

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **2nd December 2020**
Report Subject: **Transport Strategy and Review Task and Finish Group**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
Report Written by: **Owen Ashton, Service Manager Business & Regeneration**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
11.11.20	12.11.20	17.11.20			02.12.20			

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek Members endorsement and nominations to form a 'Transport Strategy and Review' Task and Finish Group.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1. From providing access to employment, services, facilities and enabling residents to attend medical appointments and education; transport has and will continue to play a key role in creating viable and sustainable communities within Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.2. Covid-19 has posed many challenges, placing increased pressure on businesses and the commercial viability of such entities across all sectors including transport. With reductions in passenger numbers using bus and rail services, there is an increasing need for greater collaboration between operators and Local and Welsh Government (WG).
- 2.3. This presents an opportunity to re-shape how residents use and view transport; from increasing numbers walking and cycling to access services in our Town Centres, to using Ultra Low Emission Vehicles for taxi services to link into improved rail services and trialling new ways of providing bus services, via Integrated Responsive Transport (IRT) with innovative funding such as the Welsh Government's Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) to deliver a more efficient and sustainable service.
- 2.4. Transport needs to evolve to meet new challenges and adapt to changing demands. In order to address these issues, a Strategy and Review is currently being procured to identify a programme of work that will provide a strategic vision and plan for transport within Blaenau Gwent taking account of:

- What our integrated local transport services would look like with 4 trains per hour and 2 trains per hour – including taxis, responsive community transport/IRT etc.
- How do we assist more people to get to work?
- The Council's subsidy – should it be for people to access work or access services, or both?
- How will Council funding for bus services work and how can we maximise opportunities through the BES?
- How can we improve the wider transport links to other local authority areas?
- How can we influence service operators' and other partners' e.g. third sector future plans?
- What are the gaps in the Active Travel network and how can we promote Active Travel as part of an integrated transport provision to improve access to our towns and villages and hubs?
- How can we embed a low or zero carbon approach into our transport strategy?

2.5. Much of this work is already underway for example the Council has been working closely with WG and Transport for Wales (TfW) on an IRT pilot project which is one of only 3 being piloted across Wales. This project will help in getting a better understanding of what transport users want, balancing both existing well used routes with new routes and services outside of the core service hours provided by operators through a semi-scheduled service. Similarly, significant work has already been undertaken in identifying improved access to town centres through Active Travel and work is already underway to increase the coverage of Electric Charging points for Taxis across the County Borough.

2.6 Whilst focussed on the needs of Blaenau Gwent and its residents, the Strategy will also take into account a range of strategic and national/regional considerations including:

- The inter-dependencies between local, regional and national transport strategies and Transport for Wales Metro proposals;
- How transport contributes to broad social, economic and environmental goals;
- How the local and regional transport underpins the Welsh Government's approach to their strategy delivery with clear allocation and division of responsibilities between WG, other agencies and local authorities;
- Links to other policy frameworks like spatial planning and economic development; clear identification of the transport problems and issues facing the local citizens both currently and in the future;
- How technology including data analytics can be used to understand how transport demand and conditions might change in the future and to appraise/prioritise components of the strategy, especially with reference to Covid-19;
- Engagement and co-production through working with a range of stakeholders.

- 2.7 Given the breadth of issues which need to be looked at as part of the Review and Strategy, there is a clear need for member representation to support the work and oversee its development and implementation via a Task and Finish Group.
- 2.8 Members of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee are therefore being asked to nominate up to five members to sit on this group which will be made up of officers and members, and where necessary representatives of other organisations.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1 – progress with the establishment of the Task and Finish Group

That we establish the Task and Finish group and nominate up to five members to sit on the Group

3.2 Option 2 – to not progress with the establishment of the Task and Finish Group

That we do not progress with the Task and Finish Group.

Preferred Option

Option 1 – to proceed with the pilot project for BG.

4. Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

- 4.1. The project supports the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-22 Outcome Statements:
- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities;
 - Support a fairer sustainable economy and community;
 - To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1. *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

A budget of £25,000 has been identified to undertake this work. As WG funding via Local Transport Fund is unable to support Local Authority strategic transport plans, it is proposed that this work is funded from the Regeneration Department's Tech Valleys Capital Fund as the study will be used to inform a number of capital projects funded via Welsh Government through its Local Transport and Active Travel Funds.

5.2. *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has neither the capacity nor specialist skills to undertake work of this nature especially at this time. It is therefore proposed that an independent contractor is commissioned to undertake the work on the Council's behalf.

- 5.3. **Legal**
Prior to procuring the project, a contract will be drawn up in consultation with colleagues in Procurement of the work provided.
- 5.4. **Human Resources**
As well as the support and input from Members, it is proposed that the Task and Finish Group is made up from Officers across various departments within the Council meeting every quarter, with a maximum of 4 meetings held to complete the work.
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1. **Performance Information and Data**
N/A
- 6.2. **Expected outcome for the public**
The project aims to establish a vision and a series of actions that provide a 'road map' to a more sustainable and integrated transport offer for residents of Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.3. **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
The project presents an opportunity to address some of the challenges facing residents in accessing employment and services via public transport. The project will work with a range of partners to establish a longer-term solution as we move towards a low carbon economy and a post Covid-19 economy.
- 6.4. **Collaboration / partnership working**
The success of the project is predicated on successful collaboration and partnership working with a range of partners and stakeholders. By working closely with Transport for Wales, the project will draw on a wide range of experience.
- 6.5. **Integration (across service areas)**
The project will work with officers across a number of directorates including Community Services, Social Services and Corporate Services and has the potential to re-scope how transport supports these service areas.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will be integrated into the project including gateway reviews at key stages. The project will review baseline data and information

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Template