

## **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**12 JULY 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire on Thursday, 12 July 2018

**PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Chairman)**

Councillors: Mike Allport, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Dolphin, Andy Dunbobbin, David Evans, Joe Johnson, Colin Legg, Vicky Perfect and Paul Shotton

**ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Marion Bateman and Christine Jones**

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Paul Cunningham, Patrick Heesom, Tudor Jones, David Mackie and Mrs. Lynn Bartlett attended as Members of the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee who had been invited to attend for minute number 11.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Aaron Shotton, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside; Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation); Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy); ITU Manager; Transport Programme Manager; Senior Manager (School Planning & Provision); Service Manager (Enterprise and Regeneration) and Service Manager (Access and Environment)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

### **10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **11. OUTCOME OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND SOCIAL TRANSPORT ANOMALIES**

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced the Outcome of Public Consultation on Public Transport and School Transport Anomalies report which provided details of existing subsidised bus routes and the outcome of the bus network review consultation exercise that had been undertaken to consider those services and deliver an affordable and sustainable public transport service in the future.

#### **Bus Network Review**

The Transport Programme Manager reported on the bus network review. To facilitate the review, an eight week public consultation process had been carried out with the public, elected Members and town and community councils who were invited to provide feedback on the proposals. The four options which had been presented for consideration were:-

- Option 1 – stop subsidising bus services completely;
- Option 2 – do nothing and continue to support the existing subsidised routes in place as they were currently;
- Option 3 – Support subsidised routes on the core bus network and implement alternative, sustainable local travel arrangements in communities not on the core network; and
- Option 4 – Support subsidised routes on the core bus network and introduce a demand responsive service for communities not on the core network.

Elected Members and town and community councils predominantly supported Option 3 but it was recognised that there was no 'one size fits all' and transport salutation would need to vary from one area to another depending on local need and demand. Under the preferred option, local travel arrangements on the non-core network were intended to be provided by smaller minibus vehicles, which were better suited to the nature of the routes in rural areas. Proposed routes had been identified for the local travel arrangements which were attached as an appendix to the report.

The Transport Programme Manager concluded that it was proposed that the intended change in service provision would be introduced from 1 October, 2018 on a phased approach and a proposed implementation plan and timetable was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside explained that there had been a number of changes to the commercial bus network by bus operators which had impacted on communities and left potential gaps in service provision; this was not within the control of the Council. However the Council had a statutory duty to keep the bus network under review and intervene when appropriate.

Councillor Paul Shotton thanked officers for the report and for the extensive consultation sessions carried out. He said that following the consultation exercise, as shown within the report, there seemed to be a consensus for Option 3 and that this option tied in well with the new transport arrangement for Deeside Industrial Estate. He asked if a contractor had been identified to deliver the Deeside Shuttle Service. The Chief Officer responded that the Council had received Welsh Government (WG) and EU funding to purchase four 16-seat minibuses and five Low Carbon Emission Buses (LCEB) with the LCEB intended to be deployed on the existing Deeside Shuttle Service. Deeside Shuttle Service would be re-procured over the summer period to be operated by an external contractor and the service would be re-branded and launched later in the year. It was proposed that the four 16-seat minibuses would be utilised for the local travel arrangements, as set out within the report, and operated in-house within the Streetscene Portfolio. The intention was to provide a high quality, sustainable, professional minibus service and maintain greater control on the passenger transport operations.

Councillor Chris Dolphin sought an assurance that consultation with town and community councils would continue before a timetable was produced and shared. He also raised concern that the Committee was being asked to recommend an option without knowing what the impacts/cuts to routes were

going to be. The Transport Programme Manager assured the Committee that consultation with town and community council and operators would take place prior to a timetable being produced. Feedback from communities had been collated to identify gaps in the current service and this feedback would be shared with communities through further consultation exercises to ensure the feedback information was correct. The Cabinet Member said that through identifying gaps in the service and continued consultation with town and community councils it was hoped that a scheduled service could be offered rather than having a pre-booking service.

### School Transport Historical Anomalies

The Chief Officer explained that the school transport route optimisation and re-procurement exercise was completed in September 2017. As a consequence of the exercise, a number of historical non-statutory transport arrangements were identified that were over and above the current Home to School Transport Policy, and presented opportunities for alternative service delivery and potential efficiency savings.

The Chief Officer, ITU Manager and Transport Programme Manager provided details of the anomalies along with proposals on how each issue would be dealt with, as shown as an appendix to the report.

The Cabinet Member explained that existing pupils would continue to receive the same service. The Leader of the Council commented on the transport provided for students to attend FUSE Drama Group at Theatr Clwyd and explained that historically this transport had been provided though funding from the WG for the Deeside Shuttle Service. When the WG grant ended a decision was taken at the time for the Council to continue to subsidise this service. This was a breach of the current Transport Policy and was not fair to other groups across the County.

In response to a question from Councillor David Evans, the Chief Officer explained that the services would be re-procured each year to ensure the right size bus was used to avoid carrying empty seats. If a service was already running which had empty seats then these could be made available at the concessionary spare seat rate.

Councillor Marion Bateman read out the guidance issued by WG around School Transport and felt that this had not been followed within her own ward. She thanked the Cabinet Member for her intervention in a recent matter and sought an assurance that the Home to School Transport Policy would be consistently applied across the County in the future.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin raised concerns around sibling groups and said that if it was not possible for sibling groups to access transport, parents may feel that their parental choice of school was being taken away from them. He proposed that the Committee recommend to Cabinet that the school transport provision for siblings be given further consideration and this was supported by the Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Colin Legg, the ITU Manager explained that if a child's nearest school was full then transport would be provided to their next nearest school.

Mrs. Lynne Bartlett sought an assurance that consultation had taken place with Ysgol Pencoch, Flint as the proposals would impact vulnerable children. The Chief Officer gave an assurance that the ITU Manager and her team engaged fully with Ysgol Pencoch during the consultation exercise.

### Concessionary Fares

The ITU Manager reported that it was proposed to increase the price of concessionary spare seats to ensure full cost recovery. Options for consideration to reach full cost recovery were shown within the report, together with charges for concessionary spare seats which currently apply in neighbouring local authorities, for comparison purposes. Further details of the proposed Concessionary Spare Seats Scheme was shown as an appendix to the report.

The Cabinet Member explained that the proposals to recover the costs of concessionary spare seats had been brought forward following its support as a preferred option at the all Member workshop held in November, 2017.

Councillor Evans said that he felt uncomfortable with the proposed increased cost and suggested that the Council look at what neighbouring authorities charged and increase concessionary fares in line with their charges. He said that further information around this and the possible increase in concessionary seats was needed. The Chief Officer explained that the cost would remain less than what was currently being paid at the moment.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report, their attendance and for responding to the questions raised by Members.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Committee recommends the adoption of Option 3 (support subsidised routes on the core bus network and implement alternative, sustainable local travel arrangements in communities not on the core network) within four geographical areas of the County;
- (b) That the Committee recommends to Cabinet the approval of the proposed service levels on the strategic core bus network;
- (c) That the provision of an in-house minibus service to support the local travel arrangements, where it was cost effective to do so, be supported;
- (d) That the Committee recommends to Cabinet approval of the proposed approach for dealing with historical non-statutory school transport arrangements that had been identified during the service review;
- (e) That the Committee recommend to Cabinet that the school transport provision for siblings be given further consideration; and

- (e) That the Committee recommend the adoption of Option 2 as its preferred pricing structure for a concessionary bus pass, with a review to be carried out on the impact of the increased cost after one year.

## **12. TOURISM PROMOTION AND DESTINATION MANAGEMENT**

The Service Manager (Enterprise and Regeneration) introduced the Tourism Promotion and Destination Management report which set out the approaches taken in Flintshire and regionally to support the visitor economy through promotional activity and managing and improving the customer experience.

The report detailed the work of both the Access and Natural Environment and Tourism services as both played a significant and co-ordinated role with opportunities for greater collaborative working in the future following the recent restructure.

Councillor Shotton thanked officers for the report and commented on the tourism offer in Flintshire which had been seen first-hand by the Committee at its recent meeting held at Greenfield Heritage Centre. He commented on the recent introduction of talks and boat trips by the Quay Watermen and praised the work of the County Rangers along the coastal path.

Councillor Vicky Perfect thanked the Service Manager (Access and Environment) and his team for installing new benches along the coastal path near Flint Castle. She commented on the successful Rock the Castle event in Flint which had been attended by 2,000 people and thanked the Coastal Rangers for their contribution and for judging the sandcastle competition.

Councillor Dolphin thanked the Service Manager (Access and Environment) and his team for their hard work. He asked when a visitor sign could be installed on the A55 to promote St. Winifred's Well and surrounding areas. The Service Manager (Enterprise and Regeneration) advised that the Council provided brown and white signs and a review was currently being undertaken to identify where there were gaps across the County. There was a need to be mindful of available funding but when money became available from the Welsh Government (WG) the Council would be in a position to submit requests for funding by having appropriate plans in place.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development said that there was a need to change attitudes about Flintshire. He said that 80% of Flintshire was rural but this had not been recognised through the availability of European funding. It was hoped that this would be addressed through the North Wales Growth Bid and although the visitor economy in Flintshire was a relatively small component of the Flintshire economy, it remained an important contributor which generated an estimated £252m each year.

On the North Wales Growth Bid, the Leader of the Council said that Flintshire would be able to take advantage of the capital investment opportunities at Holyhead in terms of Cruise Ships and excursions within a 1 hour radius. He reported that across North Wales the number of Japanese visitors had increased

84% and whilst Flintshire had many attractions, accommodation in the areas was not at the same level as was found in Cornwall or the Lake District.

Councillor Legg commented on Halkyn Mountain and thanked officers for their hard work in maintaining the mountain. He said that signage was important, especially for toilet facilities as this could be problematic for some visitors. He commented on the need to protect common land due to its geology, flora and industrial history and raised concerns of motorised vehicles on common land. He said that he was happy to carry out a tour of Halkyn Mountain for any Members who were interested.

In response to a suggestion from the Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside that Councillor Legg should be a Tourist Ambassador, the Service Manager (Enterprise and Regeneration) explained that there were 30 Tourist Ambassadors across Flintshire who were predominantly business representatives. They had signed up to a set of principles to welcome visitors to the area.

Councillor Evans questioned the figure of 2.7m day visits to Flintshire, as detailed in the report. He asked what methodology was used to calculate day visits and asked if further information on this could be provided to the Committee following the meeting. He felt that the Council was missing an opportunity by not encouraging cafes and public houses along the coastal path, similar to the ones found at Burton Marsh. The Service Manager (Enterprise and Regeneration) responded that visitor numbers were calculated through the STEAM Model. This model was used across Wales and the latest report could be shared with the Committee. He also reported that a project including Sustrans was looking to link Flint and Connaught's Quay coastal cycle routes and increasing visitor numbers.

Councillor Haydn Bateman reported that he had recently been approached by visitors to Talacre Beach who had been disappointed with the amount of litter in the area and had commented that the bins had been overflowing. He also asked if works were progressing to improve the lighthouse at Talacre Beach. The Service Manager (Access and Environment) said that there was a balance in attracting people to an area but there was always a danger that those areas could be spoilt. He added that it was appropriate to ensure maintenance and management of an area to ensure it was resilient to take additional footfall. He advised that the lighthouse and Talacre Beach was under private ownership and the current owner had been addressing structural works inside the building before moving on to renovate the outside.

The Service Manager (Access and Environment) thanked Members for their kind words which he said he would pass on to the rangers and tourism officers following the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee endorse the current and emerging approaches to visitor promotion and destination management.

13. **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

There were two members of the public and three members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.15 pm)

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**Chairman**