken with the frontagers adjacent to the site, and those directly affected by it, relevant Local Members and the local Community Council.

The Council will maintain and operate bus stations in its ownership, either directly or through partnership or service level agreements with appropriate bodies, and will ensure that these facilities are available to all operators on an equitable basis.

The Council will also provide and support measures to improve interchange facilities with and between passenger transport services. In particular, the Council will explore the possibilities for Park and Choose facilities, including the development of 'mini-interchange hubs' on mainline corridors, providing dedicated interchange opportunities with walking, cycling and/or private transport.

## 4.10 Integration

Passenger transport integration refers to the integration between services and modes, and also integration of the Council fleet to achieve better vehicle utilisation.

## Network Integration

"For transport users, integrated transport is about the availability of a co-ordinated transport service across transport modes and operators that provide a seamless journey, minimising the impact of interchange and providing clear information on when, where and how the service may be used. This is particularly important for users in areas of rural isolation and social exclusion where flexibility in transport options brings considerable potential for benefit in areas of thin demand."<sup>1</sup>

Integrating passenger transport between and within modes can provide a competitive transport system that may help to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes. The provision of a well integrated network of services, providing the opportunity for 'seamless' travel can also enhance the travel experience of existing users, including those with no alternative means of travel and as such support the strategic goal of improved social inclusion.

Aberdeenshire Council will therefore continue to work in partnership with operators and other relevant organisations to integrate passenger transport services wherever possible. This will include:

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health and Department for Transport guidance document 'Providing Transport in Partnership' for English health agencies and local authorities, available at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/935/0085701.pdf>





- passenger transport connections to mainline bus corridors;
- passenger transport services connecting to rail services;
- maintaining dedicated 'in-street' interchange facilities at key locations;
- providing comprehensive passenger information;
- promoting multi-operator integrated ticketing products;
- promoting the development of 'mini-interchange hubs'; and
- promoting the development of inter-urban and urban Park and Choose and other intermodal schemes.

## Vehicle Utilisation

Aberdeenshire Council also has a commitment to achieving best value for money and therefore seeks to make the most of its assets. In line with Best Practice, the planning and management of service provision by "in-house" vehicles will be co-ordinated within an integrated transport unit.

The Council will strive to achieve co-ordinated commissioning and/or procurement of services both within the Council and externally with other organisations where such an approach can bring efficiencies and synergies. As such, the Council will continue to integrate services and vehicles where possible to maximise the use of its vehicle fleet and minimise the number of vehicles required.

Such arrangements may include running conventional passenger transport services with school transport, and using the same vehicles for both Demand Responsive Transport and Social Work services. Services will be integrated where possible in a manner which achieves the most efficient application of the financial resources at the Council's disposal, whilst also having regard to the needs of those served and the achievement of strategic transportation aims and objectives.

## 4.11 Safe Services

The Council's 2012 Residents Survey has highlighted that perceived safety levels across Aberdeenshire remain good in comparison to the rest of the UK.

A guiding principle of Aberdeenshire Council's LTS is to encourage individuals to change their travel behaviour to be more sustainable. The Council is also committed to addressing issues of social inclusion. In order to achieve this, the Council is committed to working to provide transport services and facilities with which people feel comfortable and safe.

Specifically in terms of vehicle safety, the Council will, where appropriate, work with and assist the Scottish Police Service and the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA), for example in undertaking inspections of school transport vehicles, and provide any required information or assistance to the Scottish Traffic Commissioner as the regulator of PCV vehicle quality.



## 4.12 Client Transport

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to the provision of a comprehensive school transport network catering for both pupils entitled to free home-to-school transport under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and for the convenience of other pupils on a fare-paying basis.

The Council also provides transport arrangements for children and adults in relation to its Social Work and Community Care responsibilities.

When securing supported passenger transport services, the Council will seek, wherever appropriate, to integrate these with school transport and social work transport services and vice versa. In the interests of integration, the option of purchasing season tickets on commercial local bus services will also be considered.

## School Transport

Section 42 of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1980, regarding school attendance, sets out the maximum distances pupils can be expected to walk to school, whilst Section 51 of the Act requires education authorities to make such provision for school transport as they consider necessary, or to pay all or part of reasonable travelling expenses incurred. The combined duties of Sections 42 and 51 require education authorities to provide school transport, whenever it would be unreasonable, dangerous, or (in some cases) impossible, for a child to walk to school.

The Council provides free home-to-school transport to all primary school children who live over two miles walking distance from and attend their zoned school and all secondary school pupils who live over three miles from and attend their zoned school. Free school

transport is also provided for children with additional support needs and on both educational and medical grounds at the discretion of the Education, Learning and Leisure Service.

The Council also provides transport, at a charge, to pupils who live within two miles of their zoned primary school or three miles of their zoned secondary school. Such 'privilege transport' will also be made available to 'out-of-zone' pupils where there are seats available.

The opportunity for pupils to travel on a 'privilege basis' will be provided where no additional service delivery costs are incurred and therefore will only be available on existing school transport services, where sufficient spare seating capacity exists. The Council will not run school transport services solely for out-of-zone school pupils.



In allocating seats on a privilege basis, places will be made available according to the following priority, applications from:

- in-zone pupils;
- out-of-zone pupils who previously travelled on the service on a privilege basis; and
- out-of-zone pupils.

The Council places a high priority on school transport safety. In terms of walking to school or pick-up/set down (PUDO) point of the school transport service, it is assumed that any child will be accompanied by a responsible adult. In instances where a fare-paying passenger transport service is available it is considered that there is a safe alternative to walking and therefore free transport will not be provided. Only where the walk route is deemed unsafe and there is no safe alternative to walking will free school transport be provided.

### Social Work Transport

Aberdeenshire Council has a duty under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to assess a person's community care needs and decide in light of that assessment, whether to arrange any services and if so which services. In doing so, any provision of assistance should be based on a detailed assessment of the individual's care needs and should take account of their preferences.

Under the NHS and Community Care Act, 1990, local authorities were given the responsibility for

## “assistance should be based on a detailed assessment of the individual's care needs”

community care for older people, and services were to be provided on the basis of what the older person needed rather than what was actually available. These Home Care, Day Care, and Respite Care, needs are ascertained by means of a community care assessment, enabling people to live in their own homes wherever possible. This legislation also requires that the needs of carers are taken into account.

The Council operates a number of scheduled passenger transport services providing access to Adult and Older People's Day Services. Transport is also provided on a 'call out' basis for social work service users as and when required. All transport services provided for social work service users will be commissioned as an integral component of the relevant Social Work Joint Commissioning Strategy.



Home-to-day service transport will be provided to Adult Day Service users where: the distance involved is too long to walk independently without support; the service user is unable to access public transport; and, the service user has no or insufficient state benefits to support the cost of the transport required.

The Council will also provide, at the discretion of the Housing and Social Work Service:

- home-to-day services transport for users of Older People and Physical Disability Services, where a comprehensive needs assessment has identified that the user requires assistance with transport to access day services; and,
- appropriate transport for users of the Children's Services, where a comprehensive needs assessment has identified the need for assistance with transport.





# 5 Delivery

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“Working with our partners towards supporting and providing excellent passenger transport services and facilities for our customers across north-east Scotland”

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## 5.1 Delivery

### Aberdeenshire Council

The delivery of the PTS will be led by Aberdeenshire Council's Passenger Transport Unit (PTU), which sits within the Transportation Service of Infrastructure Services.

Service delivery will be guided by the overall vision of the PTU of “Working with our partners towards supporting and providing excellent passenger transport services and facilities for our customers across north-east Scotland”.

### Partnership Working

The Council is committed to continued partnership working with operators, local communities, Nestrans, neighbouring authorities and other Community Planning partners to achieve the best service delivery for the area.

The Quality Partnership for Public Transport will continue to provide a framework for cross-boundary partnership

working with Aberdeen City Council and Nestrans, and therefore play a role in regard to the delivery of the objectives set out in the PTS. The partnership has achieved significant progress to date and will continue to work on a programme of further initiatives to address challenges such as the development of Park and Choose services and improved service punctuality and reliability. The Council and partners, including Transport Scotland, will also aim to develop multi-operator through-ticketing initiatives and investigate e-ticketing opportunities.

### Community Involvement

Engagement with customers to identify current and emerging travel patterns and needs is essential if an effective integrated service delivery is to be achieved. The views and opinions of the public, both service users and non-users, are vital to ensuring that the passenger transport services provided meet the needs of the community. Aberdeenshire

Council established Area Bus Forums in 2000 in each of Aberdeenshire Council's six administrative areas and these will continue to act as the principal focus for consultation on public transport matters.

The views and opinions of the public, both service users and non-users, are vital to ensuring that the passenger transport services provided meet the needs of the community. In introducing new services the Council will, whenever practicable, engage directly with the local community to ensure the service is tailored to local needs.

Feedback on travel needs will also be sought through the Community Planning Process.



## Procurement

In procuring passenger transport services and facilities Aberdeenshire Council follows strict tendering procedures in accordance with the authority's Financial Regulations and The Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

Services will be outsourced or, where applicable, provided 'in-house'. The Council spends approximately £18.5 million per year on the contracted provision of supported passenger

services, school transport services and social work transport services and there are some 800+ contracts in place at any one time with a variety of operators delivering these contracts using a range of taxis, minibuses, buses and coaches. In addition approximately £2.4 million per annum is spent on the direct operation of 'in-house' passenger transport services. Further Revenue and Capital spend is incurred in providing and maintaining passenger transport facilities and information systems, supporting concessionary travel

schemes and administering ticketing initiatives.

In securing services and facilities the Council will explore all procurement options at its disposal to ensure that Best Value is achieved, competition between suppliers is maximised and local suppliers are not disadvantaged.

The Council remains committed to providing the highest level of service possible to the people of Aberdeenshire and expects all of its suppliers to deliver professional, safe and reliable services.







[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

YX59  
DYD

EMERGENCY DOOR  
PULL HANDLE



School Bus



# 6 Performance Monitoring

Effective performance management with reliable data on trends and quality is essential.

## 6.1 Monitoring

Aberdeenshire Council has a duty to ensure that all funds are spent in the most appropriate manner and that best value is achieved. Effective performance management with reliable data on trends and quality is essential. It is therefore critical that a performance monitoring mechanism is in place to ensure that this happens.

## 6.2 Benchmarking

Aberdeenshire Council will continue to conduct an annual satisfaction survey of Aberdeenshire bus users to ascertain their perception of various aspects of bus service delivery. This Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (BPSS) will be structured to allow comparison with satisfaction data collated by through the Scottish Household Survey and by Passenger Voice, thus permitting benchmarking with Scottish national trends and satisfaction levels in comparable English rural local authorities.

Aspects of service delivery satisfaction that are monitored on an annual basis will include: overall service; punctuality; value for money; level of crowding on bus; bus

stop/shelter safety; on bus safety and security; bus stop/shelter cleanliness; condition of the bus stop/shelter; information on bus; cleanliness of vehicle; comfort on bus; driver behaviour; ease of bus access; and, smoothness of ride. Passengers may not be able to, nor should they need to, differentiate between bus services provided on a commercial or supported basis and therefore whilst it will not be possible to distinguish between these, the annual BPSS will also provide an insight into the overall effectiveness of the Council's partnership working arrangements.

Satisfaction surveys of DRT passengers will also allow benchmarking with local fixed route provision as well as an insight into the performance of both the Council's

travel despatch centre and dial-a-bus services.

Participation in the annual Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) Benchmarking Survey will also permit high level cross-authority comparison of various indicators of service delivery, including: net expenditure on supported local bus services per head of population; expenditure on unconventional passenger services per head of population; number of bus shelters per 1000 head of population; percentage bus stops with a timetable information display; percentage of bus stops with a raised boarding kerb; expenditure on public transport information per 1000 population; ASN school transport costs per pupil; and, mainstream school transport costs per pupil.





### 6.3 Performance Indicators

Supported passenger services will be monitored in a variety of ways, with their relative performance gauged through use of a Performance Management Framework Model. In addition a suite of performance indicators will be maintained covering all aspects of passenger transport service delivery.

Key performance measures reported to the Infrastructure Services Committee will include:

- Bus user satisfaction with overall service
- Supported bus service patronage
- Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus patronage
- Park and Ride passenger boardings
- Percentage of timetable cases with comprehensive and up-to-date information
- Percentage of pupils using school transport arriving at school on-time
- Further performance indicators employed for management purposes will cover all areas of service delivery, with service delivery targets set on an annual basis. Service delivery areas covered will include:
  - Supported bus service performance
  - Supported bus service standards
  - Bus User Satisfaction
  - Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus service performance
  - Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus travel despatch centre performance
  - Public transport infrastructure standards
  - Bus information and publicity standards
  - School transport service reliability
  - Social work transport services reliability
  - 'In-house' passenger fleet performance



## Performance Reporting

In addition to reporting the outcome of our performance monitoring to the relevant Council policy Committees and, where appropriate, the Nestrans Board, our key performance measures will be published annually on the Council's corporate website, along with the outcome of our annual Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey and other passenger transport satisfaction surveys.

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**“Effective  
performance  
management  
with reliable  
data on  
trends and  
quality is  
essential.”**

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...the provision of high quality information targeted at non-bus users is a key component of the strategy."





## 7 Further Information

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Further information on policies and strategies discussed in this document can be found on the Aberdeenshire Council website: [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

**Links to other documents and useful pages are provided below:**

- Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport:  
[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/publictransport/index.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/publictransport/index.asp)
- Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy:  
[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/transportation/lts/index.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/transportation/lts/index.asp)
- Aberdeenshire Bus Information Strategy:  
[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/publictransport/policies/infostrategy.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/publictransport/policies/infostrategy.asp)
- Aberdeen City and Shire Fares and Ticketing Strategy:  
[www.nestrans.org.uk/fares-and-ticketing-strategy.html](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/fares-and-ticketing-strategy.html)
- Quality Partnership for Public Transport:  
[www.nestrans.org.uk/bus-quality-partnership-agreement.html](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/bus-quality-partnership-agreement.html)
- Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy:  
[www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy.html](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy.html)
- Nestrans Bus Action Plan:  
[www.nestrans.org.uk/bus-action-plan.html](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/bus-action-plan.html)
- Nestrans & NHS Grampian Health and Transport Action Plan:  
[www.nestrans.org.uk/health-transport-action-plan.html](http://www.nestrans.org.uk/health-transport-action-plan.html)
- National Transport Strategy:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/04104414/0](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/04104414/0)
- Scottish Executive – An Action Plan for Buses in Scotland:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/157450/0042432.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/157450/0042432.pdf)

For any further enquiries, please contact Aberdeenshire Council on:

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## 8 Glossary

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For the purpose of this document the following terms are defined as:

**Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership** – a voluntary agreement between local authorities and bus operators that promotes a co-operative approach to identifying the root causes of poor punctuality with a framework for developing appropriate solutions.

**Client transport services** – all Council funded school transport and social work transport services.

**Community Transport** – transport operated by not-for-profit organisations or social enterprises. Services may be operated under a Section 19 or Section 22 Permit (see below for definitions) or under car-sharing legislation.

**Demand responsive transport (DRT) services** – all non-fixed route passenger transport services, including: semi-flexible DRT services; one to many DRT services; many to one DRT services; and, fully flexible area based DRT services.

**In-zone pupils** – refers to pupils who reside within the catchment area of the school they attend.

**Out-of-zone pupils** – refers to pupils who do not reside within the catchment area of the school they attend.

**PHC** – A vehicle licensed in Scotland as a private hire car (known as a private hire vehicle elsewhere in the UK).

**Passenger transport service** – all road based passenger transport services including: commercial and supported local bus services (fixed route and demand responsive); section 19, 22 and 46 services; formal volunteer car schemes; dedicated or closed school transport services; and, dedicated or closed social work transport services.

**Public transport services** – all registered local bus services (fixed route and demand responsive services), rail services and express coach services.

**Section 19** – a permit that allows not-for-profit organisations, such as local authorities and community transport operators, to charge for carrying passengers on minibuses, cars, or, MPVs. Only passengers of certain classes may be carried including: members of the organisation; disabled persons; pupils; and persons living within a geographically defined local community whose public transport needs are not otherwise met.

**Section 22** – a permit used by organisations that wish to run a local bus service carrying the general public on a not-for-profit basis. Bus services must be registered with the Scottish Traffic Commissioner.

**Section 46** – use of a school bus by an education authority to provide a local bus service.

**Statutory Quality Contract (sQC)** – a scheme under which a transport authority determines what local bus services should be provided in the area to which the scheme relates, the standards to which they should be provided and any additional facilities or services which should be provided in that area.

**Statutory Quality Partnership (sQP)** – a scheme declared by a transport authority which defines a geographical area or corridor in which the authority invest in improved bus service facilities and infrastructure. Operators who then wish to use these facilities undertake to provide local bus services of a particular standard agreed with the transport authority.

**Supported passenger transport services** – all passenger transport services that are supported by the Council excluding dedicated or closed school transport services; and, dedicated or closed social work transport services.

**Voluntary Quality Partnership (vQP)** – an agreement not covered by the legislation framework between a transport authority or authorities and a local bus service operator or operators setting out partnership working arrangements.

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# 9 Appendix: Passenger Transport Policies

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## Network Hierarchy

- 1.1 The Council will work in partnership with commercial and community transport operators to secure a hierarchy of strategic and local services that meet the passenger transport requirements of residents, businesses and visitors of Aberdeenshire, including the delivery of: mainline corridor services; feeder services; cross-country services; and, local rural and town services.

## Supported Service Provision

- 2.1 The Council will seek to secure the provision of passenger transport services to meet travel needs which are not otherwise met and, in doing so; services shall be specified in order to satisfy identified unmet social needs and/or strategic transportation objectives.
- 2.2 In securing the provision of supported passenger transport services the Council shall, taking into account the financial resources at its disposal and the performance of individual services, seek to achieve acceptable walking distance access to services coupled with minimum levels of service by settlement size.
- 2.3 The Council will employ a Performance Management Framework Model for ranking the relative effectiveness of existing and potential supported passenger transport services, to assist in determining best value and ensure that investment of public money is made in the most cost-effective manner.
- 2.4 In securing the provision of supported passenger transport services the Council will adopt a service delivery solution that reflects local needs and available vehicles resources, taking into account legislative and operational constraints.

## Flexible Services

- 3.1 The Council will encourage development of community based passenger transport services and, subject to the financial resources at its disposal, provide funding for community transport groups through the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Initiative or similar funding mechanisms.
  - 3.2 To assist the community and voluntary sector, the Council will continue to administer the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum as a mechanism for sharing best practice.
  - 3.3 The Council will, where appropriate, secure the provision of demand responsive transport (DRT) services to meet travel needs which are not otherwise met.
  - 3.4 The Council will operate a travel despatch centre for booking and scheduling demand responsive transport (DRT) trips on supported and 'in-house' operated DRT services.
  - 3.5 The Councils' travel despatch centre will be made available to community transport groups should they consider that this facility would assist their group in trip booking, scheduling and/or despatching.
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## Fares and Ticketing

- 4.1 The Council will work in partnership with operators in order to seek the provision of appropriate fare levels and methods of payment which encourage usage of public transport services.
- 4.2 Adult single fares on Council supported passenger transport services will normally be set to accord with, and will be no higher than, commercial pricing in the area.
- 4.3 In the event that commercial fare levels are considered by the Council to exceed a level consistent with meeting public needs and/or strategic transportation objectives, the Council may exercise its powers to secure alternative service provision at appropriate fares.
- 4.4 The Council shall operate a policy of free travel for children under 5 years of age and half-fare for children aged 5 to 15 years inclusive on all supported passenger transport services.
- 4.5 On supported passenger transport services, the Council will aim to set attractive and simple levels of discounts for return and multi-journey tickets.
- 4.6 Fare levels on Council supported passenger transport services will be reviewed annually.
- 4.7 The Council will seek to encourage operators to provide discounted fares for young people and families.
- 4.8 The Council will work in partnership with operators, Transport Scotland, and neighbouring authorities to explore the opportunities of new and emerging e-ticketing technologies.

## Concessionary Travel

- 5.1 The Council will operate a taxi-card concessionary travel scheme providing discounted taxi and rail travel for those with a severe or complex disability or infirmity.
- 5.2 The Council will operate a concessionary travel scheme for scheduled community minibus services, for those eligible for the Scotland-wide free bus scheme.
- 5.3 The Council will participate in the Scottish Blind Persons Travel Scheme.
- 5.4 The Council will seek to work in partnership with operators to introduce discounted travel products for Young Persons aged 16 to 20 years, where these are not available through the Young Scot National Entitlement Card.

## Service Reliability and Punctuality

- 6.1 The Council will seek to introduce bus priority and other traffic management measures which assist the reliability and punctuality of local bus services.
- 6.2 The Council will continue to participate in a Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership (BPIP), under the auspices of the Quality Partnership for Public Transport, and assist operators in meeting relevant BPIP targets regarding journey times, reliability and punctuality.
- 6.3 The Council will, where practicable, work with and assist the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and the Scottish Traffic Commissioner on ensuring bus service reliability and punctuality.

## Customer Satisfaction and Communication

- 7.1 The Council will undertake a Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis to gauge customer satisfaction with all aspects of fixed route bus service delivery.
  - 7.2 The Council will undertake a DRT Passenger Satisfaction Survey on a periodic basis to gauge customer satisfaction with Council provided demand responsive transport services.
  - 7.3 The Council will consult with members of the public and the wider community about public transport matters through Area Bus Forums on a six-monthly basis in each of the Council's six Administrative Areas.
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- 7.4 The Council will undertake annual school transport and social work transport customer satisfaction surveys.

### Information and Publicity

- 8.1 The Council will work with all of its relevant partners to implement the actions set out in the Council's Bus Information Strategy and to ensure that the expected standards for bus information are adhered to by those responsible.
- 8.2 The Council will work with operators and other partners to deliver marketing and other publicity initiatives that enhance the image and experience of the public transport network and encourage patronage growth.
- 8.3 In partnership with operators and neighbouring authorities, the Council will endeavour to maintain a consistent and high standard of bus stop flags and information displays across north-east Scotland.
- 8.4 The Council will explore the opportunities afforded by new technology and means of communication to disseminate passenger information.
- 8.5 The Council will work in partnership with operators and neighbouring authorities to provide Real Time passenger information on all fixed route local bus services across Aberdeenshire.

### Infrastructure

- 9.1 The Council will seek to work in partnership with operators and other appropriate agencies to secure the provision of high quality passenger infrastructure for the convenience of existing passengers and in the interests of encouraging greater usage of public and other passenger transport services.
- 9.2 The Council will provide and maintain bus stops and bus shelters to the highest standard possible within the resources at its disposal.
- 9.3 Passenger transport infrastructure provided by the Council will be designed to meet the needs of elderly, disabled and other mobility impaired and encumbered passengers, taking due cognizance of Disability Discrimination legislation and relevant guidance.
- 9.4 The Council will maintain and operate bus stations and other off-street interchange sites in its ownership, either directly or through agency agreements with appropriate bodies, and will ensure that these facilities are available to all operators on an equitable basis.
- 9.5 The Council will encourage operators to deploy high quality, low emission vehicles that, in the case of public transport vehicles, meet the Public Service Accessibility Regulations 2000.
- 9.6 The Council will procure vehicles to operate 'in-house' passenger transport services that meet the needs of our customers, and will consult with clients and commissioning agencies as appropriate to ensure that these needs are met as far as is practicable.

### Integration

- 10.1 The Council will ensure that passenger transport issues are addressed within the Statutory Local Development Plan framework and associated procedures related to transport assessment and developer contributions.
- 10.2 The Council will work in partnership with operators to achieve, wherever practicable, convenient timetable connections between: passenger transport services; and, those passenger transport services that connect with rail services.
- 10.3 The Council will provide and support measures to provide ease of interchange with and between passenger transport services, including the provision and maintenance of appropriate passenger infrastructure and information.
- 10.4 The Council will develop Park and Choose facilities, including the development of 'mini-interchange hubs' on mainline public transport corridors, to provide dedicated interchange opportunities with walking, cycling, private transport and/or feeder fixed route and DRT passenger transport services.
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- 10.5 The Council will work in partnership with operators to seek the provision of multi-operator integrated ticketing arrangements.
- 10.6 The Council will seek to maximise the utilisation of its own 'in-house' fleet of passenger transport vehicles through co-ordinated management of its 'in-house' passenger transport services.
- 10.7 The Council will, at its discretion, permit the hire of its 'in-house' passenger transport vehicles to community bodies.
- 10.8 The Council will seek to work in partnership with community, voluntary, health and other appropriate public and private sector organisations, with a view to achieving closer integration of the provision of passenger transport services in its area.
- 10.9 The Council will endeavour to achieve co-ordinated commissioning and procurement of passenger transport services within the Council and externally with other organisations, where such an approach can achieve more efficient and cost-effective service delivery.

### Safe Services

- 11.1 The Council will work with all relevant partners and agencies to provide passenger transport services and facilities with which people feel comfortable and safe.
- 11.2 The Council will work with and assist the Vehicle Operators Services Agency (VOSA) and the Scottish Police Service with regard to vehicle safety and provide any requested information or assistance to the Scottish Traffic Commissioner as the regulator of PCV vehicle quality.

### School Transport

- 12.1 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to all primary pupils who live more than two miles from and attend their zoned school.
- 12.2 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to all secondary pupils who live more than three miles from and attend their zoned school.
- 12.3 The Council will, where practicable, not expect primary and secondary pupils to have to travel for more than 45 and 60 minutes on a school transport service, respectively, unless connecting transport is provided in which case the maximum journey time shall be 75 minutes.
- 12.4 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to pupils with additional support needs provided this has been authorised by the appropriate Head of Service based on objective assessment criteria.
- 12.5 The Council will provide free home-to-school transport to pupils on educational and/or medical grounds provided this has been approved by the appropriate Head of Service based on objective assessment criteria.
- 12.6 Seat belts will be provided on all Council 'in-house' operated and 'contracted-in' school transport services and no pupil will be expected to stand on any such service.
- 12.7 The Council will provide home-to-school transport on safety grounds to pupils attending their zoned school, where the walk route is deemed unsafe for a child accompanied by a responsible adult and there is no safe alternative to walking, such as paid-for privilege transport or fare paying public transport.
- 12.8 The Council will, at a charge, make available seats on school transport services on a privilege basis, to those pupils who are not eligible for free home-to-school transport where there is spare seating capacity on the vehicle.

### Social Work Transport

- 13.1 The Council will provide home-to-day services transport for users of Adult Day Services where: the distance involved is too long to walk independently without support; the service user is unable to access public transport; and, the service user has no or insufficient state benefits to support the cost of the transport required.
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- 13.2 The Council will provide home-to-day services transport for users of Older People and Physical Disability Services at the discretion of the Housing and Social Work Service, where a comprehensive needs assessment has identified that the user requires assistance with transport to access day services.
- 13.3 The Council will provide appropriate transport for users of Children's Services at the discretion of the Housing and Social Work Service, where a comprehensive needs assessment has identified the need for assistance with transport.

### **Service Delivery and Procurement**

- 14.1 The Council will endeavour to work in partnership with operators, local communities, Nestrans, neighbouring authorities and other Community Planning partners aiming to achieve the best service delivery for Aberdeenshire.
- 14.2 The Council will continue to participate in the Quality Partnership for Public Transport as the principal framework for partnership working on local bus service matters across Aberdeen City and Shire.
- 14.3 To achieve the most effective collaborative working, informal and formal voluntary partnership working arrangements will be entered into with operators and other relevant partners, including Statutory Quality Bus Partnerships where appropriate.
- 14.4 The Council will, within the resources and powers at its disposal, undertake measures to support operators who wish to enter or remain in the local bus service market, including the provision of an electronic ticket machine back office.
- 14.5 In determining the award of contracts for the operation of Council funded passenger transport services the Council shall seek to achieve best value for money within the resources at its disposal and, in addition to price, will take account of the ability of prospective operators to deliver the services and, where appropriate, the quality of service to be provided.
- 14.6 The Council will, in order to achieve Best Value service delivery, consider all available service delivery and procurement options, including 'in-house' operation of passenger transport services.
- 14.7 The Council will, in supporting passenger transport activities provided by the third sector, enter into service level agreements with community transport groups.

### **Performance Monitoring**

- 15.1 The Council will monitor passenger transport service delivery performance through the use of appropriate performance indicators, which shall be reported and published on an annual basis.
  - 15.2 The Council will, within the resources at its disposal, monitor the day-to-day operational performance of the Council funded passenger transport network, and in the case of 'contracted-in' services, apply a penalty system for incidences of non-compliance.
  - 15.3 The Council will participate in the annual Association of Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) Benchmarking and ATCO Price, Expenditure and Competition Surveys, and any other relevant cross-authority surveys, to permit high level comparison of the Council's service delivery performance.
  - 15.4 The Council will benchmark satisfaction levels revealed in its annual Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey (BPSS) with satisfaction data for comparable transport authorities collated through the Passenger Focus Bus Passenger Survey or similar surveys.
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