

Bristol City Council

Minutes of Place Scrutiny Commission

11th February at 6.00pm



Members Present:-

Councillors Alexander, Bolton (Chair), Cheney, Cook, Pearce, Telford, Threlfall and Wright

Officers in Attendance:-

Johanna Holmes – Policy Adviser (Scrutiny), Peter Mann, Service Director Transport, Adrian Davis – Public Health Support for Strategic Transport, Ed Plowden, Service Manager Sustainable Transport, Nicola Philips - Public Transport Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Frost, Hiscott, Thomas and Watson sent their apologies. Councillor Alexander substituted for Councillor Hiscott. Councillor Telford substituted for Councillor Thomas

2. Public Forum (agenda item no.2)

The Commission received and noted the following questions and officer responses:

PQ 01 Councillor Negus – Low Emissions Zones

The Commission received and noted the following statements:

PS 01 Michael Owen – Residents Parking Schemes Finance update

PS 02 David Redgewell and Others - Bus Services

PS 03 Community Transport Providers in Bristol - Community Transport (in attendance)

PS 04 Bristol Parent Carers and Bristol Community Transport - Community Transport (in attendance)

PS 05 Councillor Morgan - No.77 Bus Service (in attendance)

PS 06 Edward Bowditch - Residents Parking Schemes Finance Update

A copy of the questions, answers and statements would be placed in the minutebook (accessed via Democratic Services).

The following comments in relation to the submissions were made:

PQ 01 The Commission noted the response and it was highlighted that the map of the Air Quality Monitoring Area was available on the Council website.

RESOLVED: That the public forum be noted.



3. Declarations of Interest (agenda item no.3)

None were received

4. Minutes – Place Scrutiny Commission 21st January 2016 (agenda item no.4)

The minutes of the 21st January 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16 (agenda item no.5)

The work programme was noted.

6. Action Sheet 21st January 2016 (agenda item no.6)

The current action sheet was noted. The Commission were reminded that the 'Our Resilient Future: A Framework for Climate and Energy Security' consultation was ongoing and if Members had comments to forward them to the Chair or Policy Advisor-Scrutiny who would formulate a response.

7. Chair's Business (agenda item no.7)

The Chair reported that the Housing Inquiry Day report had been presented to Full Council and would be presented to Cabinet in March. If Commission Members had any comments please forward them to the Chair.

8. Wessex Bus Company (agenda item no.8)

Paul Churchman, Business Consultant for Wessex attended for a discussion about bus services. Paul Churchman made the following introduction;

- a. Wessex was the City's second largest bus operator, operating since 2007 initially through Park and Ride Services, tendered services for the University of the West of England and contractual work from Bristol and South Gloucestershire Councils. Commercial services had been developed through identification of new links and services. The Company operated 110 vehicles in the Bristol Bath area with circa 125 staff and an average fleet age of five years. An OLEV bid had been submitted for hydrogen buses in Bristol and Bath for which the result was not yet known.
- b. Bristol was a challenging small City due to the water ways and congested roads. Delays to services were due to traffic and the number of cars in the City, compounded by road works including Metrobus. A smaller number of delays were due to the maintenance of vehicles. The Company had invested in driver training and recruitment to provide a high quality experience, lower staff turnover and focus on quality, rebranding and keeping fares down.



In discussion, the following points were made:

- c. Members were concerned about the supported 506 service that operated around Spike Island since 2011. The service had been fined a number of times and improved slightly over the years. Paul Churchman confirmed that it was in the interests of the operator to build the customer base of a supported service and aim to make the route commercially viable as operators retained the revenue. The route suffered from traffic issues and road works.
- d. Members highlighted the additional number 1 service provided by Wessex, on part of the same route provided by First. There were concerns that customers have been getting on the bus to find that they only get part way to where they expected. Paul Churchman confirmed that there had been a small amount of confusion but reassured Members that the bus driver would be able to advise of the route and the front of the bus showed the destination. Following market research the shorter route was identified as more viable and reliable as it would not cross the City Centre. Members suggested further publicity about the route and its parameters.
- e. It was suggested that Wessex should promote their routes more in order to compete with other bus operators in the City. Paul Churchman confirmed that a media push was planned for later in 2016. Wessex were keen to be informed of any routes that were not currently well served or not connected to the bus network.

RESOLVED:- That the discussion be noted.

9. Transport Poverty (agenda item no.9)

The Commission received a report from the Public Health Support Officer for Strategic Transport which outlined the background and research surrounding transport poverty.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. There was no overall definition of 'transport poverty' but it was used to refer to households or individuals that were struggling or unable to make the journeys they need in order to gain access to people, goods and services. 'Spatial mismatch' referred to skills located in one area and jobs in another, unable to be reached by a transport solution within a time or budget.
- b. The general link between transport poverty and women was discussed with women more likely to walk to work within a local time and distance limit because of childcare responsibilities. Another factor particularly applicable to women was the general issue of physical risk and personal safety on public transport. Time spent waiting at bus stops, compounded by unreliability of buses arrival times at buses in isolated locations were of particular concern.
- c. In Bristol, installation of Real Time Information (RTI) screens and the use of smartphone apps made it possible to minimize the time spent at bus shelters and Wessex were implored to improve their RTI performance so that bus times could be viewed by those using the TravelWest App. Bus shelters themselves had been made more open and visible, e.g. at the



new Metrobus bus stops emergency help buttons and CCTV with connection to emergency operators would increase user safety.

- d. Evidence had shown that the interior design and lighting of buses, bus marshalls and screens showing CCTV images within the bus were all factors that could reduce incidences of anti-social behaviour. Improved behaviour leads to patronage increases and allows a more commercially viable service.
- e. The Chair suggested that safety on buses and in particular the safety of women, could be added to the list of possible topics for discussion during the next municipal year. It was highlighted however, that the Women's Commission were considering transport and safety for women, linking with research done through universities. **ACTION: Policy Advisor – Scrutiny to add to the list of possible topics for the work programme.**
- f. Members discussed access to transport services in job poor neighbourhoods in order to assist job seeker access to the labour market. In Bristol, it was reported that Bristol Community Transport had secured a bid to the Coastal Community Grant in partnership between Severnside Business for Wessex to provide bus services to link Lawrence Weston, Shirehampton and Avonmouth. Also, the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) had been utilised, for example, to provide bus tickets for targeted groups and loans through the Bristol Credit Unions to purchase bicycles. **ACTION: EP to provide output reports for Members for information.** Members also highlighted the need to ensure job creation and virtual work spaces in those local areas rather than concentrate on the need to travel elsewhere.
- g. It was noted that some employer supported bus services existed and Corporate Travel Schemes such as with FirstBus to gain 10% discount. Bristol City Council was a member of the First Corporate Travel Scheme although Members were surprised it was not publicised within the Council more widely.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) **the report was noted.**
- (ii) **Safety on buses and in particular the safety of women to be added to the list of possible work programme items for the next municipal year.**
- (iii) **Information to be circulated regarding output reports for LSTF schemes providing access to transport services in job poor neighbourhoods in order to assist job seeker access to the labour market.**

10. Community Transport (agenda item no.11)

The Commission received a report from the Service Director: Transport to consider the current community transport provision and upcoming changes.

In discussion, the following was noted:



- a. The rebate for the carriage of Concessionary Travelcard holders was due to cease at the end of March 2016 following a one year extension to the budget in 2015/16. This had already ceased in North Somerset and was under review in South Glos.
- b. Under new arrangements, the key objectives for Community Transport would then be translated into outcomes to address the needs of users of the Voluntary and Community Sector Services, including Community Transport. The consultation process would run for 13 weeks until the 15th February 2015. Community Transport providers had been involved in consultation sessions.
- c. The benefits of the new strategy could include linking transport services to social care, youth services and other collaborations to raise provision, such as training drivers in Counselling and listening techniques.
- d. The link could be further extended to public health and NHS Commissioning with more joined up thinking around primary and secondary care. Officers confirmed that although isolated examples had made such achievements (such as through Section 106 funding for the new Bristol hospital), it had not translated into continued provision for further efficiencies.
- e. Members were interested in research which illustrated the cost benefit of community transport to groups such as the NHS, CCG and hospital trusts. It was argued that there was a social benefit from Community Transport due to the prevention of health deterioration compared to the cost of hospitalization. Officers agreed to ascertain whether any of the funding would be from the Public Health budget. **ACTION: information to be circulated via the Policy Advisor – Scrutiny.**
- f. With reference to the statement submitted by Bristol Parent Carers (highlighting the ‘transport poor’ group of disabled children), officers confirmed that the organization could apply under the new pooled arrangements from 2017 by demonstrating how they would meet the outcomes. In the meantime the priority was to maintain the community transport budget on a firm platform.
- g. Representatives from Bristol Community Transport highlighted that voluntary groups had successfully been awarded grants for projects within Bristol which contributed to the sector over and above the funds received from the Council.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) **the report was noted.**
- (ii) **Information to be circulated regarding whether any funding from Public Health was included within the proposed grant for Community Transport**

11. Consultation on Supported Bus Services (agenda item no.10)

The Commission received a report from the Service Director: Transport to consider the proposed consultation process for Supported Bus Services and provide comments.



In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. Following past budget cuts, discussions had taken place with operators to consider all supported services and certain journeys had then been commercialized. Any further cuts were likely to impact on the network as the remaining subsidized routes were less likely to be commercially viable.
- b. Officers confirmed that there were joint supported services with all four surrounding local authorities. Members highlighted that reductions in the supported bus services of surrounding local authorities often impacted on wards within Bristol.
- c. The long term aim was to commercialise and/or reduce the subsidy for supported bus routes and services through increased passengers. The use of clear timetables, branding, smartphone apps and RTI updates all helped increase bus patronage. The majority of contracts used involved an incentive for the operator through the retention of ticket revenue.
- d. The no.5 bus service was highlighted as low performing as blighted by lack of drivers and also incidences of missing bus stops out to make up time. Officers confirmed that fines were imposed when services were not provided as contracted. Fines could be enforced through a number of measures including customer feedback and funds returned to the supported services budget. First Bus had launched a consultation regarding the no.5 service to gather feedback to aid improvement.
- e. A planned 'Bristol Ageing Better' project aimed to assist older people to stay acquainted with bus services, or re-aquaint to increase confidence and reduce anxiety. First Bus also provided Safer and Better Journey cards which could be populated with specific instructions to present to the driver to help with transactions.
- f. When Section 106 funds were available they were generally used to 'pump prime' services that may be commercially viable in the long term but which were too costly for operators to take on the initial short term risk.
- g. Collected bus service data covered whole journeys and was not specific enough to assess whether parts of the routes were viable for commercialisation. Members suggested that clearer and cleaner data could lead to elements of a service no longer requiring supported funds.
- h. Members highlighted that where supported funds provided services that helped residents reach the supermarket, the supermarket should be approached to assist with provision for that service.
- i. Bus operators First Bus and Wessex highlighted that they would prefer all services to be commercially viable in order to be able to keep revenue. Services that were deemed in need of support were also likely to have a higher rate of concessionary travel and although services were required, people were not necessarily going to use them every day.



- j. With reference to the consultation, Members suggested that it was important to consult 'not quite bus users' through facebook community pages, hospital visitors, employers, residents within council flats etc. It was suggested that the consultation should be sent to all Councillors, and other employers within the city using the LSTF database. Councillors should pass the information onto Neighbourhood Partnership forums. It was also suggested that 'hospitals' be added question no.8 - the purpose of the journey, and Scooter/Motorbike be added to question no.10.
- k. Members suggested that further market research should be carried out (perhaps by the bus companies) in order to consider alternative bus routes. It was suggested that university research could assist with the latest mathematical modelling.
- l. It was suggested that local employment hubs should be considered as not all journeys need to go through the city centre. It was suggested that new cross city routes could be viable, including a service from East Bristol to Temple Meads.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) **the report was noted**

12. Residents Parking Schemes Finance Update (information only)

The Commission received a report from the Service Director: Transport outlining the financial position of the Inner Ring Residents' Parking Schemes as a twelve month update. A supplementary note outlining the position for Kingsdown, Cotham and Redcliffe was tabled at the meeting (with a copy added to the minutebook).

It was confirmed that the four year term for the repayment of capital costs would end in 2018/19.

RESOLVED:- the report was noted

13. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting would take place at 2pm on 17th March 2016

