

Annex 2

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON
26 MARCH 2013**

Present: Councillors D Over (Chairman), D McKean, J Peach, D Harrington E Murphy and N Sandford

Officers in Attendance: Mark Speed Transport and Infrastructure Planning Manager
Richard Mayes Passenger Transport Contracts and Planning
Julia Chatterton Manager
Flood and Water Management Officer

5. Passenger Transport and Bus Services in Rural Areas

This report was delivered along with a presentation at the request of the Commission who requested information on the following items:

- Any Developments with Call Connect
- A description of rural services as they stood
- Likely Problems and development

The report advised the Commission that there were no recent developments regarding Call Connect however as part of the bus service review options around expanding existing demand response (including all Call Connect) was being considered

The Commission were advised that Members had received an invitation to contact a member of the transport team regarding any concerns they may have had regarding the reduction in subsidised passenger transport services as a result of budget changes adopted on 6 March 2013 at full Council.

Among the services subsidised were:

- Some of Stagecoach's weekend and evening buses
- Local Link 401/401A, 404, 406, 407, 408, 410, and 411 Enterprise
- Local Link 413 Centrebus
- Community Link and Dial-a-Ride

Members were asked to consider the report, feedback any comments to officers and were also recommended to make an appointment with the team to discuss the item further.

The following comments, observations and questions were raised:

- Members were concerned that the budget saving would not be achieved as it was not going to be looked in to for a further six months and £750,000 would already have been spent. *The Transport and Infrastructure Planning Manager advised members that there was more money in the transport pot this year therefore that would allow the transport team six months to find £600,000 savings.*
- Members were concerned that elderly people and rural people would be impacted the most by these changes and queried whether the Equality Impact Assessment would reflect this. *Members were informed that the Equality Impact Assessment would look at elderly people and people in rural areas.*
- Members queried what the budget was for the transportation service in 2013/14. *Members were informed that for the whole year the budget was around 1.14 million pounds.*
- Members queried whether any other contracts other than those indicated in 4.1 of the report needed to be reviewed on 1 April. *Members were informed that all of the Local Link contracts would be reviewed on 1 April 2013.*
- Members queried why Call Connect was not included in the review. *Members were informed that the demand responsive services would be used where the timetabled bus services were extracted.*
- Members commented that all Equality Impact Assessments should have been carried out before the decisions to cut services were made as once the budget had been halved there was no opportunity to retract. *Members were advised that Equality Impact Assessments were taken on Local Link in the first stage because the contract expired on 31 March 2013 therefore that service needed to be assessed quicker to enable a procurement exercise to take place however Equality Impact Assessments would also be undertaken on voluntary Partnership and Luxicab.*
- Members queried whether the reason the Council found themselves in the situation of having to make these cuts was because Enterprise had underbid for the contract and they were currently asking for an increase. *Members were advised that an independent assessment had been carried out and it confirmed that Enterprise's funding was at least £500,000 short for them to carry out all of the services efficiently.*

Members commented that the perception was that buses in rural areas were not used to full capacity therefore they were not important and queried whether the council were being pro active in finding alternative ways to fund the rural bus services. *Members were advised that surveys of use, reviews and Equality Impact*

- *Assessments had been carried out along with lots of consultation however the transport services had to work with the budget allocated as a single bus could cost up to £180,000 per year to run.*
- Members suggested that the Council promoted events to encourage people to use the bus service more frequently.
- Members suggested that the Council was as creative as possible with the funding available to cover as many areas that would be without a service as possible. *Members were informed that this was currently being*

investigated along with demand response services being included if it was not possible to have a timetabled service in an area.

- *Members queried whether it would be possible to have a minibus in the place of stagecoach buses on routes that were underused. The Passenger Transport and Planning Manager advised Members that there would be certain requirements in terms of vehicles that could be used on bus routes particularly with minibuses in relation to the Equalities Act.*
- *Members suggested that school bus services were also used by the general public and the last bus in the evening was more reliable.*
- *Members asked if the opportunity for people to use their bus pass was reduced then the cost to the Council would diminish. The Transport and Infrastructure Planning Manager advised the Commission that it was part of national legislation that certain groups of people received concessionary bus passes. The Council did not receive all of the costs to pay the concessionary fare bill. Negotiations had taken place with operators there were some cap on payments so the Council and therefore, no longer paid the full amount for concessionary fares.*
- *Members queried why the 410 bus service to the cinema ran from 12 to 4pm as most people went to the cinema in the evening. Members were informed that it was because the route was part of a timetabled service although something that could be looked in to was the frequency of services, cost and whether it could be integrated with another route. The services had to match a certain criteria to make them work and for the Council to get the best use out of them.*
- *Members were concerned that the £430,000 grant from the Department for Transport that was allocated to the Council's revenue budget was being spent on Provision of Public Transport Information when cuts were being made to the transport services. Members were advised that government would only reimburse the Council if they thought the scheme was appropriate and the money had been spent on Sustainable Transport*
- *Members queried whether there were any plans for the transport team to go to the different wards in Peterborough to update residents on future plans and intentions and the possible impact. Members were advised that a meeting had already been held with Passenger Focus who were currently helping to develop an appropriate communication plan.*

ACTION AGREED

The Commission requested that the Transport and Infrastructure Planning Manager:

1. Provide the Commission and Parish Councils with information on the performance of the Call Connect transport service.
2. Provide the Commission with the results of the Local Link Equality Impact Assessment once it had been completed

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