

**Part I - Item No. 2**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Nelson South, Pendle  
Central, Burnley Rural,  
Pendle East, Pendle West,  
Burnley Central East,  
Burnley North East,  
Padiham and Burnley West,  
Burnley South West,  
Burnley Central West

**Subsidised Bus Service: Burnley BEST**

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**Executive Summary**

To consider the future of subsidised Burnley Best Dial-A-Ride taxi service. The service takes passengers to employment and training opportunities within the Burnley and Pendle area where other public transport services are not available or the passenger is not able to access them.

Burnley Best Dial-A-Ride taxi service was last considered on 16 September 2011 when the Cabinet Member decided to continue the service for a further six months to 24 March 2012. The current contract for Burnley BEST allows the County Council to extend the service at six monthly intervals until March 2013.

The contract continues to fail to meet the County Council's guidelines in that the service does not return revenue to cost ratio of at least 40%, however the service provides a vital service that allows a small number of people to access employment and training opportunities.

This is a Key Decision and is included in the Forward Plan.

**Recommendation**

To approve the extension of the contract for a further six months to allow the Integrated Transport Unit to continue to manage this service whilst it is reviewed.

**Background and Advice**

Burnley Best Dial-A-Ride Taxi service has operated since March 2010. The service was retendered and awarded to Crusader Cars who began operation on 21 March 2011. The service was awarded for a period of six months with an option to extend for further periods of six months to a maximum of two years. The contract was extended to 24 March 2012 in September 2011.

The contractor provides the service using its own vehicles and also runs the booking service. Members of the public are able to use Burnley BEST, providing that they are members' of the scheme and cannot make their journey on the network of public transport services available in East Lancashire. County Council officers provide and administer a membership list.

A flat fare of £2.00 is charged for each single journey and, in addition, a saver strip containing ten journeys may be purchased at a cost of £18.00. Concessionary passes are not valid on this service. The Dial-a-Ride taxi service operates on a Monday to Saturday basis from 05.30 until 23.00 and passengers must book their journey with the contractor at least 24 hours in advance. The service takes passengers to employment and training opportunities within the Burnley and Pendle area where other public transport services are not available or the passenger is not able to access them. Burnley BEST currently has 49 members; however, 22 members are currently using the service on a regular basis.

Individuals who apply to join the Burnley Best scheme have their journey assessed by County Council Officers. If the journey can reasonably be made on other public transport services their request for membership is refused. However, assistance is given to the individual, who is provided with a personal travel plan and timetables to suit their transport needs.

### **Current Costs**

Based on current usage levels it is estimated that the service will cost £21,393 in 2011/12. The contract cost is currently £1.40 per in service mile.

	Annual Figures
Miles (in operation)	21,423
Passenger Journeys	4930
Gross Cost	£29,960
Revenue from fares	£8,567
Net Cost of service	£21,393
Subsidy per passenger	£4.34
Revenue to cost	29%

### **Funding the Service**

Burnley BEST is currently funded through the Environment Directorate's Public Transport budget. From April 2011, the Integrated Transport Unit (LCCG) has managed the service on behalf of the Environment Directorate.

In the past, the County Council has approached both Burnley Borough Council and Pendle Borough Council, together with 21 companies and organisations whose employees use the service, asking them to consider contributing towards the funding of the scheme or identify possible areas of funding. However, these approaches have proved unsuccessful.

### **Future of the Service**

As part of the Accessible Transport Review, the management of the County Council's portfolio of community and demand responsive transport services, including Burnley BEST, was transferred to LCCG's Integrated Transport Unit.

The objective of the review is to determine if the network of services, including Burnley BEST could be interworked or amalgamated to provide efficiencies and it may be possible that the adoption of new computer software might help achieve this.

The current contract for Burnley BEST allows the County Council to extend the service at six monthly intervals until March 2013. It is hoped that in reviewing the service, new and more efficient methods of operating the service will be developed within the network of community transport and dial-a-ride services. The Integrated Transport Unit is intending to report to the Environment Directorate's Management Team on their proposals in Autumn 2012.

### **Proposal**

It is considered that the net cost of the Burnley BEST dial-a-Ride taxi service for 2011/2012 would be in the region of £21,400 per annum and there are currently 49 members of the scheme. Although the service does not serve many people it should be noted that these people have no alternative to get to work either because they are physically unable to use the bus service or do not have a suitable public transport service available to them. All those passengers that are able to use alternative services have been helped and encouraged to use those services.

The current contract with Crusader Cars finishes on 24 March 2012, and a decision is required as to whether to extend the contract. It is proposed that the contract be extended for a further six months. Within the current contract, the County Council has an option to extend for two further periods of six months. During this time the Integrated Transport Unit would review the service and fare charges to improve the efficiency of the service.

### **Consultations**

N/A.

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

By not extending the service, passengers using the service may not be able to continue to access employment and training.

## **Financial**

Continuing the service for a further six months is expected to cost £10,700 from the Bus Services Budget.

## **Any representations made to the Cabinet Member prior to the issue being considered in accordance with the Public Notice of Forward Plans**

Name: Organisation: Comments:

Nil.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Reports to Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport:		Stuart Benson/Office of the Chief Executive/01772 534022
Burnley BEST Dial-a-Ride	4 March 2011	

Subsidised Bus Services: Burnley BEST Proposed Continuation of the Contract	16 September 2011
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.