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<u>Item</u>
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Shrewsbury Park & Ride Report

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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Shrewsbury's Park & Ride service started operation in 1994. It provides a frequent bus link between three Park & Ride sites (Meole Brace, Oxon and Harlescott) to Shrewsbury town centre.
- 1.2 This report outlines the vision and ambition to develop the existing Shrewsbury Park & Ride service into a next generation transport system that becomes the first choice of travel in and around Shrewsbury.
- 1.3 This vision for Park & Ride will support and complement other key Council strategies and initiatives such as Economic Growth Strategy, Movement Strategy, the Big Town Plan and the challenge of climate change across the organisation.
- 1.4 This Report formally seeks approval to begin the remodeling, preparation and assessment works associated with the ambition of creating a Shrewsbury Connect transport strategy in line with the Council's vision for a "Next Generation Park & Ride Transport System". This will formally launch the Park & Ride Transformation program and the necessary works required to bring to cabinet a detailed report at an appropriate time.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 This report formally seeks approval to undertake a detailed analysis of the proposals outlined here to transform Shrewsbury Park & Ride into a 'Next Generation Transport System' and to return to cabinet with a Strategic Report outlining the key elements that will be required to realise the vision outlined in this report.
- 2.2 This will include:
 - 2.2.1 **Finance** – To review the capital and revenue commitments that will be required to introduce a next generational "Park & Ride" service for Shrewsbury.

- 2.2.2 **Interchange Hubs** – To review the suitability of the existing Park & Ride sites and identify any alternative locations that would provide passengers with interchange facilities that reflect a “Next Generational Park & Ride Service”. Whilst at the same time understanding the market value of any of the existing sites should alternative locations be identified. Initial consideration will be given to the current Oxon site that is not currently seen as being in a suitably strategic location.
- 2.2.3 **Service Frequency** – To identify an optimum journey frequency, operating hours and days of operation, with the ambition of attracting additional passengers to the service over and above what has previously been achieved.
- 2.2.4 **Fare & Ticket Structure** – To adopt a fares structure that will enable funding of the Park & Ride improvements and lay the foundations for a commercially viable service
- 2.2.5 **Alternatively Fueled Vehicle Options** – To identify the options available, taking note of the evidence from a number of successful electric vehicle trials over the past 12 months and exploring the opportunities for funding through the DfT
- 2.2.6 **2.2.26 Bus Priority Measures** – Commission a study to understand where bus priority measures could be introduced to improve journey reliability and passenger experience.
- 2.2.7 **Stakeholder Discussions & Identify Formal Public Consultation Process** - To enter formal discussions with partners and stakeholders, including but not limited to, SaTH, Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Bus Users Shropshire, Shrewsbury Bid, Shrewsbury Town Council and the Shropshire & Telford & Wrekin Sustainability & Transformation Partnership.
- 2.2.8 **Branding** – To create a brand strategy that is synonymous with our vision, an example of which is highlighted in **Appendix D**
- 2.2.9 **Covid-19 Pandemic** – Understand how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the transport industry and reflect within the strategy any learning that can be taken from how passenger and stakeholder requirements may have changed as a result.
- 2.2.10 **Wider Public Transport Integration** – Explore the opportunities within the Bus Act to integrate the wider public transport network into the park and ride service. With the ambition of creating a “Shrewsbury Connect” Transport Eco System that provides for efficiencies through the coordination of vehicle and other assets.

- 2.3 Ultimately the timescales for delivery of these proposals will be dependent upon a number of other strategies such as the Big Town plan, Movement and Parking strategies, redevelopment of the Riverside and the construction and completion of the North West Relief Road to ensure that the maximum complementary value is achieved.
- 2.4 Subject to the outcome of a formal consultation it is planned that the phased introduction of the Shrewsbury Connect transport model would start in 2021 along with a modernisation of the existing sites and the introduction of EV buses into the operation. Further reports to cabinet will be required as the detailed assessments are completed.

REPORT

3.0 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 3.1 A Risk and opportunities appraisal as well as an ESIIA will be included in the report that will be brought back to cabinet following this study, complying with our equalities duties.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 To be presented to cabinet in the form of a full strategy document, following the relevant input from the Councils Capital and Revenue finance teams. Future reports to cabinet will detail all the associated costs once the modelling is fully completed.

5.0 Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 The Shrewsbury Connect proposals include a recommendation to identify alternatively fuelled vehicles that would be suitable for the service to realise the ambition of reducing the carbon footprint of public transport and to report back to cabinet on any proposals as part of a wider strategy.
- 5.2 Reference will also be made to the successful trials that have been undertaken on the current Park & Ride service, considering comments made by passengers, residents, businesses and the Shropshire Bus Users Group.

6.0 Background

- 6.1 An initial assessment of Shrewsbury Park & Ride was undertaken in 2019 considering best practice nationally to understand how we could potentially modernise the service and increase passenger numbers, to better support the

economy of the county town, as well as creating the platform for a sustainable transport system.

- 6.2 Shrewsbury has a Park & Ride service operating on three sites, north, west and south of the town centre.
- 6.3 The Park and Ride service is currently organised and funded by Shropshire Council, and operated by Arriva on a 20-minute frequency.
- 6.4 Annual passenger numbers on Park and Ride have halved in just ten years, dropping from 1.2m to 0.6m. Research has demonstrated that the reason for decline is a cumulation of the following factors:
 - Reduction in frequency (every 12 minutes in 2011 to every 20 minutes as it is now)
 - Journey time on bus increased (no longer a frequent, quick service with increased traffic and road closures)
 - Lack of promotion and public awareness
 - Reduction in investment and subsidy
 - Public perception (tired and outdated)
 - Customer experience and site amenities
 - Changing social habits
- 6.5 Shrewsbury Town centre is on the cusp of some major changes that may need to see a greater reliance on a remodelled and integrated Park and Ride service that is intrinsic to movement within the town.
- 6.6 Evidence from successful best practice services has highlighted that the formula to a successful Park & Ride service should have a number of key elements, including an attractive price (based on other options available), convenience, quality and a travel time that is at least as equitable to a similar journey by car, to encourage car drivers to switch from town centre car travel..
- 6.7 It is not a coincidence that the most heavily used Park & Ride services are also in cities/towns where town centre parking is more expensive and/or constrained.
- 6.8 Research undertaken and demand assessments for Shrewsbury showed the need to target both commuter and shopping/leisure use of Park & Ride, to give a large enough market for the service to be viable. Commuters give a consistent base demand through the year, but a clear potential to attract shoppers and visitors to Park & Ride is also critical.
- 6.9 Officers have developed a vision to address all the key drivers of demand – cost, time, quality and convenience, with the aim of attracting commuters, shoppers and visitors to the town.
- 6.10 As part of the initial review we held several Stakeholder meetings that have helped to inform and shape our vision and in particular the meetings we held at

the Darwin Shopping Centre with Shrewsbury BID and other partners were most useful.

6.11 We also acknowledge the support and advice the current Park & Ride operator Arriva has provided for this initial study, and in particular for their help in undertaking the various service trials, including the operation of EV (Electric) buses and the 10-minute bus frequency trial last Autumn.

6.12 Finally, the current Covid-19 pandemic is far from resolved and it is recognised that this emergency may continue for some time. As the Covid-19 emergency begins to subside in the time ahead, the world may look a very different place. It is important however to continue to plan for the development of the county town and its transport infrastructure, to maximise the post Covid-19 resurgence of economic and social activity. The plans in this report stand ready to adapt, bend and flex as required, as the recovery evolves and gathers pace.

7.0 Best Practice Study

7.1 In Autumn 2019 Shropshire Council made a number of visits to other English Park & Ride sites and held meetings with the Council officers responsible (**Appendix A**). We'd like to place on record our thanks for their help, advice and support in helping Shropshire Council in its development of shaping a re-imagined Shrewsbury Park & Ride service.

7.2 All the visits were very useful and much appreciated, and in particular we'd like to highlight the Nottingham City Council P&R with its Electric buses and dedicated links to Queens Medical Centre and for the help still being provided to us by the City of York Council re site development. The P&R visits included:

- Oxford
- Chester
- York
- Bath
- Coventry
- Nottingham
- Cambridge

7.3 The key elements highlighted from these visits included:

- Their P&R Sites were welcoming and easily accessible and had been optimised for both location and passenger facilities
- The vast majority of the P&R bus services were integrated with Local Bus Services (public buses)
- 'Real Time Information' was mostly provided to enhance the customer experience
- 10-minute bus frequency (not 20-minute) tended to be the norm
- Most P&R's had integrated strategies with town centre parking
- Most buses were modern and Eco friendly
- Smarter fare payments were available

- Fares were based on service costs and parking alternatives in the Town/City Centres and ranged from £3.00 to £4.20 return
- Key strategic stops were incorporated into the routes, with the health sector being the most prominent.
- Passenger number trends were mainly rising, not falling
- Generally, there was no taxpayer subsidy for P&R services

7.4 Most of these themes are at variance with many aspects of the current Shrewsbury P&R arrangements and therefore offer us great potential for modernisation

The Vision

8.0 Shrewsbury Connect – Appendix B

- 8.1 Shrewsbury Connect is a reimagining of the tried and tested Park and Ride formula. The current service provides passengers with a semi-express link from three strategically placed sites across the outskirts of Shrewsbury to the town centre, ultimately giving passengers one choice in destination, and whilst there is plenty for Shrewsbury Town Centre to offer, a change in customer demand requires more choice and potentially access to more destinations across the entire town, outside of the river loop.
- 8.2 A new network is vital for its revival and encouraging the public to access this service rather than park in the town centre. In the concept, Shrewsbury Connect will now expand upon the existing Park and Ride model by providing cross route travel, Passengers boarding at one site can now access every stop along the whole network and continue to access the service as a ‘hop-on-hop-off’, Monday to Saturday, 6.30am to 7.30pm.
- 8.3 To improve upon this, additional strategic stops have been added along all three routes, and this can be adapted as Shrewsbury and the Town Centre develops and people’s travel habits change as a result. These currently include, Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Shrewsbury Business Park, Flax Mill and Theatre Severn to name a few. This new service can be marketed at tourism, visitors, residents and commuters alike.
- 8.4 Under these proposals, passengers will be able to access the service, as before, from one of the three sites and will be presented with a fare choice:
- ‘Line Ticket’ which enables the passenger access to any stop along that particular line only, catering to customers that wish to continue to access the park and ride service as it was before.
 - ‘Connect Ticket’ which expands upon the above but allowing full access to any stop, all day, on any of the 3 routes.

- 8.5 To make connections easily, it is proposed that all vehicles in the Shrewsbury Connect fleet be colour coded in their own specific route colour, Blue for West Shrewsbury, Orange for North and Green for South. This allows passengers to identify quickly which route they want to interconnect with for their onwards travel.
- 8.6 Publicity and branding will need to feature heavily in this relaunch, a clear, simple and impactful campaign so that passengers do not feel confused and overwhelmed by the changes. Shelters and stops will be branded with clear logos and signage so that they are clear which routes serve which stops.
- 8.7 Electric vehicles will feature prominently on this service, promoting a greener and eco-friendly travel option

9.0 Interchange Hubs – Appendix C

- 9.1 Currently the Park & Ride service operates from the three Park & Ride sites (Harlescott, Meole Brace and Oxon) taking passengers directly into town without stopping. The vision for the future is to develop these sites into 'interchange hubs'.
- 9.2 The plan for a new next generational Park & Ride service is for its sites to become true interchanges (hubs) where users can access key strategic locations by not only interchanging at the sites themselves, but by also interchanging at the Park & Ride stops within the town centre, to gain access to locations served by the other Park & Ride services in town.
- 9.3 In terms of improvements to the sites, our research shows that customer experience and amenities at the sites play a key part in the public repeatedly using the Park and Ride service and increasing passenger numbers. Key elements include:
- Reception buildings for seating, comfort and shelter
 - Refreshments
 - Toilets
 - Good site security
 - Automated ticket machines
 - Through ticketing to all Park & Ride services
 - Staff presence
 - Excellent car park lighting
 - CCTV
 - Contactless payments
 - EV charging points for electric cars
- 9.4 These and other improvements will all help make sites more attractive and provide a much better travelling experience for passengers, thus significantly increasing ridership, as well as helping to better promote the county town.

- 9.5 By having the ability to interchange to another Park & Ride service within the town this would provide essential links to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital for both staff and visitors, whether that be for passengers who travel in from the Park & Ride locations, or for those passengers that access Shrewsbury by rail or rural bus services.
- 9.6 There is potential that the re-location of Oxon Park & Ride site would provide for better links to Shrewsbury Hospital, this will require a multi service approach across the Council and with its partners, with collaborative working to ensure that outcomes for all the stakeholders meet the highest expectations and are neatly weaved together in one delivery plan.

10.0 Additional Information - Conclusion

- 10.1 A transformation of the existing Park & Ride service is an intrinsic element to movement within the town, supporting the intended transformation of the town centre.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Steve Davenport
Local Member All
Appendices Appendix A –Research of other English Park & Ride services Appendix B – Shrewsbury Connect – A visual representation Appendix C – An Interchange Hub Appendix D – A Branding Example