

## **Wincanton Transport & Services Hub Update**

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### **Purpose**

The report updates members on the process of, and progress on developing a Transport & Services Hub in Wincanton.

### **Public Interest**

The Wincanton Hub project will look at ways to provide improved services to local people in a co-ordinated and efficient way and improved transport links to support the existing public transport network.

### **Recommendation**

That members note and comment on the report.

### **Background**

The Rural Transport and Access to Services report was commissioned by SST following an initial report by Yarlinton Housing Group's Director of Customer and Community Services.

A Steering group was established comprising of officers from Somerset County Council (SCC), Yarlinton Housing Group (YHG), and South Somerset District Council (SSDC). The Steering Group is jointly led by YHG's Director of Customer and Community Services and SSDC's Assistant Director (Economy). The steering group organised stakeholder workshops in February and April 2013 resulting in the establishment of a Transport & Accessibility Focus Group and the appointment through SST funding of a Transport Research Officer as an Intern. The full report sets out:

- The current state of transport provision in South Somerset
- Findings from case studies.
- Primary research undertaken in South Somerset to assess what could be done to improve transport and access to services
- Recommendations to bring forward potential solutions
- Options/methods to link people together with transport solutions (e.g. Community Transport connecting with a main bus route)

The full report can be found on the South Somerset Together website - <http://www.southsomersettogether.org.uk/current-priorities-and-projects.aspx>

## Wincanton Transport Hub

One of the main recommendations was to establish a Transport & Accessibility Hub in Wincanton that:

- Delivers services locally to reduce the need and cost of travel.
- And/or takes people to the service/facility

The issues identified in the original report around public transport and service provision in a rural area is very complicated and requires a range of responses. It is important that solutions are developed and owned locally and a project group has been established to begin to develop Wincanton as a “Hub” for services for residents in the town and the surrounding area. It is hoped that the group will include representatives of the Town Council, The GP surgery, Verrington Hospital, King Arthurs, Transport providers, The Balsam Centre, local sports facilities and the 58 User Group. There is likely to be a separate strand to look at how we can work with local employers to encourage car sharing and use of public/community transport. The first meeting of the group will have taken place on 4<sup>th</sup> September. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

The “Hub” will initially focus on two aspects:

**Take the people to the service/facility** i.e. Create a transport hub in Wincanton linking people together with transport solutions.

This strand of work will include physical improvements to the bus interchange. Somerset County Council has allocated funding within the Small Improvement Scheme towards replacing the existing shelter, maintenance and improvements to the information that is available. The project group will look at the opportunities to provide quality, easy to understand information about bus services and local facilities and services. The scheme could also include the provision of street furniture and better signage however; this could depend on the availability of additional funding. Once the group has agreed on the scope of physical improvements we will identify other potential sources of funding. This could include requests for partnership funding from the Town Council, Area East and the Market Town Investment Group. SSC funding already secured (apart from maintenance funds) will have to be spent by the end of this financial year so the shelter replacement will happen this year.

The group will also investigate ways to link people from the rural parishes surrounding Wincanton to established public transport routes using the CAT bus. 26 Parishes in Area East have no access to public transport. Almost all existing bus routes have capacity to take extra passengers with some struggling to maintain viability. This pilot scheme will look at how Community Car schemes and SSCAT can get people to buses serving Yeovil, Stalbridge, Salisbury rather than completing entire journeys which often take one of the SSCAT vehicles off the road for significant periods of time. The Transport Officer is due to meet with SCC officers and the bus operators in September to look at how this can be achieved.

**Take the service/facility to the people** i.e. Delivery of services locally to reduce the need and cost of travel and improve community cohesion.

Initial ideas about services that could be provided locally were raised through the local consultations and they included Job Centre plus, Yeovil College and some health services. The first stage of this will be to identify gaps in local service provision and to prioritise the services that could be delivered locally, prepare an evidence base of needs to try to demonstrate that service delivery is viable and to then negotiate with providers.

Somerset County Council coordinated a bid for Department of Transport funding through the Sustainable Transport Fund. This is a highly competitive process and the approach which was based on the work that has been done was always considered speculative. We have recently been informed that the bid was unsuccessful. The bid would have enabled some of the actions related to the use of new technology to have been brought forward but this strand of work will now be developed on a slower track.

### **Financial Implications**

No new financial implications resulting from this report.

### **Corporate Priority Implications**

The Transport & Services Hub will contribute to a range of corporate priorities but specifically towards Focus Four - Work with and lobby partners to help communities to develop transport schemes and local solutions to reduce rural isolation and inequalities to meet existing needs of those communities.

### **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

The Hub will promote sustainable transport solutions and local service delivery which will reduce reliance on private car use.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

One of the main aims of the hub project is to reduce inequality and improve service accessibility for all.