

Name of meeting and date: Cabinet 13 October 2009

Title of report: Dewsbury Free Town Bus

| | |
|--|---|
| Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards? | No |
| Is it in the Council's Forward Plan? | No |
| Is it eligible for "call in" by Scrutiny? | Yes |
| Cabinet member portfolio: | Regeneration, Environment and Transport |

Electoral wards affected and ward councillors consulted:

Dewsbury East, Dewsbury South and Dewsbury West

Public or private: Public

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To request Cabinet to consider the development and funding of a Free Town Bus service in Dewsbury. The service would be developed in partnership with Metro and operate on a pilot basis for a period of six months between 12th December 2009 and 26th June 2010.

2. Key points

Background

- 2.1 Since its launch in October 2006 Huddersfield Free Town bus has proved extremely popular. Huddersfield Free Town Bus carries almost 350,000 passengers per year. Accessibility of Huddersfield town centre has been enhanced and survey work has identified that new journeys to the town centre are made as a result of the service.
- 2.2 Kirklees Council has an approved Corporate Priority budget of £400k over a 3 year period to improve accessibility through the development and enhancement of public transport. An allocation of £150k is available during 2009/10 and a further £150k has been allocated in 2010/2011. £100k is available in 2011/2012.
- 2.3 Since the opening of Dewsbury Ring Road in 1986 / 1987 the town centre within the Ring Road has benefitted from the removal of through traffic from the main retail shopping area. Pedestrianisation of key shopping streets, refurbishment of the bus station and indoor market has contributed to the uplift of the town. However, the increased volumes of traffic using Dewsbury Ring Road has created a perceived 'barrier' for pedestrians (particularly the elderly) in accessing key

facilities and residential areas outside the Ring Road from the town centre and vice versa. The Rail Station, Sports Centre, Job Centre / Library, Dewsbury Minster and Kirklees College are all outside the Ring Road.

- 2.4 The topography of the town also makes the journey on foot between the town centre and Bus Station / Rail Station difficult for some pedestrians because of the steep gradients.
- 2.5 The Council has recognised the need to develop its 'vision' for Dewsbury for the next 15 to 20 years and ensure that 'vitality' and 'vibrancy' are promoted. A first class transport system has a key role to play in this process as accessibility and the free movement of people and goods are essential ingredients of a thriving town. Good access to all the key facilities (connectivity) is an important issue for people local to Dewsbury. At a stakeholder meeting held at the Town Hall on 25th July 2008 delegates requested the council to investigate the promotion of a Free Town Bus to link key facilities in and around the town.

Pilot

- 2.6 It is proposed that a new Free Town Bus service will operate on a pilot 'use it or lose it' basis for a period of six months. Should the service not meet minimum passenger numbers highlighted in paragraph 2.13 then the service will be reviewed or withdrawn.

Route

- 2.7 Kirklees Council and Metro have undertaken extensive work on developing the most appropriate route for the proposed new service. Dewsbury Free Town Bus would link key facilities in and around the town and improve bus and rail integration through the delivery of a public transport link. There are 2 potential options outlined below and included in Annex A:-

Option A

Dewsbury Bus Station, Dewsbury Health Centre, Dewsbury Rail Station, Ring Road, Northgate, Westgate, Church Street, Dewsbury Bus Station.

Option B

Dewsbury Bus Station, Dewsbury Health Centre, Dewsbury Rail Station, Ring Road, Northgate, Westgate, Church Street, Vicarage Road, Railway Street, Sainsbury's Store, Retail Park, Long Causeway (for the Sports Centre), Link Road, Wilton street, South Street, Dewsbury Bus Station.

- 2.8 The service would operate between 07:30 - 18:30 Monday – Friday and between 08:30 – 17:00 on Saturdays.
- 2.9 For the service to prove successful it is important that the service operates on a frequent 'turn up and go' basis where passengers can simply arrive at the bus stop and wait for the service without the need to refer to timetables and plan their journey around the bus timetable. Preliminary route trials suggest that a single vehicle could be used to operate a 15 minute frequency service across on the route identified in

Option A. Two vehicles would be required to operate a 10 – 12 minute frequency service on the route identified in Option B.

- 2.10 Option B is the preferred route option as this route provides a link to Dewsbury Leisure Centre, Dewsbury Minster, Job Centre / Library and retail units outside the Ring Road whilst providing a higher frequency of service.
- 2.11 A free circular bus service currently exists between Dewsbury Bus Station and the Sainsbury's store. The service is exclusive to Sainsbury's customers and funded by the store. Discussions have taken place with Sainsbury's who have advised that they would be willing to part fund Dewsbury Free Town Bus as replacement for their existing service. The Sainsbury's store would be willing to make an ongoing contribution of £30,000 per annum to the service. This money would be deducted from the vehicle operation costs.
- 2.12 Continuation of the Dewsbury Free Town Bus service beyond the initial pilot period would be dependant on the service meeting the agreed performance targets set out below:-
- 2.13 Dewsbury Free Town Bus Targets

| | Dewsbury Target (Option A) | Dewsbury Target (Option B) | Huddersfield Actual (Comparison) |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Patronage | 6 passengers per trip | 8 passengers per trip | 12 passengers per journey |
| Modal shift car -> bus | 5% | 7.5% | 10% |
| Users with impaired mobility | 20% | 25% | 38% |
| Trip generation to town centre | 3% | 5% | 9% |

- 2.14 Sainsbury's will regularly review the service to ensure that it meets their needs. Sainsbury's reserve the right to withdraw their funding should the service not meet their needs. Should Sainsbury's withdraw their funding then the stop within the Sainsbury's site will be withdrawn.

3. Implications for the Council

Financial

- 3.1 To facilitate the 6 month pilot of service it is proposed that Kirklees Council will fund vehicle lease costs and marketing costs of the service. Kirklees Council will meet the full operating costs for the six month period of the pilot operation with revenue costs being backdated and shared with Metro on a 50 / 50 basis should the pilot prove successful and continue beyond this date.
- 3.2 A breakdown of costs is detailed in Annex B. In summary the cost of the scheme to Kirklees Council is estimated as follows:-

| Option | 6 Month Pilot Dec 2009 – June 2010 | 9 Month June 2010 - March 2011 | Ongoing Annual Cost |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| A | £65,000 | £37,000 | £80,000 |
| B | £120,000 | £70,000 | £140,000 |
| B (with Sainsbury's) | £105,000 | £48,000 | £125,000 |

- 3.3 Estimated costs of the pilot can be met by the Corporate Priority transport accessibility budget allocation and Highways Capital Plan, Public Transport Accessibility Measures budget (25/8233) for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. A contribution of £15k over a 5 year period has been agreed as part of a S106 with a residential development at 23 / 25, Northgate, Dewsbury. Sponsorship of the vehicle(s) has been sought and a response is currently awaited. These contributions will be deducted from the operational cost of the service.
- 3.4 If successful, the ongoing cost for the service to Kirklees Council after March 2011 is estimated at as follows:-
- Option A - £80k
Option B - £140k
Option B - £125k (With continued Sainsbury's Contribution)
- 3.5 Should the service continue after March 2011 a budget will be need to be identified to fund the service. A further report will be submitted to Cabinet in the future.

4. Consultees and their opinions

- 4.1 Councillors from the Dewsbury East, Dewsbury South and Dewsbury West Wards have been consulted on the development of the new pilot service. To date two comments have been received:-
- *I fully welcome this service, which will mean all the town would be accessible for those that have walking difficulties, could I also thank officers and the Cabinet for their hard work in working up this proposal. – Cllr Paul Kane*
 - *I am absolutely delighted with this initiative and look forward to its implementation, I am sure that it will be a success. – Cllr Eric Firth*

5. Officer recommendations and reasons

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- Approve a pilot Dewsbury Free Town Bus (Option B inc Sainsbury's) service between 12/12/09 and 26/06/10.
- Update Cabinet in June 2010 with progress on the pilot 'use it or lose it' service.

6. Cabinet portfolio holder recommendation

I support the approval of a pilot Dewsbury Free Town Bus (Option B inc Sainsbury's) service between 12/12/09 and 26/06/10 and hope that the success of the service will enable it to continue beyond the pilot.

7. Next steps

- Appointment of contractor to operate the service
- Marketing and communication
- Service launch
- Service monitoring

8 Contact officer and relevant papers

Contact Officer: Matthew Ward Direct Dial (01484) 225506
Email: matt.ward@kirklees.gov.uk

Assistant Director for Highways & Transportation: Jacqui Gedman

Relevant Papers:

None

ANNEX A - OPTION B

Length of Route 2.05 Miles (3.27 km)

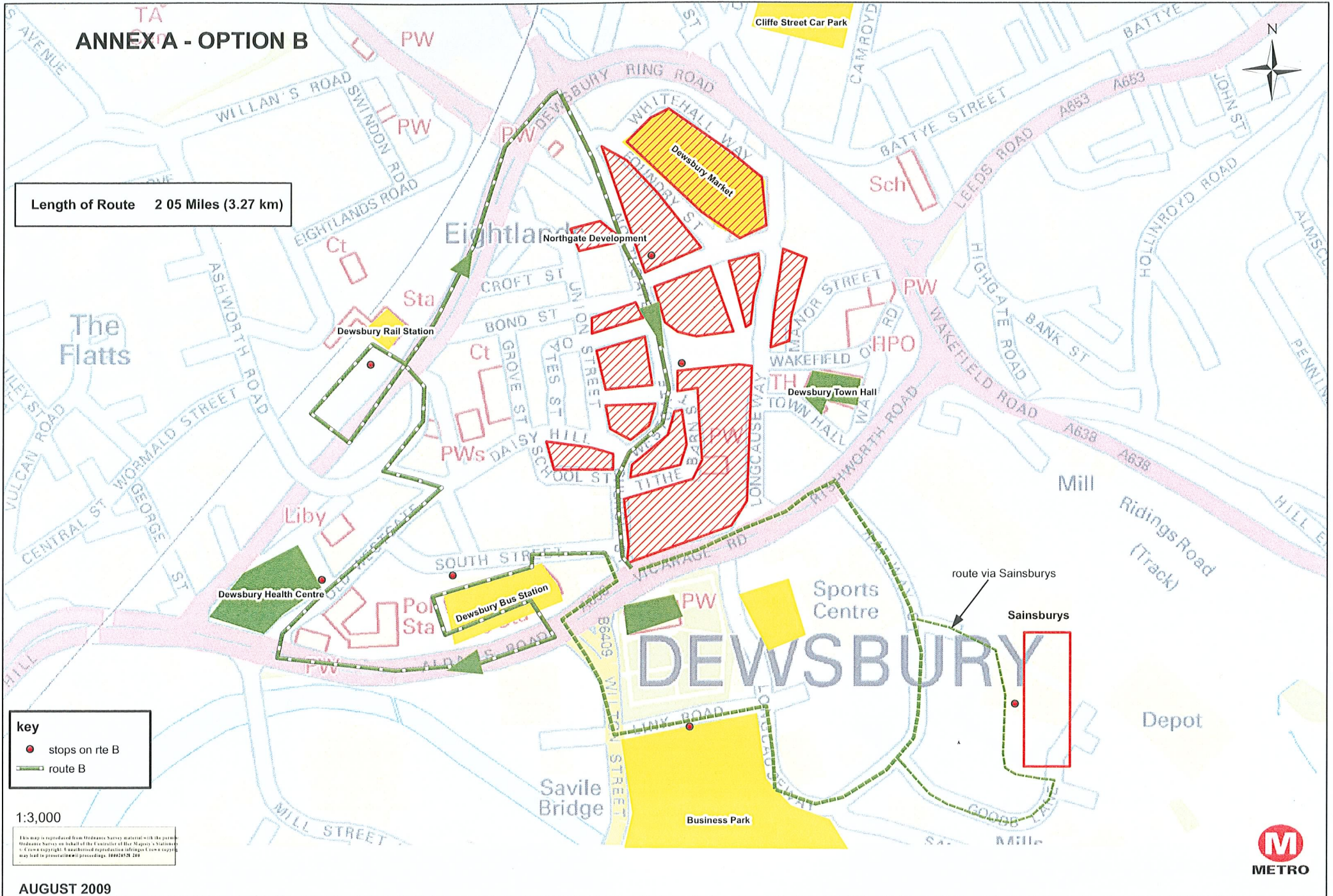
key

- stops on rte B
- route B

1:3,000

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AUGUST 2009



Annex B – Breakdown of Dewsbury Free Town Bus services costs and contributions

Option A

Pilot - December 2009 – June 2010 (6 Months)

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Vehicle lease | £15,000 |
| Operational costs | £40,000 |
| Marketing and promotion | £10,000 |
| TOTAL | £65,000 |

June 2010 – March 2011 (9 Months)

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Vehicle lease | £22,500 |
| Operational costs | £60,000 |
| Marketing and promotion | £5,000 |
| Metro contribution December 2009 – June 2010 | -£20,000 |
| Metro contribution June 2010 – March 2011 | -£30,000 |
| TOTAL | £37,500 |

Option B

Pilot - December 2009 – June 2010 (6 Months)

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Vehicle lease | £30,000 |
| Operational costs | £80,000 |
| Marketing and promotion | £10,000 |
| TOTAL | £120,000 |

June 2010 – March 2011 (9 Months)

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Vehicle lease | £45,000 |
| Operational costs | £120,000 |
| Marketing and promotion | £5,000 |
| Metro contribution December 2009 – June 2010 | -£40,000 |
| Metro contribution June 2010 – March 2011 | -£60,000 |
| TOTAL | £70,000 |

Option B (Via J. Sainsbury's Store)

Pilot - December 2009 – June 2010 (6 Months)

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Vehicle lease | £30,000 |
| Operational costs | £80,000 |
| Marketing and promotion | £10,000 |
| Contribution from Sainsbury's | -£15,000 |
| TOTAL | £105,000 |

June 2010 – March 2011

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Vehicle lease | £45,000 |
| Operational costs | £120,000 |
| Marketing and promotion | £5,000 |
| Metro contribution December 2009 – June 2010 | -£40,000 |
| Metro contribution June 2010 – March 2011 | -£60,000 |
| Contribution from Sainsbury | -£22,000 |
| TOTAL | £48,000 |