

BSDP,
Nexus,
Nexus House,
33 St James Boulevard,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE1 4AX

Date: 22nd November 2013
Our Ref: GM/IM
Your Ref:

Dear Sir / Madam,

Bus Strategy Delivery Project – South Tyneside Council Consultation Response

South Tyneside Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposal for a Quality Contract's Scheme in Tyne and Wear which has been developed by Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive (Nexus), following the decision to pursue the first stages of consultation at the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority meeting in July 2013.

In considering our response it is helpful to set out our vision for a prosperous, healthy and sustainable South Tyneside, and the important role that public transport and bus services in particular play in this. The Council is committed to an extensive programme of investment in regeneration to maximise the opportunities we have to drive long term prosperity across the borough. We have a 20 year growth strategy and a target of creating 25,000 new jobs, attracting £3 billion of investment to the borough and building up to 12,000 new homes. We are working shoulder to shoulder with Sunderland on an ambitious City Deal, and that in itself will see significant investment in the advanced manufacturing sector and associated transport infrastructure along the A19 corridor.

South Tyneside is changing. Our plans are seeing tangible outcomes. In recent weeks we have opened a new world class leisure facility on the foreshore, Haven Point; our long term vision for South Shields Town Centre (South Shields 365) is building momentum, as is our investment in key communities such as Hebburn, Jarrow and the villages of the Boldon's, Cleadon, and Whitburn. The hugely important role public transport plays in connecting these communities cannot be underestimated.

Any proposals to change the way bus services are delivered must compliment these ambitious plans for economic growth and regeneration. It is important that overall local bus services remain accessible and affordable, and lead to further investment in the quality of the bus network and the actual buses themselves. This means that existing local bus services must be protected, and where possible enhanced. Access to vital local services, such as our Town and Village centres, and South Tyneside hospital must also be protected.

There are real opportunities in South Tyneside for an integrated public transport infrastructure that builds on strengths such as the North East Smart Ticketing Initiative and the ongoing investment in the Tyne and Wear Metro system and opens up more

possibilities for innovation around transferrable ticketing connecting South Tyneside to the rest of Tyne and Wear. This point is particularly important to effectively bring residents and visitors to the South Shields Foreshore and Haven Point.

The quality, frequency and network of local bus services are particularly important to our elderly population and not only provide access to essential local services they also reduce social isolation. Bus services are therefore vital for the health and wellbeing of our elderly residents and any proposals to introduce a Quality Contract Scheme must take account of their needs.

It is also important to note that we currently have a very positive experience of working collaboratively with the principal bus operators in the borough through our two Better Bus Partnerships. These have demonstrated the value working with the operators in an open, mature and pragmatic manner. Therefore, any local bus board need to have the authority to make decisions and really influence local services. They must also operate in an inclusive manner that values and promotes ongoing passenger and resident engagement.

I trust these comments are helpful, however should you require any further clarification or additional information, then please contact George Mansbridge, Head of Development Services on 0191 4246599, or george.mansbridge@southtyneside.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Iain Malcolm
Leader of the Council