

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL ON 23 FEBRUARY 2010**

- Present:** Councillors D Day (Vice-Chairman), R Dobbs, J A Fox, N North, N Sandford and J Wilkinson
- Also Present:** Councillor D Seaton – Cabinet Member for Resources
Laura Lee – Peterborough Youth Council
- Officers Present:** Paul Phillipson, Executive Director Operations
Teresa Wood, Group Manager - Transport & Sustainable Environment
Paul Phillipson, Executive Director Operations
Cathy Summers, Team Manager - Passenger Transport Contracts and Planning
Helen Edwards, Solicitor to the Council
Louise Tyers, Scrutiny Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Burton.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Request for Call-In of an Executive Decision: Bus Service Review

On 8 February 2010, the Cabinet made an executive decision relating to the Bus Service Review. In accordance with the Constitution that decision was published on 10 February 2010. On 15 February 2010, Councillors D Day, JA Fox and Sandford submitted a request to call-in this decision on the following grounds:

- (i) The decision did not follow the principles of good decision making as set out in Article 12 of the Council's Constitution, specifically that the decision maker did not:
 - (a) realistically consider all alternatives and, where reasonably possible, consider the views of the public; and
 - (b) follow procedures correctly and be fair.

In support of the request to call-in Councillor Sandford made the following points:

- There had been cross party support for the call-in request.
- In relation to the 406 service, information had been put forward that the number of passengers using the service was greater than stated and therefore it had been agreed that a number of the morning journeys would be restored. However, in the Cabinet report the journeys had not been restored and he was advised that a verbal update would be given at the Cabinet's meeting, however this did not happen.
- The trade unions had put forward an alternative proposal which had not been referred to in the report.

- Evidence had been provided by the bus drivers that passenger numbers on some of the services was significantly higher than stated.
- The Youth Council had complained that they had not been consulted on the proposals, specifically as the proposals had an affect on school children.
- The decision should be referred back to the Cabinet as a series of errors had occurred and the Cabinet should reconsider the proposals further.

In response to Councillor Sandford's points, Teresa Wood made the following comments:

- The proposals around the 406 service had been reviewed following the information supplied by Councillor Sandford. There had been an error in the Cabinet report and it should have read '406 - all journeys before 0745 and all journeys after 1813, with replacement available within walking distance on Citi 2.' She apologised that a verbal update had not been given at the meeting.
- A number of consultation processes had taken place, including feedback and consultation with the trade unions. All alternative options had been considered and had been detailed in the report on a collective basis.
- She noted the ticket information provided by the bus drivers. All of the journeys could be covered by alternative services e.g. Kimes and Call Connect. School children were considered the top priority when developing the proposals and the Council had a duty to transport them.
- Officers had met with the Youth Council on a number of occasions around the Fares Fair campaign. They had been invited to a bus operators meeting at which part of the meeting had been an update on the bus service review. At no time had they asked for further information. Even though they were not consulted directly on this issue they would have been aware of the process and should have contacted an officer.

Phil Green, one of the bus drivers, addressed the Committee, and made the following points:

- Why was it felt justified to take out services which were used regularly but still provide a Sunday service?
- Some passengers would now be required to use underpasses to catch the alternative services which could be unsafe.
- It was not just school children who used the service but also adults who used Stamford College and had to pay for their journeys

In response Cathy Summers advised that passengers would be directed to alternative commercial services. The Sunday services exceeded the 10 passenger threshold and that was why they were being maintained. She clarified that she had meant anyone, adult or child, who had to travel to an educational establishment and not just children.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Councillor Fox advised that she had received a letter from a resident in Gunthorpe Road who had stated that for four months on the 406 service some of the bus drivers had not issued tickets so there could not be accurate records on the number of passengers using the service. *There had been a problem with a module on one of the buses and for a time it was not able to be replaced.*
- Laura Lee, who was representing the Youth Council, advised that they were working on the Fares Fair campaign but had been advised by Council officers that the Council would not pay for the research needed to take it forward.
- Councillor Seaton advised that as Cabinet Member for Resources he was happy to be involved in the discussions between the Youth Council and Council on the Fares Fair campaign.

- Councillor Seaton also advised that he had received a large number of representations on the review and the majority of people now appeared to be satisfied after the proposals had been explained to them.
- There appeared to be confusion as to what the motive of the review was. In a report considered in September 2009, the motivation had been detailed as taking out services with low passenger number but now it was being said it was to transfer passengers to commercial services. Overall the major motivation was to make savings, and again there was confusion over how much savings would be made. *The motivation for the review was two fold. The savings could only be finally quantified once the proposals are agreed.*
- There were no real alternatives to the 406 evening services which would be withdrawn as the only alternative was to walk through Bretton Park or an underpass which would not be safe.
- Clarification was sought as to what the alternative provision was to enable people to travel to the Showcase Cinema if the 410 was withdrawn. *During the day there was alternative provision via the 410 and 411 services. Passenger numbers had shown that an evening service to the Showcase was not warranted.*
- The Chair of the Youth Council had been on the radio today stating that they had not been consulted on the proposals. *A number of emails had gone between officers and the Chair offering to meet with them but this had not been taken up. Officers were happy to work with the Youth Council.*
- Were the 402 and 404 services being withdrawn because of passenger numbers or because there was a commercial alternative? *The breakdown of journeys, once the school journeys had been taken out, was very low. There were existing services and the public would be able to use the Call Connect service. The Call Connect service would enable people to travel when they wanted to and would give them flexibility.*
- The trade unions had put forward a proposal to maintain the early morning and afternoon services on the 402 and 404 services, why was it not being considered? *The high usage on the peak services were due to the number of school children. Some passengers did not want to travel with the children.*
- Why did officers think that the Call Connect service would be a success as previous similar services had not been? How specific did people have to be about the times they wanted to use it? Also, the service did not help if someone from the urban area wanted to travel to the rural area. *We were trying the service in the rural areas and not the urban area this time. People could book up to an hour before they wanted to travel. Officers were working on promotional information at the moment which would explain how the service would work. Officers were seeking additional funding to enhance the journeys and they had worked with the bus walking group on the proposals.*
- It appeared that opportunities had been given to the Youth Council to comment on the review but perhaps we needed to examine how we consulted with them in future to ensure that everybody was clear about what was happening.
- In the Local Transport Plan and Long Term Transport Strategy there was a commitment for the Council to work towards half hourly evening services but this review went against that. *Stagecoach had increased the number of their evening services so officers believed that the Council was supporting the commitment.*

Councillor Day proposed, seconded by Councillor Dobbs, that the decision should be called in and referred back to the Cabinet so they could reconsider the decision in relation to the early morning 406 journeys only.

Councillor Sandford moved an amendment, seconded by Councillor Fox that the decision should be referred back on all four points detailed in the request for call-in.

On the amendment being put to the vote there were two votes for and four against.

On the substantive motion being put to the vote there were four votes for and two against, so it was carried.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the decision relating to the Bus Service Review should be called-in; and
- (ii) That the Cabinet should reconsider the decision due to the error in the original decision relating to changes to the timetable of the 406 service.

CHAIRMAN
6.00 - 7.15 pm