

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL****SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -ECONOMY****6 March 2008****EXECUTIVE****18 March 2008****PARK AND RIDE STRATEGY FOR EXETER****1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1** To outline the joint City and County Council Strategy for 'Park and Ride' in Exeter and to seek Members' endorsement of it.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Exeter currently has four Park and Ride sites (Honiton Rd, Sowton, Matford and Digby). Digby provides parking for RD&E hospital staff, patients and visitors as part of their green travel plan. All other sites are for onward travel to the City Centre. The three sites for travel into the City Centre offer parking spaces for 1660 spaces. The Matford Park and Ride site is owned by the City Council. The Sowton and Honiton Rd sites are owned by the County Council, and park and ride bus services are operated under contract to Devon County Council. Stagecoach operates a commercial bus service for Matford but voluntarily agrees to operate a charging scheme which is consistent with the other Park and Ride facilities. Payment for the Park and Ride (P&R) service is made on board P&R buses. This approach (rather than payment on car parks) has been adopted because of the different tax arrangements for car-parking and bus travel – the latter is VAT-exempt while car-parking attracts VAT. Evidence from elsewhere shows that approximately three quarters of P&R services charge for bus travel (rather than car park use).
- 2.2** All sites are now operating reasonably close to capacity. On average, Sowton is often 100% full on weekdays and Honiton Rd is around 70% full (with variation at weekends and in the run up to Christmas). Their geographical concentration to the East and South of the City Centre is viewed as a strategic weakness and there has been a long-held ambition to develop sites to the West and North of the City Centre.
- 2.3** The location of Park and Ride facilities at Sowton, Honiton Rd and, to some extent, Matford does cause some difficulties, with employees of firms adjacent using these sites for free parking for work (whether travelling alone or as part of a car sharing arrangement). Others, meanwhile, also use the sites as a meeting place and as a place to leave a car for longer periods. In this context, and particularly as a response to the capacity issues at Sowton, the County Council has recently increased enforcement activity to counter unintended use at Sowton and Honiton Road, using P&R security staff to politely remind people clearly not intending to board buses, to avoid parking at the facility or face further enforcement action.
- 2.4** The security/information service operated at Honiton Road and at Sowton has recently been extended to Matford. Security staff are based in the new kiosk at Matford Park and Ride and provide security and information services for car park users and the Matford Livestock Centre.

### **3 FUTURE STRATEGY FOR PARK & RIDE SITES IN EXETER**

**3.1.** The draft strategy for Park and Ride sites in Exeter is to:

- Double the number of P&R parking spaces provided (in parallel with a medium-term policy of increasing the real cost of long-stay city-centre parking).
- Identify and implement a new P&R site on the west of the City, easily accessible from the A30 ( ideally to provide a minimum of 1000 spaces), and provide a bus priority route into the City Centre.
- Review scope to significantly increase capacity elsewhere in the south west sector.
- Continue to review options for a new P&R site to the North of the City (on A377/A396) with a minimum of 500 spaces
- Investigate the potential for a new site in the vicinity of M5 Junction 30 with increased capacity, to replace or supplement the Sowton facility.
- Investigate the potential for and implications of additional capacity on the A30 (east) corridor.
- Maintain the Digby site for Hospital Green Travel Plan use.
- Research and devise alternative methods of payment that deter misuse of Park and Ride facilities (i.e. parking, but not riding) and review the application of a Smartcard system/other technology for use at Car Parks and on P&R bus services.
- Provide high quality toilets and baby changing facilities, CCTV coverage, improved lighting and site-operative accommodation at all ‘city-centre bound’ P&R sites and ensure that each location is served by security/information operatives.
- Offer a restricted number of parking spaces at one P&R site to accommodate taller vehicles (e.g. camper vans).
- Agree appropriate funding and user charging levels (between the City and County Councils and bus operators) which allow for maintenance and growth of the Park and Ride Service (also taking into account car park charging policy in the City Centre)
- Consider the potential for provision of sites for park and cycle

### **4 FUTURE STRATEGY FOR PARK & RIDE SERVICES, PATRONAGE AND PROMOTION**

**4.1** The proposed strategy for Park and Ride services in Exeter is to:

- Optimise the contribution of Park and Ride towards providing alternative travel options to reduce congestion in the city
- Increase service frequency and improve journey times by at least 15% over this period (underpinned by quality contracts and partnerships with operators) in support of patronage targets
- Ensure vehicles are fully accessible and no more than 5 years old at any time
- Review, maintain and update signage for all sites; install advance ‘Variable Message Signs’ to all sites, and use a range of media to promote Park and Ride facilities in Exeter (including ‘Real Time Information’ services)

## **5 PROGRESS AND ISSUES IN RELATION TO STRATEGIC THEMES**

- 5.1** The County Council is investigating the provision of a new park and ride facility to the west of the city to be included in a major schemes bid for funding under the Regional Funding Allocation. The new facility could be situated close to the A377 Alphington Spur and A30 junction. Given its position in a sensitive location, a major consideration will be measures to reduce the environmental impact.
- 5.2** Suitable sites for a further P&R facility to the north of the City are extremely limited. County Council colleagues are exploring sites to the west of the junction of the A377 and A396 at Cowley Bridge. These sites are liable to flooding and the agreement of the Environment Agency (EA) will be necessary before proposals can develop further.
- 5.3** Park and Ride sites should be on the fringes of urban development to minimise impact on traffic flows within the urban area and to reduce the opportunity for misuse and abstraction from other public transport services. In this context, County and City Council officers are looking at capacity and locations for Park and Ride provision to the east of the city and, in particular, options to the east of the M5.
- 5.4** In addition to a new security and information kiosk (and resurfacing) at Matford Park and Ride, new toilets and a baby change facility were completed in October 2007, close to the main bus stop. These facilities incorporate a rainwater harvesting system that uses rain collected from the roof to flush the toilets. A similarly high-specification facility is expected to be completed later this month at Honiton Road P&R, funded jointly by the City and County Councils.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1** That Members of Economy Scrutiny and Executive endorse the joint City and County Council 'Park and Ride Strategy for Exeter' and resolve to receive regular updates on progress in relation to it.

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**ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling the report:**

National Performance Indicator Results - December 2007