

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - PUBLIC TRANSPORT ISSUES

MEETING DATE Monday, 8 December 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Robert Finnamore (Chair), Councillor (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Charlie Bromilow, Margaret France, Mike Handley, Matthew Lynch, Mark Jarnell, June Molyneaux and Kim Snape

OFFICERS: Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Customer and Advice Services) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Julia Berry

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor

148 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of any interests.

149 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Public Transport Issues meeting held on 4 November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

1410 Response to the consultation on the draft criteria for assessing Lancashire County Council subsidised bus services

The Group received a copy of the completed consultation on the new criteria for subsidised bus services proposed by Lancashire County Council. Although the consultation had finished the Group had been invited to submit their views by Lancashire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, Councillor John Fillis, at a previous meeting.

The main points that the group wanted to comment on were around social isolation and rural accessibility as it appeared that there was no scoring criteria listed to cover these issues and Members considered this contrary to both Council's strategic objectives relating to health and wellbeing.

RESOLVED – That the revised criteria for Subsidised Bus Services to be implemented by Lancashire County Council be brought to a future meeting of the Group.

Cumbria County Council - Community and Rural Transport Scheme

As part of the review of the Subsidised Bus Services being undertaken by Lancashire County Council, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport had talked to the Group about the possibility of a Parish Partnership scheme that was being looked into as a potential alternative for bus travel in rural parts of the borough.

Democratic Services had undertaken to research similar schemes to that which had been discussed to ascertain if there was anything already available that the Group could investigate to ascertain if this type of scheme would be a viable option for the parishes of Chorley.

It appeared that Cumbria County Council operates three schemes, Rural Wheels, Village Wheels and Community Wheels that broadly fit the description that included:

Rural Wheels

Rural Wheels provides door-to-door transport for people who do not have, or are unable to access scheduled transport. The service can be used for a variety of purposes including, making connections with buses or trains, doctor, dentist or optician appointments, visiting friends or family in hospital, shopping or visiting friends or family

It does not duplicate other County Council transport provision and therefore cannot be used for transport to day care, school, nursery or college and cannot be used for hospital appointments/treatment if Patient Transport is available.

The Rural Wheels scheme uses a 'Smartcard' to pay for travel and a central booking system to plan journeys and passengers need to apply for the Smartcard before they are able to travel. The value of the Smartcard can be topped up with the transport provider or alternatively at local post offices, libraries and mobile libraries and transport requests must be booked by telephone before noon the day before travelling and passengers may be asked to be flexible about their travel time and also to share transport which will be at a reduced fare.

Village Wheels

Village Wheels provides a timetabled service for communities to their nearest town and uses the Rural Wheels membership scheme, planning service for booking and smartcard for payment. As Village Wheels is not a registered bus service, passengers are unable to use their concessionary NOWcards.

Community Wheels

Following the allocation of Government funding specifically to develop Community Transport services, six new accessible minibuses were purchased by Cumbria County Council. These enhanced the fleet of Community Minibuses available countywide and their usage was prioritised to provide regular transport, driven by volunteer drivers in areas where scheduled bus services are not sustainable.

This scheme appears to be a partnership approach that sees the County Council and a local steering group, drawn from the local community working together to deliver the service; each partner having specific roles and responsibilities.

Cumbria County Council have provided the minibus asset and retained ownership of the vehicle, worked with the community through the steering group to develop a service that meets evidenced need and supports the recruitment of volunteer drivers. They also ensure volunteer drivers are Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checked (formerly Criminal Records Bureau CRB) and ensure volunteer drivers are trained to MiDAS standard and have full vehicle familiarisation and ensure that the community minibuses are legal, roadworthy and in the correct location. The day to day aspects of this are delivered by Cumbria Community Transport on behalf of the County Council, they also monitor usage, and provide information to the steering group regarding cost of provision and income generated.

The “Community” will form a steering group and take ownership of the service, they work together with the County Council to develop, support and promote the service and recruit a pool of volunteer drivers from their community to drive the minibus.

Passengers need to be registered with the Council’s Rural Wheels service and should pre-book their seat on the transport. This is because of the Section 19 permit legislation under which community minibuses can operate and the need for users of the vehicle to be part of a “membership” scheme.

Passenger fares generated offset the County Council’s running costs in providing the minibus. Fares are paid by Rural Wheels smartcard at a rate of 25p per mile. Concessionary NoWcards can’t be used on “Community Wheels” services as they are not scheduled bus services.

The minibuses are also available for hire to “not-for-profit” groups through Cumbria Community Transport. This helps to generate additional income and enhance the service viability.

The first Community Wheels started on 18th September 2013 in the Lakes and Lyth area providing Wednesday morning transport into Kendal from Crook, Winster, Crosthwaite, Underbarrow and Brigsteer.

A representative from Cumbria County Council would attend the next meeting of the Group to answer Members questions on the above schemes that would include usage, prices and frequency.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That Cumbria County Council be invited to a meeting on 29 January 2015.**
- 3. That Parish Councils be invited to a future meeting of the Group**

1412 Combined Authority - Revision to Scoping Document

The Group discussed the possibility of looking at the proposals for a Combined Transport Authority (CTA) for Lancashire as part of a wider discussion on Combined Authorities (CA).

Since May 2013 there has been a Transport for Lancashire Committee, chaired by the Leader of Lancashire County Council, Councillor Jennifer Mein and has representation from the two unitary Councils, Blackburn and Blackpool, Network Rail, Highways Agency and the Department for Transport. The Committee had been established after

the Government agreed in September 2012 to hand power to new local transport bodies as part of its localism agenda.

In May 2014 the role of the Group was amended and will now advise the LEP Board with regard to progress and delivery of all transport schemes programmed for delivery through the Growth Deal.

The Group AGREED to consider the role of a Combined Transport Authority to understand and comment upon what a typical existing Combined Transport Authority as part of a Combined Authority would focus their attention on, for example, their role, priorities and projects.

The Group could form a view of the likely impact a Combined Transport Authority would have on Chorley and make recommendations to the Future Governance Viability Working Group of Chorley Council on what should be the priorities/areas of focus for a Combined Transport Authority for Lancashire in order to improve public transport for Chorley residents.

The Group considered looking into the feasibility of inviting a representative of the Manchester Transport Authority to a meeting of the Group in order to explore areas of best practice within this area.

RESOLVED – That the scoping document be amended to reflect the Groups consideration of a Combined Transport Authority for Lancashire

Chair

Date