



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

24 September 2018

To provide the Committee with information regarding the North Gate bus station, including the traffic model.

Briefing Note

The North Gate bus station is owned by the Borough Council and managed through its Town Centre Operation team. Day to day operations include health & safety, proactive and reactive maintenance, cleaning & waste disposal, welfare facilities and security services.

The council has sublet two small units within the bus station to a café operator and Stagecoach to provide a Travel Centre which provides travel information for all the bus services. The adjoining Select Convenience shop has direct access into the bus station but are managed and operated separately from the bus station.

North Gate bus station operates 7 days a week throughout the year. It closes on Easter Sunday and Christmas Day only as no buses services run on those days. The bus services operate from 04.30 hours to 23.45 hours Monday – Saturday. Sunday's bus services are reduced and operate between 06.30 hours to 23.30 hours.

All bus routes are managed by Northamptonshire County Council as the Highway Authority who work closely with the Bus Operators. Stagecoach operate the largest number of routes and services (circa 70%) with UNO being the second largest bus operator.

The Borough Council has responsibility for the day to day building operations which include public safety and there are protocols and risk assessments in place to support our staff, contractors, bus operators and bus users.

In March 2014, when the bus station opened additional resources were provided to support bus users, bus operators, contractors and staff through the transitional stage. As the new operations came into place, bus users were advised about which bays the bus service ran from, visitors were guided to the market and other locations across the town centre, bus information displays above bus bays provide key information on timings and the Travel Centre provided face to face help.

North Gate bus station provides a single level provision for all bus users and is compliant with DDA regulations and offer new welfare facilities for users.

North Gate has all a level access for all bus bays which accommodate the needs of all users, other features include a travel centre, café, welfare facilities and public seating. North Gate has an up to date CCTV system and security which provides for a more pleasant experience for bus users as the level of anti-social behaviour is significantly below those experienced in the old Greyfriars bus station.

The bus operator's adapted quickly to the bus interchange incorporating the Drapery bus bays. Bus operators signed a voluntary agreement which set standards for operational workings, provision of welfare facilities and health & safety. Despite some initial concerns the North Gate bus station has received only a handful of complaints over the last 4 years.

Since its opening, minor modifications have been introduced to enhance safety across the board including the general public, bus users and bus drivers. This has included enhancing bay barriers, additional signage to advise the public where to go, information boards for bus passengers and we continue to review operations and ensure safety is maintained.

There have been some incidents since the bus station first opened, these include slips & trips, verbal abuse, assaults, drunken behaviour, near miss, bus on barrier strike, medical illness and criminal damage. In the main, most incidents have been 'low level' and in comparison with the old Greyfriars bus station the numbers are significantly lower.

The Town Centre Operations team and our security contractor manage public safety day to day.

Highways:

There have been issues with cars occasionally driving through the bus station, despite the signage at the entrance but numbers are very low. The County Council, Bus Operators and the Borough have reviewed various options to address this issue.

The highway network around the town centre has remained constant for many years and at times reach bursting point. The ring road around the town centre has peak usage times and should a road accident block the ring road or reduce lane numbers it does not take too long before the knock-on effect creates traffic jams all along the ring road and into the town centre.

The County Council are aware of these issues and have been working with the Borough with the aim to implement improvements to create some additional resilience across the highway network.

The bus interchange which incorporates North Gate and the Drapery have around 100 bus services operating per hour during peak times. On an average days these Services operate without any significant issues. However, should unexpected or unplanned incidents occur which impacts on the ring road then we have experienced / encountered traffic issues in the town centre. The exception to this is around Christmas when traffic numbers increase significantly due to the increase in shoppers coming into the town.

Suggested Future Options:

Improvements to the ring road should be explored with the aim to provide additional resilience to the network.

Highway proposals in Bradshaw Street to be progressed.

Camera enforcement in the Drapery to be progressed.

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