

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Development and Regeneration (Introduced by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration)	Chorley Partnership Board	20/03/07
	Executive Cabinet	29/03/07

TRANSPORT AND SERVICES ACCESSIBILITY PLAN OF CHORLEY BOROUGH

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To introduce the Transport and Services Accessibility Plan, recommend that it be approved and out of it an action plan be produced to guide implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- The Plan relates directly to the Chorley Community Strategy Priority of 'Improving access to and take-up of public services' and the Council's Strategic Objective to 'Improve access to public services'. A commitment to produce a Plan is itself an Action in the Community Strategy and a Key Project in the Council's Corporate Strategy.

RISK ISSUES

- The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	X	Information	X
Reputation		Regulatory/Legal	
Financial	X	Operational	X
People		Other	

- The Plan is primarily about the operation of transport and key services provision. The overall aim is to improve the match between these; if this is not properly achieved there is a risk that operational difficulties could arise. The Plan is clearly of strategic importance and could lead to financial commitments through subsequent action planning. Much of the Plan is about improving information.

BACKGROUND

- The Government is committed to improving accessibility to key services as part of its social inclusion agenda. The County Council in the Lancashire Local Transport Plan 2006-2010 has picked up this opportunity and the authority chose Chorley as a pathfinder location involving the Chorley Partnership and the Borough Council. It therefore represents a good opportunity to pursue enhanced two-tier working. In actual fact

because of the involvement of parish councils/parish plans it amounts to three-tier working.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

6. The Plan concentrates on non-car modes of transport and what key services can be accessed by these means. The percentage of the Borough's population that is within 1 kilometre of 5 basic services (bus stops, GPs surgeries, food shops, post offices and primary schools) is less than 55%. This is one of the lowest figures in the County. It is mainly due to the rural nature of much of Chorley but it underlines the spatial issues involved. Car ownership in the Borough is high but there are many single car households. So together with households without a car there are many people, who on a daily basis, are reliant for their travel on public transport, cycling and walking.
7. The key services that the Plan considers are as follows:
 - The essential services of education, employment, healthcare and shopping for food as well as post offices and pharmacies
 - Social and leisure activities
 - Town centre services

Particular emphasis is given to the essential services and the Plan draws upon many existing initiatives but aims to identify new ways of taking these forward, often through partnership working.

8. The physical difficulties in travelling to these key services is a barrier for people without access to a car, particularly if the alternative modes of transport are poor in terms of service frequency and facilities, information availability and high costs. People who lack confidence in using public transport, have mobility disabilities, learning difficulties or carer responsibilities can experience particular problems. The Plan aims to take account of these and other barriers.
9. One side of the answer to these problems is to improve transport services and facilities so as to make it easier for people to get about. There are however limitations with this approach. The County Council is the transport authority but its ability to influence bus and train operators is limited and funding for enhanced provision is in short supply. Similarly resources for physical infrastructure works can only be justified on a strict priority basis considered Countywide. The Borough Council's capacity to fund minor transport schemes is similarly limited although both authorities are able to seek monies from nearby new developments. However such financial contributions related to planning permissions can only be secured when the new development would create extra transport demands.
10. The other side of the answer to improving accessibility is to take services to the people that most need them and are least independently mobile. Computer analysis has been done to reveal locations in the Borough where residents have poor accessibility to essential services taking account of public transport routes in particular and how they relate to where services are provided. Consideration has also been given to residents surveys and the perceptions people have of transport and service accessibility. These perceptions can of course be a false understanding of the actual situation but poor perceptions are themselves barriers that need to be overcome through better access to information etc.
11. Representatives of service providers have been involved in the Plan's preparation to explain how they currently operate and suggest how this might be improved. One of the difficulties they have is not knowing where all the people in need live. This can be tackled by more joint working and detailed analysis of spatial data.

12. There have also been inputs from parish councils and account taken of parish plans in terms of both local transport and service availability. This has been backed-up further by raising the issue at a wide range of forum and other meetings from which useful comments and suggestions have been made.

13. The Plan recommends a series of improvements which can be implemented through a targeted action plan covering the following:

Transport

- Pedestrian priority measures such as footway improvements and road crossings
- Cycling network completion and links off, as well as further priority improvements on roads
- Bus service enhancements taking account of current deficiencies and likely future demand, better service coordination and access to timetable information
- Community transport improvements through more flexible joined up operation
- Railway station provision and parking improvements
- Road link completion, motorway junction improvements and better parking provision

Services

- Better use and coordination of information of where people in need live
- More targeted localised provision of essential services
- More flexible use of existing community premises for all types of services
- Greater use of voluntary activities and self help initiatives

14. The Plan also provides a commentary on the joint working achieved during its preparation and the learning points arising from this pathfinder approach – generally these are positive.

CONCLUSION

15. Essentially the Plan brings together a comprehensive analysis of accessibility and an understanding of key service provision in the Borough. Out of this arises the ability to spatially target people in need with greater accuracy and an opportunity for service providers to work together to better reach local communities. The Plan sets out a series of recommendations that can best be taken forward through an action plan approach.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

16. There are no apparent Human Resource implications associated with this report.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

17. There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report.

RECOMMENDATION

18. That the Plan is approved, subject to minor textual amendments being delegated to the Director of Development and Regeneration, and its recommendations are taken forward in an action plan to guide implementation.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)
(If the recommendations are accepted)**

19. The Plan alone is insufficient to ensure its recommendations are carried out.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

20. Having committed to preparing a Plan no other options have been considered.

JANE E MEEK
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

There are no background papers to this report.

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