

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Local Bus Board for Gateshead

**REPORT OF:** Peter Udall, Strategic Director, Economy, Innovation and Growth

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To approve the establishment and initial membership of a Local Bus Board for Gateshead.

### **Background**

2. The North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) has established a regular Bus Forum with representatives of the regional bus operators (known jointly as NE Bus). The first of these meetings was held in September 2020.
3. The Forum has been established partly through a longstanding concern from bus users and elected Members across the area as a whole regarding the lack of consultation and involvement in commercial decisions. In addition, the increased financial role of both central and local government in the bus industry, particularly through the Covid pandemic, has afforded a greater opportunity for improved partnership and an increased desire from government to see this happen.
4. The overarching purpose of the JTC/NE Bus Forum is to allow senior politicians to meet with senior NE Bus representatives to increase collaborative understanding between the JTC and bus operators. It will also allow JTC to offer appropriate levels of influence over the decisions of bus operators in the best interests of the North East bus network.
5. The intention is that the Forum should be supported by a Local Bus Board for each Council area in the region, where discussion can take place between elected Members, officers, bus operators and other stakeholders on the detail of the bus network and specifically on the local impact of forthcoming changes to routes, times and fares. A draft Terms of Reference for the Board is attached as Appendix 3. The JTC/NE Bus Forum is not envisaged as the place where such detailed issues would be debated.
6. There is already an established East Gateshead Bus Alliance and a long-held aspiration to mirror that in West Gateshead. The current proposal is that the Local Bus Board should sit alongside, rather than replace, existing arrangements. This will allow the work of the Local Bus Board to

complement that of the Alliance(s), whose somewhat different remit suggests they should continue in parallel.

### **Proposal**

7. It is proposed that the Cabinet should approve the establishment of a Local Bus Board for Gateshead and the adoption of the initial structure for the Board set out in Appendix 2.

### **Recommendation**

8. It is recommended that Cabinet;
  - i) approves the establishment of a Local Bus Board for Gateshead.
  - ii) approves the initial structure of the Board set out in Appendix 2.

For the following reason:

To support a sustainable transport system capable of supporting the Gateshead's environmental, social and economic objectives.

### Local Bus Board for Gateshead

#### Policy context

1. The proposal is consistent with the Council's strategic approach 'Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives'; working towards a transport system that supports the pledges to:
  - Put people and families at the heart of everything we do
  - Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
  - Support our communities to support themselves and each other
  - Invest in our economy to provide opportunities for employment, innovation and growth
  - Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead

#### Consultation

2. Consultation has taken place with the Cabinet Members for Environment and Transport.

#### Alternative options

3. To not establish a Local Bus Board for Gateshead would miss out on an opportunity to foster local joint working and information exchange with bus operators.
4. Alternative initial structures for the Board could be established, but the proposal is seen as good starting point and the Board will be able to expand and alter its membership as workload and experience dictates.

#### Implications of Recommendation

5. **Resources:**
  - a. **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
  - b. **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resource implications arising from this report. It is envisaged that the Board meetings will be arranged to follow the existing East Gateshead Bus Alliance Stakeholder Board meetings so as to reduce administration and allow it to be managed within existing resources.
  - c. **Property Implications** - There are no direct property implications arising from this report.
6. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no risk management implications.

7. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The proposals will assist in reducing social exclusion by improving access for the young, elderly, unemployed/low waged and people with disabilities.
8. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications.
9. **Health Implications** – The Board aims to improve bus services which in turn improve access to services and facilities that enhance people’s health and wellbeing.
10. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – The proposal will assist in providing the basis for a sustainable transport system capable of supporting the Borough’s environmental, social and economic objectives in a sustainable fashion. In particular, reducing car dependence, thereby contributing to important aims, including improved air quality and combatting climate change.
11. **Human Rights Implications** – There are no human rights implications.
12. **Ward Implications** – All.

## APPENDIX 2

### Local Bus Board for Gateshead – Proposed Structure

Representing	Membership
Gateshead Council	Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport – to chair the meeting  Four additional Members with a geographical spread across the Borough, with one being an existing representative on the East Gateshead Bus Alliance Stakeholder Board.
Nexus	To nominate one representative
Bus Operators	NE Bus to nominate appropriate representation
Stakeholders	One representative from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport User Group;</li><li>• Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly;</li><li>• Gateshead Youth Council;</li><li>• Disability Groups/Forum – potential representative from the former Gateshead Access Panel.</li><li>• Chamber of Commerce</li></ul>

## **Local Bus Board for Gateshead – Draft Terms of Reference**

### **1. Board aims**

The overarching aim of the Gateshead Local Bus Board is to allow elected members, including the relevant Cabinet Member, to meet with bus operators' representatives to increase understanding between the parties involved. Local organisations such as voluntary sector groups will also be represented on the board, which provides an opportunity to utilise their knowledge and experience of the bus network in its work.

This will include, but is not limited to, reporting and discussion of forthcoming commercial bus service changes in Gateshead, and consideration of bus network planning work which may be carried out at regional level. It may also include the discussion of improved working arrangements for bus service reliability such as service improvements or highway infrastructure measures.

### **2. Frequency and conduct of meetings**

Attendance at Board meetings will be by invitation and is expected to include:

- The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment plus a further 4 elected Members
- Representatives of bus operators
- A representative of Nexus
- A range of stakeholders

Additional officers may also attend the Board to support Board members.

The Board is not a decision-making body and its meetings will not be held in public. Meetings will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport or the nominated substitute.

The agenda for each meeting will be prepared by officers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport. A meeting note will be prepared and circulated to all attendees.

The ordinary frequency of meetings will be quarterly and these will normally be held the same day as meetings of the East Gateshead Bus Alliance Stakeholder Board.

Additional meetings may be arranged by exception and at the discretion of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport: two weeks' notice will normally be given. Any requests for an additional meeting should be made in writing, stating the reason for the request, to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport.

Task and finish groups may be set up: these will act within the remit as specified by the Board and a written report of their activity will be provided to the next meeting of the Board.

### **3. Procedure for participation in bus network planning**

It is understood that in March 2021 the North East Joint Transport Committee will be invited to approve a project based on network planning to develop the bus network. Updates on the development of this project will be provided to the Board and there will be discussion of how the Board can provide input to this process and highlight any appropriate local matters.

### **4. Procedure for reporting forthcoming commercial bus service changes or other matters which bus operator representatives wish to raise**

The procedure to be observed for notifying the Board of forthcoming changes to commercial bus services will be:

- a. Bus operator representatives will provide a written report to the Board containing as a minimum:
  - o Commentary of any proposed changes including but not limited to revisions to routes, frequencies, hours of operation and the type(s) of vehicles used;
  - o Full proposed timetables;
  - o Date of introduction in accordance with the proposed notification and registration process.
- b. These changes will be discussed by the Board and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport will agree on a written response to be sent to operators setting out the Board's comments and requesting a response to be provided by the next meeting of the Board.
- c. Bus operator representatives will then provide a written response to the Board to be discussed at the next available Board meeting.

The above procedure will be observed regarding any other matters bus operator representatives wish to raise, unless the urgency of the matter means it has to be raised verbally at the meeting

### **5. Procedure for reporting matters by other Board Members**

The procedure to be observed for Board Members to raise matters will be:

- a. The Chair should be made aware of the intention to raise a matter in advance of the Board meeting in question
- b. A written report will be prepared for presentation at the Board meeting unless the urgency of the matter means it has to be raised verbally at the meeting.
- c. Following discussion at the meeting, the Board will identify whether a written response is required from any Board Member or Members.
- d. Should a written response be required, it will be provided to the Board to be discussed at the next available Board meeting.

### **6. Review of Terms of Reference and membership**

The Terms of Reference and membership of the Board will be reviewed on an annual basis and approved by the Board.