

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL
3 February 2016

Lead Officer: Executive Director of Place

Wards: All

Agenda Item: 11

Subject: - Mobile Information Bus

1. Recommendation

1.1 The panel is asked to review the use of the mobile information bus to date and to give their views on the future use of the bus.

2. Summary

2.1 This report summarises the use of the mobile information bus by the housing service and gives an evaluation of the outcomes to the end of the current contract.

2.2 The housing service had exclusive use of the bus to promote housing services on council estates – this took place on five occasions - the last Tuesday of each month from July to November 2015.

2.3 The council has decided to extend the contract for the bus until the end of September 2016. The housing service is now reviewing how it could make best use of the bus until this date.

3. Background

3.1 On 7 July 2015 this Panel received a report advising that the council had agreed the decommissioning of the Partnership for Older People (POP) Bus and directly awarded a contract to Croydon Care Solutions for provision of a new mobile health and wellbeing information service.

3.2 The bus was refurbished and the housing service would contribute £25,000 towards the costs of this and its first year running costs. In return the housing service would have exclusive use of the bus on a number of days during the year to provide housing information and advice on housing estates across the borough. It was also agreed that the bus would also prioritise health and wellbeing information sessions on council estates.

3.3 The Panel was advised that at the end of a pilot an evaluation of the outcomes for the housing service would take place and a decision would be taken on the future use of the bus by the housing service.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 The bus actively promotes access by taking the housing service into the community; particularly those communities that may have difficulty accessing housing information and support or getting to council offices. The bus visited locations with close proximity to high density council properties
- 4.2 The bus is equipped (four laptops, a printer and wi-fi, seating area, consultation room and screens to show videos, etc) and is fully wheelchair accessible.
- 4.3 The bus was fully-staffed at all visits and staff on board the bus were able to offer advice and help with the following:
- housing services – repairs, rent, caretaking
 - options to help you move or register for social housing
 - universal credit, welfare benefits, managing debt and budgeting
 - getting you back into work or training
 - getting online or learning basic IT skills
 - having your say on housing services
 - information, signposting or referrals to other council services.
- 4.4 Publicity to promote the upcoming bus visits included; articles and postings in Open House newsletter, Involve, council website, Twitter and Facebook (Love Croydon & Croydon Resident Involvement), Your Croydon e-weekly newsletter, Carers News, posters in local areas (housing estates, shops, doctor's surgeries, libraries), emails to voluntary organisations, use of the plasma screens in Access Croydon, Inside Croydon website (sample poster - see appendix 2).
- 4.5 Over 90 people from the local community have visited the housing mobile information bus on the five visits, with over 75 requests taken, most being resolved on the bus.
- 4.6 When polled at the bus, tenants scored the usefulness of the service with a 94% (very good 65% & fairly good 29%) satisfaction rate based on receipt of 48 surveys. All 100% (very good 90% & fairly good 10%) visitors said they felt welcomed on their visit. A summary of the evaluation is attached (appendix 1).
- 4.7 The branding of the bus as a health and wellbeing information bus led to confusion for some residents when it was used for housing information only. The bus has now been rebranded as a generic information bus.

When & where	General overview of the visit
28 July 2015 – 2-7pm, Central Parade, New Addington	Location in car park out of sight to passers-by. No trams so less footfall. Timing as market came to an end. The branding 'health and wellbeing bus' was confusing to residents as it did not accurately indicate the services we were providing. This was an issue at all locations.

25 August 2015 – 2-7pm, Forecourt, Shirley Community Centre, Shrublands Avenue, Croydon	The visitor numbers were quite low. This could have been due to the weather – pouring rain, which did not let up. Many residents may also have been away during the summer holidays.
29 September 2015 - Waddon 1. 2-4pm: Car park, St Dominic's Catholic Church, 243 Violet Lane 2. 5-7pm: Car park at the rear of flats 1-32, 45 Violet Lane,	Waddon was chosen as a bus location as CR0 4 selected is a special pilot roll-out area to test the Universal Credit digital service. Two locations – loss of an hour to take down and set up again. Church car park. Not much footfall at rear of school, although officers leafleted parents at the front. Rear of flats - eyed with suspicion. 7pm end too late because of nightfall.
27 October 2015 – 10am-3pm, Outside Poundland, 101-103 Thornton Heath High Street	Issue with setting up (step malfunction). Reduced time by an hour. Spoke to passers-by on street. Busy, high street location.
24 November 2015 - 10am-3pm, New Addington Market (Pitch)	In the market. The weather was cold and drizzly. Disappointing overall footfall in area. Not many stalls out. Friday market apparently a bit more vibrant.

4.8 The use of the bus by Health services, Adult Social Care and the voluntary sector has been very limited. As a result the cost to the Council has been considerably less than expected. The housing service is currently negotiating its contribution but this is now likely to be in the region of £8-9,000 for 2015/16.

5. THE FUTURE

5.1 The Council has extended the contract until 30 September 2016 at which time there will be a full evaluation of the outcomes and a decision will be made on whether the contract will be further extended.

5.2 Under the extended contract the Council is committed to paying a daily rate of £331 for a minimum of 90 days use. The housing service has been asked to use the service for at least nine days (10%) during this period which equates to a total of just under £3,000.

5.3 The Panel is asked to comment on the proposal in paragraph 5.2.

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