Lancashire County Council

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Thursday, 30th August, 2012 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room 'B' - County Hall, Preston

Agenda

Part 1 (Open to Press and Public)

No.	Item	
1.	**Apologies for Absence**	
2.	**Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests**	
	Members are asked to consider any Pecuniary Interests they may have to disclose to the meeting in relation to matters under consideration on the Agenda.	
3.	**Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 July 2012**	(Pages 1 - 6)
	To be confirmed and signed by the Chair.	
4.	**Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement - Amendment to Membership**	(Pages 7 - 8)
5.	**Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring and Improvement - Corporate Scorecard Report**	(Pages 9 - 18)
6.	**Customer Experience Project - Online Bus Information**	(Pages 19 - 42)
7.	**Urgent Business**	
	An item of Urgent Business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the minutes, the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Chief Executive should be given advance warning of any Members' intention to raise a matter under this heading.	
8.	**Date of Next Meeting**	
	The next meeting of the Cabinet Committee will be held on 12 October 2012 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room B, County Hall, Preston	

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I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston

Lancashire County Council

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd July, 2012 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room 'D' - County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Geoff Driver (Chair)

County Councillors

A Atkinson	J Mein
Mrs S Charles	M Perks

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Tim Ashton.

2. **Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests**

None declared.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 May 2012**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. **Early Support and Intervention Strategy**

Bob Stott, Director of Universal and Prevention Services, and Rod Norton, Strategic Lead for Early Intervention/Support, (both Directorate for Children and Young People) presented a report setting out progress around the Early Support and Intervention (ESI) Strategy within Lancashire.

A report "Proposals for the use of £5 Million One-off Funding to Improve Safeguarding and Outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People" was agreed by the Leader of the County Council in January 2010.

The ESI Strategy was agreed by the Lancashire Children's and Young People's Trust in June 2010. ESI relates to work which will increase resilience within families and allow work at an early stage to reduce the number of families for whom a referral to statutory services is deemed necessary.

Of this, £1.73m was allocated to support the co-ordination of ESI across the 12 Locality Children's District Trusts (LCTP's). A Strategic Lead for ESI was appointed in June 2010 along with the team structure, which came later, as described in the Executive Summary of the report presented with all team

members on a fixed term two year contract from April 2011. A further £600,000 was allocated to allow ESI pump priming within the LCTP's. Therefore, in total, Lancashire County Council has allocated £2.33m to support ESI between 2010 and 2013.

Progress to Date (June 2012)

Rod Norton explained how ESI was being implemented by "Working Together in Lancashire" and explained how the approach taken was to work differently in order to:

- Reduce duplication
- Reduce dependence
- Reduce cost
- Reduce and manage risk
- Manage demand and expectation against funding.

Rod also highlighted other different ways of assessing needs including:

- Strengths based (what can, not what can't do)
- Child and family centred/focussed (looking at whole)
- Earlier support (proactive)
- Evidence based (what works)
- Sustainable and whole system change (mainstream not grant funding)

Working together with a number of partners has involved a number of aspects including:

- Sharing locations
- Sharing ownership
- Sharing pathways (tell us once)
- Sharing commissioning and delivery
- Sharing information

Rod also highlighted a number of Early Support Developments, including:

- Creation of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Creation of Multi Agency Early Support Hubs based on Children's Centres and Youth Zones
- Refresh of the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) and CoN (Continuum of Need)
- Refresh of 'Request for Service' pathways
- Redesign of Commissioning structures and processes
- Refresh of Information Sharing Agreements
- Introduction of Management Information Software

Rod summarised his presentation by explaining that a countywide approach had been taken and that the strategy was district based and was available in four districts now, and in the remaining eight districts by September 2012. Rod also advised that the strategy encompassed the "working together with families"

project led by Gail Porter and the potentially nationally funded work (possibly up to £8.7m over three years) that had identified a number of specific families to work with and help.

Committee members welcomed the presentation and result of the work undertaken so far to implement the strategy. Some concerns were raised regarding financial accountability and the need to ensure that the funding put into the Children's Trusts is accounted for and some other concerns regarding out of date information appearing on the Children's Trusts websites. Officers advised they would take up these points with the relevant colleagues.

Resolved:

The Committee:

(i) Welcomed the report, noted it and provided comments.
(ii) Requested that a further report detailing how the £8.7million funding for the "working together with families" project was planning to be used be submitted in approximately 6 months time (January 2013) to the Committee.

5.	**European Social Fund: Project for Young People who are, or are at Risk of Being, Not in Education, Employment or Training 2011/13 - Performance Update**

Mike Heaton, 16-19 Manager, Directorate for Children and Young People, presented the report and explained that the report provided an update on performance of the European Social Fund Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) Project 2011/13 covering the validated data period of 1 September 2011 to 20 March 2012.

Mike explained that the Service aim is to reduce the number of young people, aged 14-18 (or up to 25 for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities) in the Lancashire sub-region, who are at risk of becoming, or are, NEET. This is in order to improve their education, employability and personal skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work or further learning or training.

In November 2010, Lancashire County Council facilitated a 'Partnership' responding to an invitation to tender by the Skills Funding Agency and were successful. In terms of funding Mike explained that the total contract value is £3,558,067.00 targeting a minimum of 1,621 young people over three years. The number of young people to be targeted is prescribed by the Skills Funding Agency. To help put this into context the number of young people NEET, in Lancashire, in September 2011 (the start of this ESF Programme) was 2,295 and in March 2012 (the reporting date of this report) it was 2,612. The 'Partnership' agreed to the funding methodology allocating resources broken down to district level using available NEET cohort data (as at December 2010).

Mike highlighted progress to date as follows:

Outcome description	Total number of young people to be supported by Dec 2013	Number of outcomes achieved by LCC up to end 20 March 2012		Is this ahead or behind planed delivery profile?
		Profile	Actual	
Number of young people to start the programme. (YP to be assessed, action plans and support put in place)	1,621	160	264	Ahead*
Number of young people in a Vulnerable Groups category (Young mum, young offender, Looked after child, Learners with learning difficulty/disability)	434	31	27	Slightly behind*
Number of young people to achieve an accredited qualification of at least 45 guided learning hours	1,058	46	31	Slightly behind*
Progression into further learning, training or employment (All actuals to-date are progression into further learning/training)	808	34	27	Slightly behind*
Project evaluation (N/A at this time, relates to project close)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Impact monitoring report (quarterly)	LCC meet with SFA	LCC meet with SFA	N/A	
Service level agreement/contracts in place	-	All subcontract or contracts in place	As planned	

Mike highlighted areas of good performance and also any barriers to performance.

The Committee welcomed the presentation and report and members of the Committee expressed their thanks for the regular updates on performance levels received. The Committee asked if some case studies could be brought to a future Committee meeting to show some examples.

Resolved:

The Committee:

(i) Noted the report and provided comments as appropriate.
(ii) Requested that a further update report be submitted around September/October 2012.
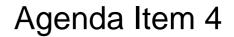
6.   Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business to be considered.

7.   Date of Next Meeting

The Cabinet Committee noted that its next meeting would be held on Thursday 30 August 2012 at 2.00pm in Cabinet Room 'B', County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement
Meeting to be held on 30 August 2012

Electoral Division affected: None

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement – Amendment to Membership

Contact for further information:
Dave Gorman, (01772) 534261, Office of the Chief Executive,
dave.gorman@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

An amendment to the membership of the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the appointment of the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools to the membership of the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement.

Background and Advice

On 7 August 2012, the Leader of the County Council approved the appointment of the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools to the membership of the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement on the basis that the Cabinet Committee receives regular reports, within its terms of reference, from the Directorate for Children and Young People on a range of issues.

Following this decision, the current membership of the Cabinet Committee is as follows:

The Leader of the County Council (Chair)
The Deputy Leader of the County Council
The Cabinet Member for Children and Schools
The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
The Cabinet Member for Young People
The Leader of the Labour Group

In line with the County Council's Constitution, only Cabinet Members may vote.

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Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

There are no significant risks associated with the proposal set out in this report.

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

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Report to the Leader of the County Council – 'Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement – Amendment to Membership'	7 August 2012	Dave Gorman, Office of the Chief Executive, (01772) 534261

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement
Meeting to be held on 30 August 2012

Electoral Division affected:
All

**Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring and Improvement –
Corporate Scorecard Report**
(Appendix 'A ' refers)

Contact for further information:
Michael Walder, (01772) 533637, Corporate Policy and Performance Team,
michael.walder@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The Corporate Performance Monitoring and Improvement - corporate scorecard report - for quarter 1 2012/13 (April 2012 – June 2012) highlights that NO indicators are currently forecast to miss their year-end 2012/13 targets.

Performance monitoring against those indicators with quarterly targets shows 4 indicators have not met their quarter 1 targets but are forecast to hit their year-end targets.

These 4 (currently off target) indicators correspond to 11% of the total number in the scorecard and are:

- Increase the number of contacts to Help Direct;
- Increase the number of issues dealt with by Help Direct as a consequence of contacts;
- Make an additional 10 major investments in high value companies within priority/key growth sectors;
- Repair 90% of carriageway and footway potholes, identified by regular highway inspections, within 30 days.

Recovery Plans have been produced for all 4 indicators and are presented at Appendix 'A'.

In addition, there are currently 2 indicators for which data is not available for the quarter 1 period. These indicators are:

- Increase the number of training opportunities for young people in local businesses supported by the County Council.
- Increase the number of training opportunities for young people within the County Council and One Connect Limited.

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Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

(i)   note and comment on the current performance against the corporate scorecard;

(ii)   Review, comment and advise on the Recovery Plans provided at Appendix 'A'.

Background and Advice

As part of the annual update of the Corporate Strategy the corporate scorecard was also reviewed. The scorecard is now far better aligned with the themes and objectives of the Corporate Strategy with indicators only included against the priority areas identified in refreshing the strategy – subsequently the scorecard now contains far less indicators than previously (35 indicators against 51 in the 2011/12 scorecard).

The full corporate scorecard containing detailed information in relation to all indicators is available at:
http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=5743&pageid=36220&e=e

Quarter 1 underperformance:

The 4 indicators that are off target this quarter but forecast to still meet their year-end target are:

- Increase the number of contacts to Help Direct
  (Recovery Plan at Appendix 'A' – jointly with other Help Direct indicator below)

- Increase the number of issues dealt with by Help Direct as a consequence of contacts
  (Recovery Plan at Appendix 'A' – jointly with other Help Direct indicator above)

- Make an additional 10 major investments in high value companies within priority/key growth sectors
  (Recovery Plan at Appendix 'A')

- Repair 90% of carriageway and footway potholes, identified by regular highway inspections, within 30 days
  (Recovery Plan at Appendix 'A')

In addition there are 2 indicators for which current data is not available for the quarter 1 period. These indicators and the reasons for the data delays are detailed below:

- Increase the number of training opportunities for young people in local businesses supported by the County Council.

- Increase the number of training opportunities for young people within the County Council and One Connect Limited.

The funding and proposed approach to the programme of projects that will deliver against these measures was only agreed in June 2012. Targets and specific definitions for the training opportunities included in these indicators are currently being finalised and will be available for quarter 2 monitoring and reporting.

Consultations

Both members of the Performance Working Group and of Management Team(s) have previously received the information in this report.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

No significant risks have been identified in relation to the proposals contained within this report.

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

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Report to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement – 'Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring Report - Corporate Scorecard'	31 May 2012	Dave Gorman, Office of the Chief Executive, (01772) 534261

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

Help Direct Performance Indicator(s) Recovery Plan

Performance Indicator Description:
In 2012/13 increase the number of contacts to Help Direct (HD) in from 37,765 to 38,000.

Year end target 38,000 contacts	**Current performance**
Quarter 1 target 9,500	Quarter 1 performance 8, 017

Performance Indicator Description:
In 2012/13 increase the number of issues dealt with by Help Direct (HD) as a consequence of contacts from 51,361 to 52,000.

Year end target 52,000 issues dealt with	**Current performance**
Quarter 1 target 13,000	Quarter 1 performance 10, 541

Why are these indicators under-performing?

- We have seen an increase in the complexity of cases coming through, which has meant that the capacity of the teams has been taken up seeing fewer citizens and dealing with lesser volume of issues and, as the "satisfaction" measure shows, these cases and more complex issues are being dealt with very effectively;

- With the reissue of the contract in November, responsibility for the promotion and marketing of the service shifted from the delivery agents to ACS Communications team. Work has been ongoing to develop a toolkit for the service, the introduction of which was delayed from November 2011 until recently (some key items still outstanding) meaning that there has been limited availability of promotional material. All four provider agencies cite this as a reason the number of contacts has dropped;

- We are working to transfer the access element of the service into One Connect Ltd. Work to support this is impacting slightly on the capacity of team members, plus the uncertainty is causing a small number of vacancies;

- As at 31 July, we were running 12% (contacts) and 10% on issues below 2012/3 target however with the measures outlined below, we are confident that we will hit this year's target.

Action to be taken

- The HD leaflet is now in production and 1,000 copies per district will be sent to the relevant provider agencies very soon, which will enable them to step up their outreach promotion of the service again;

- A communications and marketing approach has been agreed with the ACS Communications Account Director and Accounts Executive based on the learning from the pilot campaigns in Accrington in St Anne's earlier this year, which will maximise the promotion and awareness-raising of the service amongst our partners, stakeholders and frontline staff;

- The transfer of the access arrangements for HD is on track for October this year.

Appendix 'A'

> This will bring stability in the teams and will see a more robust link between the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and HD, which will see increased volumes of calls coming through to HD.
>
> - We are making available a pot of money (unused contingency funds) for the HD providers to "bid" for additional capacity to support the service following the transfer of the access arrangements as well as to cope with the increased complexity of caseloads;
>
> - HD is playing a bigger role in supporting those individuals who have lost services following Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) review, or have refused services following the increase in charges. An exercise is currently being undertaken to contact these individuals to ensure that their situations are stable and to proactively offer the HD service to them. This will be repeated on a regular basis.

Major investments (LCDL) Performance Indicator Recovery Plan

Performance Indicator Description: Make an additional 10 major investments in high value companies within priority/key growth sectors.	
<u>Year end target</u>	<u>Current performance</u>
10 major investments in excess of £50,000 from the Rosebud Loan Fund to key business sectors.	1 qualifying loan was made in Quarter 1. Against a planned profile of 2. However, another company had two investments totalling £50,000 over two quarters.

Why is this indicator under-performing?

The Rosebud Fund has been repositioned to focus on larger investments in key sectors with more intensive marketing activity. This new proposition will become better understood by the market-place.

In addition, the wider economic situation in the County has meant that the overall number of strong businesses seeking investment for growth has declined.

Alternative funds such as the North West Fund are also now servicing part of the market in which Rosebud operates.

What actions are required to put it back on track?

Action to be taken

- <u>Marketing Plan</u> – included in the Corporate Communications Marketing Strategy and will continue to deliver the following initiatives and actions:

  Direct Marketing to key companies identified using business databases.

  One to one meetings with targeted companies

  Advertising campaigns in – Lancashire Business View, North West Insider, Times Business Insider North

  Online articles Lancashire Business View and Times Business Insider

  Mail-shots.

  Linking to businesses being turned down by banks (process in development).

  Links to other funding regimes to part finance propositions – North West Fund, Accelerating Business Growth (Regenerate Pennine Lancashire /Regional Growth Fund Programme).

  Links to intermediaries and trade organisations e.g. Institute of Chartered Accountants England and Wales, banks, individual accountants.

- Events

  Access to Finance Service working with LCDL to deliver 4 events commencing in

October 2012, highlighting business finance offer from Rosebud, NW Fund and RPL.

- Considering Changes to the Operation, Control and Branding of the Fund

- Lancashire Business Growth Hub.

  The establishment of the Hub later this year will also provide further opportunities to engage with target SME companies/sectors.

In conclusion, significant deals are in the pipeline and we would anticipate being back on track by the end of the second quarter.

Appendix 'A'

Potholes - Performance Indicator Recovery Plan

Performance Indicator Description:
Percentage of carriageway and footway potholes, identified by regular highway inspections, filled within 30 days

Year end Annual target	2012/13 Q1 performance
90%	80%

Why is this indicator underperforming?

- A computer server which supports the system used to record and monitor pothole information crashed on 23 May 2012 preventing the loading of defect reports, the creation of Works Programmes and the signing off of defect repairs. The system was offline until 29 May. The result of this was a mass loading of Highway Safety Inspection data on 29 May which resulted in a deluge of defects to repair. There were nearly 500 potholes loaded into the system on 29 May, compared with the normal day of less than 100. As a result, this impacted upon performance in May.

- During the first quarter of the year, in a number of districts, pothole repairs have been combined with other works within the same area of highway. The consequence of this approach is that in some cases pothole repairs have been delayed beyond the target period.

- The system of recording pothole repairs has not recorded temporary repairs as effecting a pothole repair completion. The implications of this are being addressed however in the mean time it presents a worse picture of performance than is actually the case.

Action to be taken

Pothole repairs are managed through the operations teams in Lancashire Highway Services. Operations managers are responsible for managing repair performance through their teams. Managers have been instructed to prioritise work to achieve the required response time for all reported potholes.

A performance target of 95% has been set for July 2012 to March 2013. Performance will be monitored and resources deployed so that this will be achieved. This will ensure that performance at the end of Quarter 2 improves to 88% with final year end performance at 92%.

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement
Meeting to be held on 30 August 2012

Electoral Division affected: All

Customer Experience Project – Online Bus Information
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:
Michael Walder, (01772) 533637, Corporate Policy and Performance Team
michael.walder@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The customer experience project was designed to offer Lancashire County Council services the facility to better understand the needs, experiences and aspirations of their service users to enable service improvements.

The individual research projects are undertaken by the County Council's graduate management trainees.

Wave 4 of the programme (December 2011 – August 2012) is currently being completed and thus far 9 projects have completed customer experience research. These 9 projects are listed over the page and includes one relating to:

- Bus services – online information

The completed customer experience report relating to this project is set out at Appendix 'A'.

An overview presentation of the report along with an update on actions that the service has taken in response to the findings will be made at the meeting by the graduate who undertook each of the research projects and a representative from the service.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and comment on the Bus Services customer experience project report.

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Background and Advice

The customer experience project was designed to offer Lancashire County Council services the facility to better understand the needs, experiences and aspirations of their service users to enable service improvements.

The individual research projects are undertaken by the County Council's graduate management trainees. The programme is managed, and individual projects are organised, under the guidance and support of the Corporate Policy and Performance Team.

Thus far more than 35 service areas have undertaken research as part of the programme. Those services that have most recently undertaken customer experience projects (as part of wave 4 of the programme) are:

- Bus services – online information (report set out at Appendix 'A');
- Charges at country parks;
- The experience of service users with a child protection plan;
- Quality assurance in respect of safeguarding and children looked after;
- Alternative and complementary education and residential services: exploration of the current service and identification of future requirements;
- Primary and secondary school meal take up;
- Tracking customers discharged from acute hospital;
- Exit Strategy for Learning Disability Development Fund (LDDF);
- Employment Training/Support for Learning Disability Clients.

Consultations

The service manager and senior officers in the Environment Directorate have received the report set out at Appendix 'A'.

The cross-directorate performance working group was consulted and developed the customer experience project programme.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

No significant risks have been identified in relation to the proposals contained within this report.

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

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Report to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement – 'Customer Experience Project – Young People's Service'	10 January 2012	Dave Gorman, Office of the Chief Executive, (01772) 534261

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

Customer Experience Project

Online bus information

March 2012

Lancashire
County
Council

Caroline Bradley on behalf of the Sustainable Transport Team

April 2012

Contents

1. Executive summary

1.1. Key findings

- Those who accessed online bus information through the Lancashire County Council (LCC) website found it accessible. The majority used the search engine 'Google' and found that the website was displayed on the first page of search results. Following on, they were then able to locate the online bus information website.
- Problems were identified with the presentation and navigating the online bus information website. These included the website being seen as cluttered which caused some confusion and slightly increased the time taken by some to navigate around the website.
- The Traveline journey planner was found useful and praised by many. However, a number of issues were identified including acronyms being used and a mystery shopper noted that when they entered their details into the Traveline website it reverted back to the Traveline homepage.

1.2. Recommendations

1.1.1. Links on the A-Z index

- It is recommended that the links on the A-Z index on the LCC website could be reviewed. At the present online bus timetables are situated under 'd', 'download timetables and bus service changes' which is not the most intuitive heading.

1.1.2. Redesigning the website

- The LCC website needs to be made clearer by removing the visual clutter. Currently, there are too many prompts for classes of information resulting in confusion when navigating the website. This could be improved by reducing the number of links, focusing on key information and rearranging the links into the centre of the web page.

1.1.3. Traveline online journey

- It is recommended that the Sustainable Transport Team reports back the positive comments to Traveline but also highlights the suggestions for improvement and the potential problem identified by one mystery shopper.
- One suggestion is the possibility of the online planner identifying routes where saver tickets can be purchased.
- The potential problem which needs to be explored is why on one occasion when details were entered on the Traveline journey planner it reverted back to the Traveline homepage.

2.Introduction

Customer Experience Projects are undertaken to gain a better understanding of the customer or end user experience of LCC services and how they compare to the frontline staff experience of delivering services. This will facilitate service-level improvements.

This research was commissioned by the Sustainable Transport Team to identify how easy it is for people to access online bus information via the LCC website.

2.1. Background

The customer experience project aims to complement quantitative methods of measuring performance, satisfaction and experience currently used across the organisation, with qualitative information allowing services at all levels to reveal a deeper understanding of people's experience. This is done to provide service managers with the necessary information to improve performance, conduct service redesign and manage customer service more effectively.

A customer experience project was conducted last year for the Sustainable Transport Team to look at how members of the public access bus information. The team is currently looking to reduce the amount of printed information they provide and focus more on online bus information.

The Sustainable Transport Team is also undertaking a review, through One Connect into the future development of a central hub for all bus service information, rather than the many separate access points that currently exist.

3. Research objectives

The objective of this research was to find out if bus service information via the LCC online bus information website is:

- easily accessible;
- easily understandable;
- easily useable; and,
- can be used to make a journey between two places in Lancashire.

4. Methodology

The fieldwork was carried out by mystery shoppers. The mystery shoppers were recruited by LCC's Organisational Development, Customer Focus Team. Thirteen mystery shoppers (although questionnaires were only received back from eleven) were asked to plan a specified journey and record their findings based on one of three scenarios:

Scenario 1 required searching for a specified bus journey using the LCC website.

Scenario 2 required searching for a specified bus journey via the internet without the method being specified.

Scenario 3 required searching for a specified journey via the LCC website and then carrying out the journey.

A different journey was given to each mystery shopper, in total:

- 4 carried out scenario 1
- 3 carried out scenario 2
- 4 carried out scenario 3

The scenarios can be found in appendix 1. The mystery shoppers recorded their findings on a questionnaire and returned them for analysis. The questionnaires can be seen in appendix 2, 3 and 4.

This methodology was chosen because it enabled mystery shoppers to plan an online bus journey and then evaluate it. This therefore allowed us to gain a real life understanding of users' experiences, which would not have been possible through the use of focus groups or interviews.

4.1. Limitations

The nature of mystery shopping, and indeed qualitative research in general, means that only a small number of respondents from the population in Lancashire can participate. This means that this research does not offer results that are statistically representative for all people in Lancashire; they only offer indicative or illustrative results. Results are therefore attributed to participants only and not the wider public.

The advantage, however, of mystery shopping is that respondent's can carry out a specific task or tasks and report back on their actual experience.

4.2. Who conducted this research?

The research was conducted by Caroline Bradley on behalf of the Sustainable Transport Team, Lancashire County Council.

4.3. Fieldwork dates

The fieldwork was conducted between February 2012 and March 2012.

5. Main research findings

5.1. Easily accessible

All the mystery shoppers who were asked to access the LCC website were able to do so. The majority of mystery shoppers used the search engine Google and found the LCC website displayed on the first page of search results. Once they had accessed the LCC website it took the majority of the mystery shoppers two minutes and three clicks to find the link to the online bus information website. However, it took one mystery shopper five minutes and another ten minutes to locate the link as they found the homepage confusing.

One mystery shopper accessed the online bus information website via the A-Z index on the LCC website. They commented that the online bus timetable link was situated under 'd', 'download timetables and bus service information' and they felt this could confuse users as the key letter is 't' not 'd'.

For scenario 2, where mystery shoppers were not directed onto the LCC website, only one mystery shopper accessed the LCC website to locate the information but could not find it so searched another source.

5.2. Easily useable

The mystery shoppers were then asked a number of questions designed to identify how useable they found the website.

5.2.1. Navigating the website

Once on the online bus information website many of the mystery shoppers found it hard to navigate.

Table 1 - Would you consider it to be easy to navigate?

Yes	Partially	No
2	3	3

Base: only respondents to scenario one and three

Many felt frustrated navigating around the website and expressed a number of negative comments including 'a really dreadful experience' and 'visual clutter'. One mystery shopper commented that they found the website more difficult than they expected, as they were taken to the LCC website then they were redirected to an external site and finally back to the LCC website.

5.2.2. Ability to find the information specified in the brief

Not all of the mystery shoppers were able to find the information specified in the brief.

Table 2 - Were you able to find the information specified in the brief?

Yes	Partially	No
7	2	2

Base: all respondents

5.2.3. The presentation of the online bus service information website

The opinion was varied on whether mystery shoppers found the website well presented.

Table 3- Overall did you find the website well presented?

Yes	Partially	No
4	3	1

Base: only respondents to scenario one and three

The mystery shoppers who stated that they found the website well presented did not expand on their answer. However, negative comments were raised by those who felt that the website was partially or not well presented.

'I like what appears to be its relatively simple design. However, it is misleading as the links on the right totally confuse the eye and seem very arbitrarily placed ... I found I became very confused with too many prompts for too many classes of information and it took me (as someone who uses the internet daily) 20 minutes to complete my planning due to this' - *Mystery shopper 2 scenario 3*

'It was ok but not punchy and quite small print (for those with a slight visual impairment)'- *Mystery shopper 2 scenario 1*

The 'website was a bit bland' - *Mystery shopper 1 scenario 3*

5.2.4. The presentation of the Traveline website

The online bus information website links to the Traveline website on which users can plan a journey using the search facility. Most mystery shoppers felt that the Traveline journey planner was very useful but they noted a number of issues with it.

'Not as easy as it should be to work out how to plan the time of arrival; once you find your way it is easy' - *Mystery shopper 3 scenario 1*

'There were a number of acronyms which I didn't understand eg o/s and opp after bus stops. This added time to the journey and could have been avoided if I knew what they meant' - *Mystery shopper 2 scenario 1*

One mystery shopper commented that they were repeatedly taken back to the home page on the Traveline website when they entered their information which resulted in them having to repeat the process.

5.3.   Easily understandable

The mystery shoppers were finally asked to report how easy they found it to understand the information on the LCC online bus information website.

5.3.1. Understanding the information on the online bus information website

Many mystery shoppers reported that they did not find the information on the website clear and easy to understand.

Table 4 - Was the information included on the website clear and easy to understand?

Yes	No	No answer
5	5	1

Base: all respondents

One mystery shopper suggested that the website should be redesigned:

'Remove most of the patronising blurb from the homepage explaining about site. Good clear design and well worded links makes this visual/verbal 'clutter' unnecessary. The reader can then get straight to the point – if they want a timetable, they just not need to go to a link to 'timetables'- *Mystery shopper 2, scenario 3.*

5.3.2. The clarity of the website

The results show that the majority of mystery shoppers felt that the website made it clear how to access further information.

Table 5 - Did the website make it clear how to access further information if you needed it?

Yes	No	No answer
8	2	1

Base: all respondents

5.4. To gather feedback on the overall journey experience from departure to arrival after accessing online information

The majority of the mystery shoppers who undertook scenario 3, which required them to undertake a bus journey, found the journey experience acceptable with the bus journeys arriving within a few minutes of the expected time.

However, one mystery shopper noted a problem concerning the cost of journeys. The online journey planner provided by Traveline does not take into account buying saver tickets. A bus driver advised one mystery shopper that the bus route they had been advised to undertake by the online journey planner would have cost them twice as much as another route, using buses from the same provider, as they would be able to buy a day ticket instead of having to buy a number of single tickets.

6. Conclusions

6.1. LCC online bus information website

The findings suggest that those who were instructed to use the online bus service information website through the LCC website found this straightforward. However some problems occurred when they commenced searching around the website to identify their bus times.

The majority found the presentation of the website unclear as they struggled to navigate around the website and this frustrated some users.

6.2. Traveline website

Difficulties were highlighted with the Traveline online journey planner which the LCC online bus information website has a link to. These included saver tickets not being shown, the use of acronyms on the journey route and the Traveline website reverting back to the homepage on one occasion when details were entered.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations have come from the mystery shoppers' experience when using the online bus information website:

7.1. Links on the A-Z index

- It is recommended that the links on the A-Z index on the LCC website could be reviewed. At the present online bus timetables are situated under 'd', 'download timetables and bus service changes' which is not the most intuitive heading.

7.2. Redesigning the website

- The LCC website needs to be made clearer by removing the visual clutter. Currently, there are too many prompts for classes of information resulting in confusion when navigating the website. This could be improved by reducing the number of links, focusing on key information and rearranging the links into the centre of the web page.

7.3. Traveline online journey

- It is recommended that the Sustainable Transport Team reports back the positive comments to Traveline but also highlights the suggestions for improvement and the potential problem identified by one mystery shopper.
- One suggestion is the possibility of the online planner identifying routes where saver tickets can be purchased.

- The potential problem which needs to be explored is why on one occasion when details were entered on the Traveline journey planner it reverted back to the Traveline homepage.

Appendix 1- Scenario 1:1 Planning a bus journey from Preston Railway Station to Leyland, Towngate, leaving Preston at 22:00

Website

Background

You want to plan a bus journey from Preston Railway Station to Leyland, Towngate, leaving Preston at 22:00 using the Lancashire County Council Website.

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Preston Railway Station to Leyland, Towngate, leaving Preston at 22:00.

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access this information, how accessible the information was, how easy it was to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 1:2 Planning a bus journey from Penwortham Library to Kirkham Market Square to arrive at 09:30

Background

You want to plan a bus journey from Penwortham Library to Kirkham Market Square to arrive at 9:30 using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Penwortham Library to Kirkham Market Square to get there for 09:30

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access this information, how accessible the information was, how easy it was to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 1:3 Planning a bus journey from Tarleton to Lytham Square to arrive at Lytham for 10:00

Background

You want to plan a bus journey from Tarleton to Lytham Square to get to Lytham for 10:00 using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Tarleton to Lytham Square to get to Lytham for 10:00am

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access this information, how accessible the information was, how easy it was to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 1:4 Planning a bus journey from Barrowford to Bacup to arrive at 13:30

Background

You want to plan a bus journey from Barrowford to Bacup to arrive at 13:30 using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Barrowford to Bacup to arrive at 13:30

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access this information, how accessible the information was, how easy it was to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 2:1 Planning a bus journey from Preston Bus Station to Fleetwood Freeport leaving at 09:45

Website

Background

You want to plan a journey from Preston Bus Station to Fleetwood Freeport leaving at 9:45

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet.

- Access your internet browser and search for the bus times from Preston Bus Station to Fleetwood Freeport leaving at 9:45

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record the steps you followed to find the information you required, how long it took you to find the information and how easily did you find the information in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 2:2 Planning a bus journey from Coppull to Royal Preston Hospital for an appointment at 10:15.

Website

Background

You want to plan a journey from Coppull to Royal Preston Hospital for an appointment at 10:15.

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet.

- Access your internet browser and search for the bus times from Coppull to Royal Preston Hospital for an appointment at 10:15.

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record the steps you followed to find the information you required, how long it took you to find the information and how easily did you find the information in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 2:4 Planning a bus journey from Burnley, Pike Hill to Rawtenstall Town Centre to arrive by 19:00

Website

Background

You want to plan a journey from Burnley, Pike Hill to Rawtenstall Town Centre to arrive by 19:00.

Accessing the Information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet.

- Access your internet browser and search for the bus times from Burnley, Pike Hill to Rawtenstall Town Centre to arrive by 19:00.

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record the steps you followed to find the information you required, how long it took you to find the information and how easily did you find the information in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 3:1 Planning and taking a journey from Lancaster Bus Station to Garstang to arrive by 10:00

Website and carrying out a journey

Background

You want to plan and carry out a journey from Lancaster Bus Station to Garstang to arrive for 10:00 by using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Lancaster Bus Station to Garstang to get there for 10:00

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access the information, how accessible the information is, how easy it is to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet

- Carry out the journey and whilst you are carrying out the journey make a note of whether the bus turned up, how easily you found to follow the instructions given and your overall experience of the journey in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 3:2 Planning and taking a journey from Preston Fishergate Centre to Longton to arrive by 09:00

Website and carrying out a journey

Background

You want to plan and carry out a journey from Preston Fishergate Centre to Longton to arrive by 09:00 by using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Preston Fishergate Centre to Longton to arrive by 09:00.

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access the information, how accessible the information is, how easy it is to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet

- Carry out the journey and whilst you are carrying out the journey make a note of whether the bus turned up, how easily you found to follow the instructions given and your overall experience of the journey in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 3:3 Planning and taking a journey from Burscough Bridge to Chorley and District Hospital to arrive for 10:00

Website and carrying out a journey

Background

You want to plan and carry out a journey from Burscough Bridge to Chorley and District Hospital to arrive for 10:00 by using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Burscough Bridge to Chorley and District Hospital to arrive for 10:00

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access the information, how accessible the information is, how easy it is to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet

- Carry out the journey and whilst you are carrying out the journey make a note of whether the bus turned up, how easily you found to follow the instructions given and your overall experience of the journey in accordance with the feedback sheet.

Scenario 3:4 Planning and taking a journey from Baxenden Hollins Lane to Altham Business Park to arrive by 09:30

Website and carrying out a journey

Background

You want to plan and carry out a journey from Baxenden Hollins to Altham Business Park to arrive by 9:30 by using the Lancashire County Council website.

Accessing the information

Familiarise yourself with the feedback sheet. Access your internet browser and search for the Lancashire County Council website.

- Once you are on the Lancashire County Council website search for 'bus timetable information'

- Plan a journey from Baxenden Hollins to Altham Business Park to arrive by 9:30 using the Lancashire County Council website.

- Were you able to locate the relevant information

- Record approximately how long it took you to access the information, how accessible the information is, how easy it is to understand the information you have been given and suggestions for the future in accordance with the feedback sheet

- Carry out the journey and whilst you are carrying out the journey make a note of whether the bus turned up, how easily you found to follow the instructions given and your overall experience of the journey in accordance with the feedback sheet.

4.0 Further information

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