



## Bus Subsidies Task and Finish Group

Minutes of the meeting held in the Churchill Room, Colliton House, Colliton Park, Dorchester on Tuesday, 29 November 2016

**Present:**

Hilary Cox (Chairman)  
Andy Canning and Daryl Turner

Officers Attending: Andrew Shaw (Dorset Travel Team Service Manager) and David Northover (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

**Chairman**

- 1 **Resolved**  
That Hilary Cox be elected as Chairman of the Working Group.

**Apologies for Absence**

- 2 No apologies for absence were received from members.

**Confidentiality**

- 3 **Resolved**  
That the agendas and reports of meetings of the Working Group be regarded as open to the public, as necessary.

**Terms of Reference**

- 4 The Panel noted its Terms of Reference and what these entailed.

**Notes**

- 5 The informal notes of the meeting held on 28 September 2016 were noted.

**Evidence of reasoning for decisions taken about bus subsidies**

- 6 At its meeting on 28 September the Group considered that in order to determine what process had been followed for the reasoning behind the decisions taken by Cabinet about how bus subsidies should be managed, there was a need to understand if that process was delivering what it was designed to achieve and in a way that was sustainable and manageable. Given this, the Group asked that evidence should be provided on criteria identified to determine this.

Officers were asked to analyse each criterion to see on what basis the decisions taken had been made, what had been taken into account in coming to that decision and the reasoning for this. From this analysis, evidence had been able to be provided which showed that the decisions taken were on the basis of agreed strategies, policies and plans and that the application of these had formed the basis on how bus subsidies should be managed and, crucially, the reasoning for this. The Group were satisfied with the reasoning provided which was seen as being the justification for the decisions made.

As part of the discussion about the evidence, the Group:-

- established how the Cabinet got the point of making the decision they did;
- understood how strategies, policies and plans were applied, with particular reference to the Dorset passenger transport Strategy and what this entailed

- understood how rural services were intended to be managed in the future and that the services to market towns could play some part in how these might be maintained, in part and where practicable, particularly if they were en route;
- understood how needs of communities were being met and the means by which this could be achieved.
- understood how the optimum number of people could be served by passenger transport and where community transport alternatives could play their part
- understood what the TAS report entailed in so far as how the business case for the Passenger Transport Service Procurement was being made.
- acknowledged that the attention of communities needed to be drawn to what was happening to their services so that they might benefit from the toolkit for developing community transport alternatives;
- learnt how the communication strategy was being applied;
- understood what the EQIA entailed and how this was applied;
- were informed that bus contracts were in the process of being renewed with the tendering process being undertaken in early 2017. New routes would be confirmed and drawn to the attention of the Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting in March 2017.

### **Noted**

#### **Consideration of Notice of Motion - Clause 21 of the Bus Bill**

7 The Group took the opportunity to consider a motion by Councillor Ros Kayes on Clause 21 of the Bus Bill, prior to it being reported to Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration at their meeting on 25 January 2017. The Bill was in the process of passing through Parliament and the motion encouraged the County Council to play their part in influencing how this proceeded and on what basis this should be.

Whilst the motion did not directly relate to the issue of bus subsidies, it was felt that the principle of the motion had a bearing on how passenger transport could be delivered in future years. On that basis the Group felt that, in principle, the motion had merit.

Although there currently was no plans for the Authority to pursue the formation of an 'arms length' company for the purposes of running their own service, the Clause 21 of the Bus Bill sought to deny local authorities the opportunity of doing this if they so wished. Accordingly it was felt that they would be disenfranchised in their ability to pursue this course of action if they considered this to be viable option.

The Group considered it necessary to do what could be done whilst it could be done, and, so as to take the opportunity to influence proceedings at the earliest possible stage, asked that a response be drafted by officers which set out how Clause 21 would affect the County Council's ability to manage its own passenger transport arrangements in the best interest of Dorset as it chose and saw fit and the means by which it would be able to do this.

Members of the County Council could then be given their own opportunity to endorse this on an individual basis, if they so wished. The basis of any draft would only provide what the facts of the Bill were and what it entailed and would be for members' guidance only, for them to make their own judgment on its merits. This, in turn, could form the basis of a recommendation to Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny

Committee at the their meeting on 25 January to formalise any endorsement in a letter to the Secretary of State.

The Group considered that this matter should proceed on that basis.

**Work Programme**

- 8 The Group considered that with the recommendation to Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January it had, for now, achieved its purpose and the basis of its remit had been fulfilled.

Meeting Duration: 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm