

**REPORT FROM THE ENTERPRISE, GROWTH AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REGARDING SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICE  
CHANGES: CONSULTATION RESULTS**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **31<sup>st</sup> January 2012**

*From:* **Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **Not applicable** *Key Decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **To set out the comments and recommendations from the  
Committee's analysis of the results of the bus service  
consultation, and future policy options.**

*Recommendation:* **Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 1) Consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's  
comments when determining their policy response to the  
public consultation.**
- 2) Ensure that changes to subsidised bus services are  
appropriately advertised to the public.**
- 3) Not withdraw subsidies to bus services without mitigation  
measures being put in place.**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012 to review the results of a recent public consultation regarding changes to subsidised bus services in Cambridgeshire. The Committee questioned:

- Councillor Steve Criswell, Cabinet Member for Community Infrastructure
- Graham Hughes, Service Director: Strategy and Development
- Paul Nelson, Local Passenger Transport Manager

- 1.2 A full record of the discussion is recorded in the Committee minutes, which are available from the Scrutiny and Improvement Officer. However, the Committee decided to exercise its 'Overview' role by submitting a summary of their comments and recommendations to Cabinet, in order to inform future policy.

## **2. COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

### Consultation Process

- 2.1 Some Members criticised the length and detail of the consultation, with one Member referring to it as 'big and unfriendly' and inaccessible, particularly as many bus users do not have access to the internet.
- 2.2 Members also felt that as the consultation results provided county wide information, further consultation work and consideration would need to take place when making decisions about specific bus routes.

### Service Change Implications

- 2.3 Committee Members noted that over 80% of respondents did not support the Council's proposals to withdraw funding for subsidised bus services. Members commented that the consultation had been conducted as part of the Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed changes, and that the results demonstrated that the withdrawal of funding for subsidised bus services would have a disproportionate effect on the disabled, young people and the elderly, amongst others.
- 2.4 Members noted that 37% of respondents using subsidised bus services, at the time of the consultation, stated that there are no other suitable alternatives in place. There could be significant economic implications, in their view, as 20% of respondents stated that they used subsidised buses to get to work. Some Members felt that responses such as this indicated that the withdrawal of funding would promote inequalities in society and that they could therefore not support the proposals.
- 2.5 Some Members expressed concern about the impact of the changes in rural areas, particularly for those travelling to work without access to a car. One Member, in particular, felt that if cuts to bus services are required, then the focus should be on those later in the day as many people currently rely on the first bus of the day to get to work.

## Alternative Service Provision

- 2.6 The Committee discussed the potential of alternative methods of transport provision to mitigate the proposed withdrawal of bus subsidies. Some Members were hopeful that some withdrawn bus routes could be reintroduced by commercial operators, whilst some other Members were sceptical of this as only one bus had been retained in any form following the withdrawal of subsidised services in 2011/12.
- 2.7 One Member felt that the use of hospital cars and related transport schemes needed more attention, and could provide a means of bolstering transport provision.
- 2.8 The Committee discussed the Cambridgeshire Future Transport Project, including the current community transport pilots in Haddenham and Duxford, and their future potential. Some Members were optimistic about the prospect of communities supporting these schemes, particularly following the withdrawal of subsidised bus routes.
- 2.9 Some Members noted that the Council had agreed that bus subsidies would be withdrawn over a four year period, and that the first year had already resulted in several route closures. They were concerned that these changes had been introduced on the basis of inadequate information, a high degree of uncertainty in many areas and without an alternative or replacement arrangement in place. One Member sought assurances from the Cabinet Member that subsidies would not be withdrawn without mitigation measures being put in place, and the Cabinet Member said that this would be the case. The Committee Member welcomed this reassurance and noted that further impact assessments would add detail to the results for further consideration. The Cabinet Member responded that much depended on current work with the bus operators, and so far there was no information about specific routes.
- 2.10 At the end of the item Members discussed the areas where they felt that there was sufficient consensus to make recommendations to Cabinet. It was agreed that there was considerable uncertainty and a lack of awareness amongst the public about which bus services are under threat of no longer being funded, and that Cabinet should ensure that the changes are appropriately advertised to the public.
- 2.11 It was further agreed that the Cabinet should be recommended to ensure that subsidies to bus services should not be withdrawn without mitigation measures being put in place.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 1) Consider the Committee's comments when determining their policy response to the public consultation
- 2) Ensure that changes to subsidised bus services are appropriately advertised to the public.

3) Not withdraw subsidies to bus services without mitigation measures being put in place.

#### **4. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING**

4.1 The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

##### **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people when they need it most**

- No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole.

##### **Helping people live healthy and independent lives in their communities**

- No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole

##### **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

- No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole

##### **Ways of working**

- No significant implications identified

#### **SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

##### **6.0 Resources and performance**

###### Finance

6.1 The implementation of recommendation 3 could result in additional costs, depending on the arrangements to mitigate the withdrawal of subsidised bus services.

###### Performance

6.2 No significant implications identified.

##### **Statutory, legal and risk implications**

###### Key risks

6.3 No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole.

###### Statutory

6.5 No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole.

##### **Equality and diversity implications**

6.6 No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole.

## **Engagement and consultation**

- 6.7 No significant implications highlighted by the Committee as a whole.

### **Source documents**

### **Location**

Enterprise, Growth and Community  
Infrastructure Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee minutes and  
reports from the meeting held on  
the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012

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