

**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 Manager  
Julia Chatterton Flood and Water Management Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Sanders and Lamb

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2013**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities meeting held on 14 January 2012 were approved as a true and accurate record.

**4. Flood and Water Management Activities Undertaken by Peterborough City Council**

This report was presented to the Commission to inform them of the work being carried out by the Council within the area of water management and to assist with raising awareness of flood risk and water management issues within Peterborough.

The Commission was requested to note the report, endorse the services being provided and offer suggestions for inclusion in the work programme.

Members were also asked that following the meeting they utilise any future opportunities as Councillors to raise awareness of the need for residents and businesses to prepare for severe weather events (e.g. flood risk and drought).

The following comments, observations and questions were raised:

- Members queried whether Peterborough City Council had the option to use resources from other authorities if necessary. *The Flood and Water Management Officer informed Members that Peterborough worked closely with other authorities in Emergency Planning and with the Planning Development Management Team. The right approach would be to look at a catchment area as a whole to enable resources to be shared and authorities to learn from each other.*
- Members queried whether the issue with the water pumps in Thorney had been resolved. *Members were informed that Anglian Water had resolved the problem by replacing the wastewater (foul) pumps. The company's data also showed that the rain water was not entering into the foul system.*

- *Members queried whether plans for new developments in Thorney were being reviewed in terms of whether the water systems could cope with the new builds. Members were advised that following detailed discussions Anglian Water had advised that they felt their water systems would be able to cope with the new development.*
- *Members were concerned that the B1040 road was being closed due to flood warnings when the road did not appear to be flooded. Members were advised that Peterborough City Council closed the North Bank road. However the B1040 was the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council and it was understood that they were looking at ways of addressing issues. The Environment Agency had also been asked to reassess the timings of their flood warnings. However the roads would always need to be closed before water levels were due to rise for the safety of residents.*
- *Members queried what the Council's biggest concern would be if the weather continued to stay extreme. that the Flood and Water Management Officer advised members that in her opinion it could be the element of new developments and the changes in drainage systems. The concern was not with work the Council carried out but whether the forthcoming Government regulations would lay an appropriate foundation to ensure the new system would run correctly.*
- *Members queried whether the Council were the right point of contact if there was an issue with dykes or drains. Members were advised to contact the Council and even if it was not Council property they could find out who it belonged to. If, for example, there was an issue with a private land owner's management of a watercourse and this posed a risk to the community then the Council could act to get them to comply with relevant legislation i.e. enforcement action could be taken.*
- *Members queried whether it would be possible to object or recommend that a new development should have water retention or drainage systems built in to the planning application or would this be at the discretion of the developer to decide. Members were informed that from April 2014 it would be possible for the Council to insist that these measures were put in place.*

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission noted the report and endorsed the services being provided by the Council.

### **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 1.4 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 and stagecoach had capped the payment. The Council 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 Equality Impact Assessments once they had been completed

#### **6. Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions**

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Notice of Intention to Take Key Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

#### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the latest version of the Council's Notice of Intention to take key Decisions.

*The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.00pm*

CHAIRMAN