

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Panel
DATE: 28th January 2008

RE: Customer Service Bus

Purpose

To outline to the panel the aims and objectives of the new customer service bus and inform them of the progress made to date. The project team also seek the views of the panel on the proposed locations to be visited and the range of services being proposed.

Background

Work is being undertaken to improve our telephony system and website to enable customers to do business with the council from home, however citizens still require or often prefer to make face to face contact with us. To meet our customer's expectations we also recognise the diverse needs of our community and that citizens may find it difficult to contact us via the existing channels. The customer service bus will allow us to take our services to all areas of the borough providing citizens with access to core council services and information, as well as key partners, avoiding the need for a difficult or perhaps unnecessary journey to the town centre offices. The concept has already been established and developed in other parts of the country the most similar being that in Coventry.

Progress to date

A small project team has drafted a design specification and expressions of interest to tender have been received from 16 companies. The closing date for tenders is the 31st January with evaluation and appointment of a preferred contractor to undertake the design and build to be completed out by the end of February. A basic floor plan/lay out has been attached for your information (appendix A)

In addition to the above the project team has undertaken site visits of the borough and conducted a detailed evaluation of suitable locations at which the bus can stop. The following set of criteria was considered to produce an initial shortlist

- Likely footfall
- Suitability of the environment for staff and customers
- Access and parking of the vehicle
- Manoeuvrability
- Visibility to the public
- Access to nearby toilet facilities
- Wi fi connectivity

Having scored locations against the above criteria a further evaluation was then taken to consider the demographic needs of the borough in particular those areas with above average elderly population, ethnic minority communities as well as areas of high economic inactivity.

The list attached (appendix B) details the chosen locations divided into three categories, preferred, reserve and stand-by, these are also shown on a borough map (appendix C). All sites are subject to agreement with the land owner but initial discussions particularly with the supermarkets have been extremely positive.

Service provision/proposals

The intention is that the bus will visit the agreed locations to an agreed timetable covering four days of the week, this will ensure that the public know where it will be at a given time providing a consistent service. The fifth or floating day will allow the bus to be taken off the road for maintenance and staff training. As the frequency of undertaking maintenance is unlikely to be necessary every week, the spare days can also be used to go out to additional locations as a one off or support and promote council/partner initiatives, for example, community safety, healthy living or social care in a particular area. Once the service has been embedded there will be the potential to increase the number of locations and extend its operating hours subject to customer demand and available resources. It may also be necessary to amend the timetable to reflect demand and the changing needs of our residents.

As well as the provision of information the following will be amongst the core services to be provided:

- Reporting of fly tipping or anti social behaviour
- Requesting rubbish removal
- Reporting a missed bin
- Applying for a disabled parking permit
- Checking and verification of application forms for concessionary bus passes
- Viewing a planning application on line
- Requesting a form for a planning application or council job vacancy
- Cheque payments for council services

The customer service bus driver and a customer service advisor (CSA) from the First Stop Shop team will be available to assist customers in carrying out the above and where the enquiry can not be dealt with there and then, ensuring the customer has all the necessary information and contact details to help them get the matter resolved.

Service areas are currently being approached to identify what specialist/additional services can be offered over and above the core provision. They are being asked to consider enabling appointments to be booked on their behalf by a CSA, increasing the availability of on line services that a CSA can assist customers to complete and for services with a high take to provide an officer from their team to be on the bus to provide specialist advice or surgeries.

Consultation has taken place with the customer stakeholder forum and lead officers of both the LNP's and safer borough partnership. Citizen feedback is seen as an ongoing process both pre and post launch of the bus and further consultation is already being planned with LNP's and the Community Engagement Network (CEN)

Recommendation

The panel are asked to:

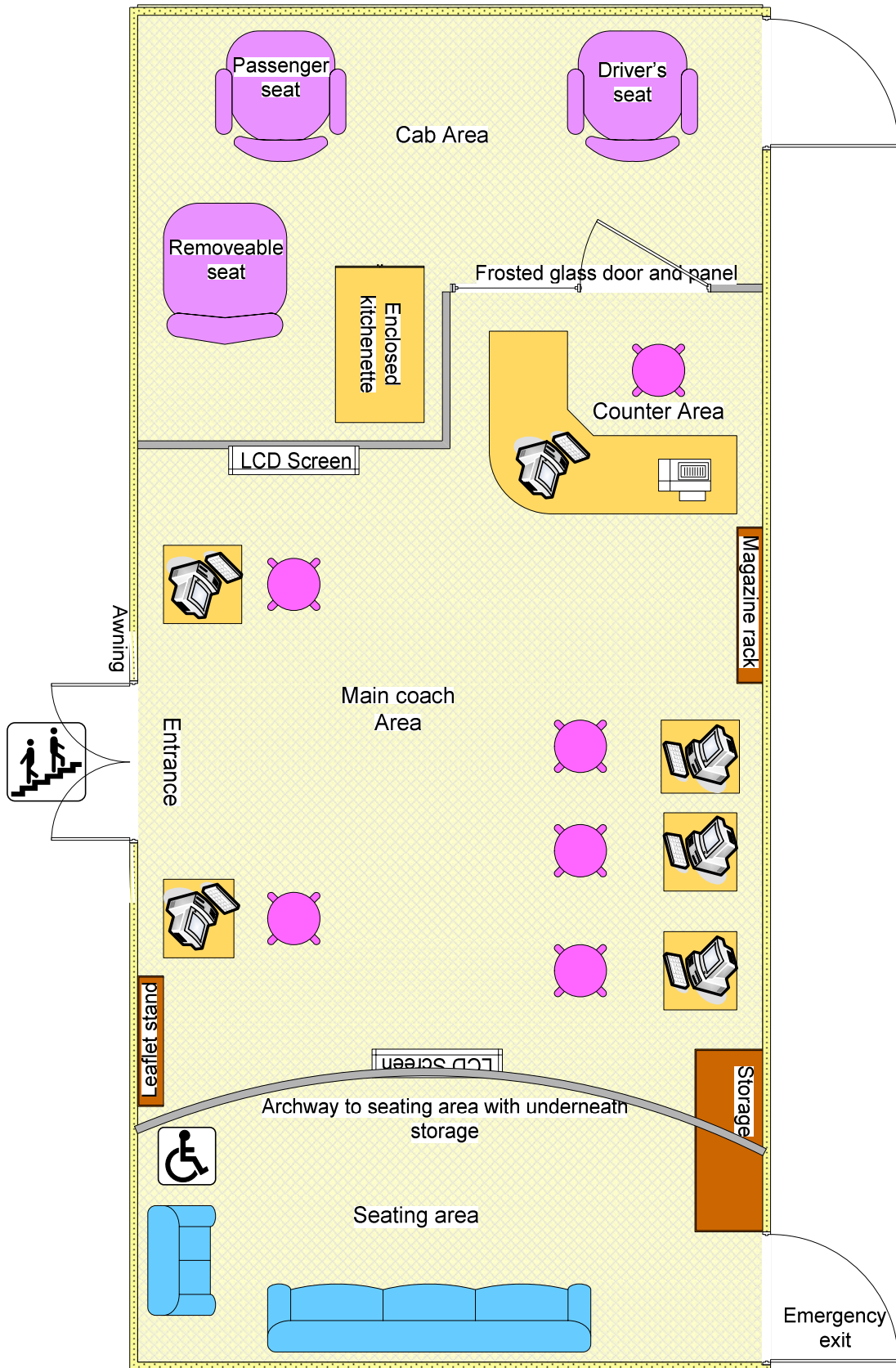
- a) note the briefing
- b) seek clarification to its content if required; and
- c) provide any feedback on the proposed route and service provision.

Author

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Basic Floor Plan for Customer Service Bus

Preliminary bus layout – subject to confirmation (NOTE: This is not to scale)



**Local Access Vehicle
Location Scoping – Potential Sites**

Preferred Sites

Area	Location
Aldridge	Community Centre, Anchor Meadow
Bloxwich	Asda - Woodhall Street
Brownhills	Tesco, Silver Court
Darlaston	Town Centre pedestrian area
Pelsall	Library, High Street
Pheasey	Collingwood Centre
Pleck	Morrisons, Wallows Lane
Willenhall	Wakes Ground Car Park

Reserve Sites

Area	Location
Beechdale	Sainsbury, Reedswood Way
Moxley	People Centre, 3 Queen Street
Walsall Wood	Oak Park, Lichfield Road

Stand-by Sites

Area	Location
Aldridge	Morrisons, Anchor Road
Beechdale	Lifelong Learning Centre, Stephenson Square
Bentley	Western avenue layby
Blakenall	Library, Thames Road
Blakenhall	Community Association, Blakenall Road
Clayhanger	Church Street,
New Invention	Beacon Community Building, Davie Road
Streetly	Community Association, Foley Road East
Willenhall	Tesco, Owen Road