

Meeting	Economic Development and Transport Policy and Scrutiny Committee (Pre Decision Calling In)
Date	18 May 2016
Present	Councillors N Barnes, Cullwick, Cuthbertson (Chair), D'Agorne, Gates, D Myers, Rawlings and Warters
In attendance	Councillor Kramm Councillor Gillies

4. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

5. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been seven registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

John Bibby stated that he was a member of the York Bus Forum and was opposed to the reductions in the subsidised bus service budget for the following reasons:

- He did not believe that the cuts were necessary. The total amounted to £400,000 and was a small amount. The proposals were short sighted and accountancy led.
- The proposed cuts were vicious and discriminatory and would impact on the most needy and those without their own transport. Members' attention was drawn to the health, educational and social impact of the proposals.
- The consultation that had taken place had been rushed and unfit for purpose.
- The Bus Forum was currently developing long term policies to improve local transport and it called upon the Council to not proceed with the proposed cuts.

The Chair stated that Members of the committee had also received written representation from Mr Bibby on behalf of the Bus Forum.

Mrs Linda Nelson stated that she supported the comments made on behalf of the York Bus Forum. She explained some of the impacts of the removal of bus subsidies, particularly on the elderly and on children travelling to school. She stated that Dial a Ride was not a suitable alternative. Mrs Nelson drew particular attention to the impact of changes to the Number 20 service.

Mr Graham Collett stated that the proposed cuts amounted to a saving of only 0.3% of the council's budget and therefore would hardly be noticeable. There was no justification for the cuts to be implemented and no evidence to justify the proposed actions. Mr Collett requested that the Committee advised the Executive Member to reject the proposals and await the outcome of legislation on bus services.

Mr Ron Healey drew particular attention to the impact of the proposed reduction in subsidy to route 20. He stated that a more strategic view needed to be taken. The focus should be on alternatives to car travel and tackling emissions on a city-wide basis. It was important to take time to develop the options, given that legislation on buses was expected.

Mr Derek Paterson spoke on behalf of Rawcliffe Parish Council. He stated that the Parish Council had not been consulted on the proposals as the timing of the parish council meeting had not provided an opportunity for the proposals to be discussed. Rawcliffe residents had raised issues in respect of bus travel for a number of years. Mr Paterson expressed concern at the use of the word "significant" in the report, as the responses were not statistically significant in number. He urged that a statistically significant survey be undertaken.

Mr Toby Hart expressed concerns regarding the impact of the proposals on social and economic inclusion. He stated that the consultation had not included visitors to the city. The proposals would make bus travel less competitive. Mr Hart requested that, in the immediate and longer term, consideration be given to seeking alternative sources of funding in order to have a balanced transport system. Mr Hart requested that, as an

alternative to the proposals, the decision to freeze car parking charges be reversed.

Mr Dave Merrett expressed concern at the impact on Sunday services. He stated that he was particularly concerned about the impact on services in the Southbank and Bishopthorpe area. Cuts to services would make it particularly difficult for shift workers, those who worked late or people using the bus services to get to events in town. It was also socially important to maintain the services. Whilst the pressures on budgets were recognised, the decision to freeze car parking fees could be re-examined as an alternative. York was unusual in that its Park and Ride facility generated substantial profits.

Members noted that written representation had also been submitted by:

- John Yates – Executive Member of York Older People’s Assembly
- Carol Atkinson

6. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair.

7. Called-In Item Pre-decision - Delivery of Reductions in the Subsidised Bus Service Budget

Members received a report which provided background to the pre-decision call-in of the Delivery of Reductions in the Subsidised Bus Service Budget. The report set out the reasons for the call-in and invited the Committee to consider what feedback, if any, it may wish to make.

In accordance with the arrangements for pre-decision scrutiny call-in, three Members (Councillors D’Agorne, Craghill and Kramm) had called in the intended decision in relation to the Delivery of Reductions in the Subsidised Bus Service Budget for the following reason:

“The impact that this is likely to have on bus service provision across the city and potential to undermine the sustainable

transport strategy as set out in the Local Plan Transport Plan 3 means that changes should be subject to cross party scrutiny before Executive Member approval. Depending on the outcome of the consultation consideration may also need to be given to alternative strategies to more cost effectively provide evening and weekend services in the affected areas. (This might include Dial a Ride, council minibuses services etc)”

Councillor Kramm spoke on behalf of the Call-in Members. He stated that the impact of the changes would undermine the sustainability of the transport strategy as set out in LPT Plan 3. He expressed concern at the lack of consultation that had taken place and stated that evening and Sunday services were essential and not a luxury, particularly as the NHS and other services sought to provide a seven day a week offer. Councillor Kramm stated that the Park and Ride Service offered only a very limited service in the evenings. He also drew attention to issues in respect of air pollution and congestion and stated that people should be encouraged to use public transport. Consideration should be given to seeking sponsorship for some of the services. The aim should be to have the best bus services for residents and thereby encourage more people to use them.

Members noted that the decisions on the delivery of reductions in the subsidised bus service budget were scheduled to take place at a Decision Session on 2 June 2016.

The Executive Member for Transport and Planning stated that £350k of savings to this budget had to be made over the next two years. This was not a situation that the Council would wish to be in. The bus services were privately operated and run for the shareholders. They received a subsidy from the Council but the routes that were potentially under threat were those which were not used by a sufficient number of people. 70% of the costs of the service were for the costs of the driver and hence the use of smaller size vehicles would not make a significant difference in costs. The Executive Member stated that the Council had not reduced bus subsidies for several years. No one had come forward with costed alternatives. Decisions had yet to be made on when and how the reductions would be made. The budgetary situation meant that this issue had to be faced but it was acknowledged that some residents did not wish to travel by public transport and preferred to walk or use cars or

other modes of transport. If the buses were well used there would be no need for the services to be subsidised.

Officers gave an update on the report. Members were informed that the lead petitioner for petition b was Ms Linda Nelson and not Ms L Thompson as had been specified in the report. Members were informed that written submissions had also been received from York Green Party, Huntington and New Earswick Liberal Democrats and Councillors Dew and Aspden.

Officers stated that the proposals had been put forward to implement the decision of Full Council regarding the reduction in the subsidised bus service budget. The Council would still be allocating £500,000 per annum to subsidise bus services following the proposed reduction. The timescale for the consultation had had to take into account the fact that the contract was due to come to an end in August and hence tendering arrangements would take place in early June. Discussions were ongoing with bus operators and community transport providers. Officers had also been working with York University and other organisations regarding contributions towards the costs of particular routes.

Members raised the following issues:

- Consideration could be given to alternative sources of transport in rural areas, for example taxi buses. There may be a willingness by some users to pay more for this type of service.
- Particular concerns were raised in respect of route 20 and access to the out of town retail and, in future, the Community Stadium. It was noted that some parts of this route were used more than others. During the daytime it was mostly used by those with free bus passes. Whilst it was acknowledged that the passes were vital for many older people, this did have commercial implications.
- A suggestion was put forward that the route to Stamford Bridge should not continue beyond Dunnington.
- Concerns were expressed that not all parish councils had had an opportunity to respond to the consultation. Members suggested that they should be given the opportunity to do so before decisions were taken. Consultation should also take place with Residents' Associations.
- Consideration should be given as to whether there were ways in which Parish Councils could contribute financially to

mitigate the impact of some of the proposals on their communities. The possibility of utilising ward funding for this purpose should also be explored.

- More work could be carried out to look at alternatives, including giving consideration to suggestions put forward during the consultation and looking at reducing the frequency of some services rather than withdrawing routes.
- Further consideration could be given as to whether the Dial a Ride facility could be developed to mitigate the impact of the reduction in subsidies.
- Consideration could be given as to how the Council, working with operators, could do more to raise awareness of the public transport that was available.
- Some Members stated that the decision to make reductions to the subsidised bus service budget could have been avoided if alternative budgetary decisions had been taken.
- Concerns were expressed that the Community Impact Assessment had not given sufficient consideration to the impact on gender and on young people, particularly in respect of safety implications if routes were removed or the frequency of services was reduced.
- It was important that the Council and the operators liaised with health services in order to ensure that residents were able to access these facilities by public transport.
- In view of the impact of the proposals, consideration should be given to the decisions being taken by the Executive rather than an Executive Member.

Resolved: That the Committee recommended that:

- (i) In view of the significance of the decision on local communities, consideration be given to referring the decision to the Executive rather than the Executive Member for Transport and Planning.
- (ii) Prior to any decision being made, a new Community Impact Assessment be undertaken to give greater consideration to the impact of any changes on gender and on young people, particularly in respect of any safety and security issues if bus routes were to be removed or reduced.
- (iii) Consideration be given to exploring alternative sources of funding, for example the possibility of utilising ward funding, to mitigate the proposed reduction of financial support from the Council.

- (iv) Prior to any decision being taken, consultation should take place with bodies omitted from the original consultation, for example Residents' Associations, and with those Parish Councils who had not had an opportunity to respond to the original consultation within the timescales that had been set.
- (v) The outcome of the consultation be considered as part of the decision-making process, including any alternative suggestions put forward.
- (vi) Consideration be given to address the concerns that had been raised regarding service routes 10 and 20, particularly as to how they affect travellers to schools, hospitals, Monks Cross and Clifton Moor.
- (vii) The decisions made should reflect the comments raised during the EDAT Calling-In meeting, including consideration of reducing the frequency of services rather than withdrawing routes, the point being that the axing of services leads to a vicious circle of decline.

Reason: To enable the called-in matter to be dealt with efficiently and in accordance with the pre-decision call in arrangements.

Councillor Cuthbertson, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.30 pm].