

Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 25 January 2017

The County Council at its meeting on 10 November referred the motion by Councillor Ros Kayes (County Councillor for Bridport): Clause 21 of the Bus Bill - seconded by Janet Dover (County Councillor for Colehill and Stapehill) – to the Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration at its meeting on 25 January 2015; the Motion being:-

'This Council notes:

1. That the Bus Services Bill currently passing through Parliament includes Clause 21 that will effectively "prohibit a local authority from forming a company for the purposes of providing a local bus service".
2. That this might have profound implications both for the proposed Combined Authority in seeking Local Transport Authority powers and in DCC's ability to support small community transport schemes with its own fleet as is currently happening in Southill and Portland.
3. That the Localism Act (2011) provides general powers of competence to local authorities.
4. That municipal bus companies like Reading and Nottingham provide some of the best bus services in the country and have a successful track record of increasing bus passenger numbers and providing high quality bus services.
5. That polling by We Own It found that a majority of the public (57%) oppose clause 21, whilst just 22% support it. The opposition to Clause 21 is consistent across voters from all political parties.

This council believes:

1. Clause 21 contradicts the general powers of competence and the spirit of the Localism Act 2011.
2. If there is a need and a demand from their public, then Councils should be able to provide their own bus services
3. Should they wish, Councils should be legally able to follow the model developed by Reading and Nottingham.
4. Consequently Clause 21 should be omitted from the Bus Services Bill.

This council resolves:

1. To write to Lord Ahmad and to call on the Department for Transport to omit Clause 21 from the final legislation
2. To write to local MPs to ask them to oppose clause 21 when the Bus Services Bill reaches the House of Commons and ask them to write to Lord Ahmad and the Department of Transport to raise concerns about Clause 21.'

Unless determined otherwise by the Chairman the maximum time to be allowed to present this motion shall be 10 minutes.

Associated with this, the Bus Subsidies Working Group met on 29 November 2016 to consider evidence of the reasoning for the decisions taken by Cabinet for how bus subsidies would be managed and applied in the future. In doing this, they also took the opportunity to give some initial thought to the motion and made recommendations on what progress might be made. The notes of the meeting are attached.