

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Sustainable Public Transport

Thursday, 18th February 2021, 5.00 pm

The Lancastrian, Town Hall, Chorley

Call in (audio only) +44 20 3321 5257 Conference ID: 841 149 759#

Agenda

Apologies

1 **Minutes of meeting Friday, 29 January 2021 of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Sustainable Public Transport** (Pages 3 - 6)

2 **Minutes of meeting Thursday, 4 February 2021 of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Sustainable Public Transport** (Pages 7 - 10)

3 **Declarations of any Interest**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any pecuniary interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda.

If you have a pecuniary interest you must withdraw from the call. Normally you should leave the call before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.

4 **Draft Final Report**

To receive and consider the draft Final Report.

Gary Hall
Chief Executive

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Sustainable Public Transport Councillor Kim Snape (Chair), and Councillors Julia Berry, Martin Boardman, Val Counce, Mark Clifford, Gordon France, Tom Gray, Yvonne Hargreaves, Laura Lennox and June Molyneaux.

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Sir Lindsay Hoyle believed that a good starting point would be for Chorley Council to reflect upon this question and think what they are doing to ensure Chorley has more sustainable public transport. He believed that a good starting point would be for Chorley Council to seek a greater voice and push for greater control at the local level.

Bus and taxi operators should be incentivised to convert to electric and cleaner fuels, and stressed that it was important for the council to cooperate and work closely to ensure good delivery, and felt that a 'lead by example' approach could work with the implementation of electric charging taxi ranks.

Councillor Molyneaux added that when hearing from Northern Trains, they explained that they consulted with the County Council. She asked if he could persuade Northern Trains to talk to Chorley and the Parish Councils as well. Sir Lindsay Hoyle agreed and felt that the County Council should be having regular meetings with the District, Town and Parish Councils to ensure all are better informed and that there was a free flow of dialogue and exchange of information.

He recounted the decrease in service in Chorley, and reminisced it was once possible to get the train to Scotland, and to Yorkshire but the County Council allowed the dominance of Wigan and the routes were resultingly lost and never replaced. He felt that it was important for the Council to push back if they believed their area was not being serviced as it should.

It was summarised that with all the improvements made, and money spent Chorley had not gained the benefits that other areas did.

Councillor Kim Snape (Chair) - *Do you think Chorley would be better served for public transport by being included in the greater Manchester transport network?*

The MP agreed and explained that fares were more expensive in Chorley and the connection was weaker. 50% of Chorley's population worked out of town and more needed to be done to encourage the use of public transport. This would result in a cleaner area with less congestion. He believed that a devolved bus service to the local level would be best for the users in Chorley.

Councillor Laura Lennox - *I would like to know if Parliament can push for re-regulation of public transport to enable it to become more accessible and consequently more sustainable.*

Sir Lindsay Hoyle explained that it was possible, but it was not on the agenda. It was widely recognised that it was more efficient to have a nationalised train and bus service. There was no evidence that private enterprise was more efficient but acknowledged that the past was often viewed with rose tinted glasses. He explained that when the Local Authority were running the buses, the aim was to meet the needs of the people rather than profit. He highlighted the issue of multiple train operators which can cause users confusion and inconvenience as certain tickets could only be used at certain times on certain routes.

He remarked that failed enterprise would often give the keys back and gave the example of East Coast Train Line. In public hands, it was performing better than it did privately.

Councillor Lennox highlighted the deregulated buses in Cornwall, controlled by the Council but ran by private enterprise. The MP highlighted that in that case, the local authority had no choice but to take control as the private operators returned the franchise, but highlighted that there were many factors that had to be considered, especially into sustainability for the tax payer, but felt that its success had been boosted by the tourism in the area.

Councillor Yvonne Hargreaves asked if it was a good idea to involve bus companies more in the planning process. The MP replied that it was positive to meet with them but warned that their focus would be profitability rather than the needs of the residents.

Relating to the cost of public transport, Sir Lindsay Hoyle believed that raising the prices was not productive as it frequently caused the cycle of fewer people being able to afford the bus, which then resulted in less people using the bus, and then that would result with the route being classed as “commercially unviable”.

He added that Chorley was behind when it came to technology available as there are no bus stops that highlight when the next bus is due. He did praise that travel to the Youth Zone was offered for £1 but felt that it should be free, in addition to further youth subsidies.

Sir Lindsay Hoyle continued to say that a service that ran locally could pick the right routes with the right buses. At present, routes that were not profitable were pulled without regard for passengers and the local area. Devolved powers to the local authority would be able to manage routes and subsidies the routes that were in danger, he noted that there was a rise in routes that had been subsidised by Chorley Council and asked what the County Council were doing for Chorley in return.

Councillor Gordon France agreed and raised that the number 24A bus route was subsidised 70% by Chorley Council but have no say in the route. He then asked for more information about the double decker hydrogen bus fleet in Aberdeen.

Sir Lindsay believed that hydrogen was a great fuel source, and better than electric but Aberdeen’s hydrogen buses were currently a trial, and the progress unknown. The success of the trail had the potential to shape the view of bus companies on hydrogen’s future.

Councillor Hargreaves added that hydrogen was twice the price of electric, and that the infrastructure was not in place.

Alison Marland – Principle Planning Officer -*The National Bus Strategy was due to be launched in 2020 (backed up by a comprehensive settlement in the Spending Review, which would give local authorities and bus operators the ability to plan for years to come and ensure the sustainability of critical services while stemming cuts and working to increase patronage). Can you provide any information on the National Bus Strategy timetable and how can local authorities be involved?*

The pandemic delayed progress, but the budget was due soon.

Alison Marland - *Have you any update on devolution or combined authorities for Lancashire?*

The County Council would be unlikely to give up the power that they have but the best way to explore models was to raise issues to the County, and to cooperate with nearby councils.

Alison Marland - *In light of Covid-19 and the amounts of subsidies being provided including changes to routes and timetables, has the government a recovery plan?*

This was believed to be a matter of wait and see, there would likely be upcoming cuts. A new budget was due but he did not wish to speculate. He added that he hoped that there was more emphasis on using rail for freight.

Alison Marland - *What sustainable public transport initiatives are the government proposing? Lancashire County has bid for public transport initiatives e.g. electric buses but has not been successful and cannot afford to do this alone*

Sir Lindsay believed that a strategy was needed to be created that suited the needs of the population.

Alison Marland - *How can we progress a new station at Coppull?*

It was believed that golden opportunities had been missed when the land was sold and houses were built without a long term plan for the station. Money had been put aside for a feasibility study. He noted that there needed to be a new motorway junction in addition to the station at Coppull to help the new homes.

21.OS4 Date of Next Meeting

4 February 2021, 18:00.

Chair

Date



Minutes of **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Sustainable Public Transport**

Meeting date **Thursday, 4 February 2021**

Members present: Councillor Kim Snape (Chair), and Councillors Julia Berry, Mark Clifford, Gordon France, Tom Gray, Yvonne Hargreaves, Laura Lennox and June Molyneaux

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Deputy Chief Executive), Jonathan Noad (Director of Development and Place), Alison Marland (Principal Planning Officer) and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

20.OS5 Minutes of meeting Friday, 29 January 2021 of Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Sustainable Public Transport

Minutes of the meeting Friday 29 January 2021 to be considered at the next Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Sustainable Public Transport taking place 18 February 2021.

20.OS6 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations.

20.OS7 Question and Answer with Chorley Council's Chris Sinnott, Deputy Chief Executive and Jonathan Noad, Director of Development and Place

The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group for Sustainable Public Transport welcomed Chris Sinnott, Deputy Chief Executive and Jonathan Noad, Director of Development and Place.

Members asked *“What incentive measures could be suggested to make sure Chorley’s fleet of licensed taxis quickly move onto clean zero carbon emitting models.”*

It was said that the process was not simple nor straight forward, but progress was being made, but with Jonathan Noad’s recent appointment, it would take time for matters to come to fruition.

Directives about green, efficient, electric vehicles and taxi’s changes were coming from Central Government, and the Council were in the process of updating the policies to ensure that they aligned.

A new Climate Change Working Group had been formed and this issue will feature on the agenda. It was understood that without careful consideration and cooperation, there would be push back from the trade due to the substantial costs involved.

Councillor Clifford returned and asked what more could be done to incentivise, encourage and promote the take up of electric and greener vehicles over carbon fueled vehicles.

Chris Sinnott explained that the Council had explored if it was possible to create a separate license for those with green vehicles, but the legislation was not in place.

Members asked if there was anything that Chorley could do to persuade or influence the County Council for a public transport service to cover the east to the west of Chorley, as the Task Group heard from Stagecoach that they do not want to deviate their service.

Chris Sinnott explained that they had been engaged with the County Council and Chorley Council continued to prevent gaps in the service with subsidies where necessary but the County Council were not interested in what Chorley had to say but were happy to take the money to fund the services. He added that the influence Chorley had was with the Local Plan, but the influence was limited against the Transport Operators or Transport Authority. In collaboration with West Lancashire and South Ribble a transport study was commissioned to form an evidence case which would be used in negotiations and discussions. Overall, Chorley agreed with what the County Council had done but it was the nuances that were often overlooked, with an example being the lack of a route from the east to the west of Chorley.

It was enquired if the cost for electric taxis were higher than carbon vehicles, as Stagecoach highlighted that a diesel bus that would last 15 years cost £250,000, an electric bus cost £400,000 and a hydrogen bus £500,000.

Chris Sinnott summarised that at present, electric was more expensive, but technology was evolving, charging points were becoming more common and faster, the capable range of electric vehicles were increasing, and price was decreasing.

The Task Group asked if there was the opportunity with the delayed County Council's Transport Plan to have fresh conversations about funding, investment, incentives, and tangible actions to be taken in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chris felt that there had to be the right balance, Chorley should continue to lobby, persuade, and build relationships with the County Council. But focus was needed on realistic outcomes, Chorley was not a Transport or Highways authority, but a community leader.

When asked about the timescales of adopting of cleaner vehicles and if there was a preference for either electric or hydrogen Chris felt that arbitrary timescales could undermine potential achievement. The Council did not have a position of preference as there were pros and cons of each source, the view of the Council is to have an efficient fleet of low emission vehicles.

Councillor Molyneaux asked if the planning process could be used to influence developers to think more about sustainable transport as sustainable transport rather than marketing. She gave the example in Adlington as a development was advertised

to have good transport links by bus with three a day, but failed to mention that they were not on the bus route, and it was not disclosed that the trains were infrequent.

Jonathan Noad felt that it was crucial for planning to have strong policies that could be used to set the standard going forward. There was an opportunity with the new local plan to strengthen policies and incorporate sustainable transport such as electric charging. Councillor Molyneaux felt it to be unusual that the social housing of which the tenants would be unable to afford an electric vehicle had electric charging points, yet the big 4 or 5 bedroom houses did not. Chris agreed and explained that the national policy plan was currently playing catch up.

Members asked if the Council could use a Section 106 agreement on new development stating that they must fund a bus route and added if the Council had given any consideration to operating its own small bus company.

Consideration had been given, but it was a difficult market to enter in terms of cost and the Council would not be able to support its operation. It was possible for a Section 106 to subsidise a bus route, but there would be considerable issues that could come from this. The route itself would need to be sustainable and successful otherwise the route would likely be discontinued after the funding was exhausted.

Relating to a question about additional funding for community travel to assist the most vulnerable residents, Chris Sinnott explained that it was a question that could be further elaborated on by the Communities Team, but he noted Central Lancs Dial-a-ride was funded by both the County Council and Chorley Council, although the levels of funding had been decreased.

The Chair asked if the Council could be doing more to use the rail stations to support the local economy and get more people into Chorley as some residents preferred going to other towns to shop.

Chris highlighted that there was Check Out Chorley and Choose Chorley, and these were at high footfall stations.

Members asked if there was consideration to add elements of gamification, for instance, the use of apps to encourage younger people to use public transport. Alison Marland, Principal Planning Officer explained that there were benefits to promoting the use of apps for information and ticketing and noted that an invitation was sent to Arriva Click to speak, as they were a provider of on demand transport.

20.OS8 Date of Next Meeting

18 February, 2021, 17:00

Chair

Date

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