

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19th December 2007

TRANSPORT AND TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Transport and Telecommunication Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met three times since the last full Council meeting.

Additional meetings

1st November 2007 - call in of the decision of the Executive relating to the highways depot review

An additional meeting of the Committee took place on the 1st November 2007 in order to consider the call in of an Executive decision relating to the Highways Depot Review; "investigate the reasons for the additional costs and concerns that the targeted outcomes and costs identified have been robustly identified".

After deliberation within the Committee the decision of the Executive was upheld as follows:-

- (a) That the progress of the Highways Depot Review and the financial situation be noted.
- (b) That total Prudential Borrowing of £3.8m to support the Highways Depot Replacement Programme be approved.
- (c) That the total borrowing of £3.8m be paid back on a ten year basis funded by savings made from within the Business and Environmental Services budget.
- (d) That progress reports on the project be included in the Quarterly Performance Monitoring reports to the Executive.

28th November 2007 - Highways Agency Agreements

County Councillor Geoffrey Cullern chaired the meeting looking at the proposal to terminate the highways agency agreements with Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils. After considering the proposal put forward by the Corporate Director Business and Environmental Services and the reports of and presentations on behalf of the Borough Councils the Committee took the view that the Highways Agency Agreements should be terminated. The report is scheduled to be presented to the Executive on the 8th January 2008.

Committee Meeting – 5th December 2007

The Committee was very interested to receive the annual presentation from Lawrence Ireland of Balfour Beatty. Proving how we maintain an interest and a monitoring role in the recommendations of scrutiny reviews. This annual report came from our review 'Roads to re-use and recycling' where we looked at innovative ways of reusing and recycling materials into our highways.

Let's get on the bus!

The update on progress and implementation of the recommendations of the 'Let's get on the bus!' scrutiny review from the Assistant Director Integrated Passenger Transport proved to be an interesting and informative follow up to our scrutiny review. I do not intend to list all the questions that were asked ...and answered... at our Committee meeting instead I have included a table (ANNEX A) which briefly outlines the update on progress and the comments from the Committee. However as this was an important element of our work in the last 12 months, I would like to take this opportunity to pick out some key points.

1. We have tasked the Assistant Director Integrated Passenger Transport with looking into the feasibility for half fare travel on contracted services to students under the age of 18. (The upper age limit is currently 16). This will be reported back to the February 2008 meeting of this Committee.
2. We recognise the ongoing work to develop the four Rural Access and Transport Partnerships. They are keen to embrace the role of bus forum for their local areas and will ensure local people can play a more strategic role in the development of local services. This is something we will keep a watchful eye on.
3. Members might also be interested to know that there is to be a national drive to improve consultation with bus passengers. The Department of Transport (DfT) has recently put forward a consultation document *Options for strengthening bus passenger representation*, with a suggestion that there should be a national forum to consult with passengers.

The DfT's aim is to establish a formal bus passenger representative body to:

- champion improvements in bus and scheduled coach service provision founded on robust research and analysis;
- work with passengers, operators, government, local authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure that the passenger's voice is heard when key decisions are being made; and
- make suggestions about the future direction of bus provision.

Further information on this can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/buspassenger/busconsultation?page=2#a1004>

or for a paper or electronic copy please contact our scrutiny support officer, Lorraine Laverton, lorraine.laverton@northyorks.gov.uk

4. Evidence that this scrutiny review has led to improvements for local people was presented at the Committee meeting when a letter from the Chairman and Chief Executive of East Yorkshire Motor Services (EYMS), Peter Shipp was read out,

...following the overview and scrutiny committee's visit earlier this year and their report 'Let's get on the bus', we have been able to act on some of the points in that report which concerned EYMS. In particular we have taken note of the comments about the quality of buses on the 128 Scarborough to Helmsley service. We are continuing major investment in new buses and have already placed an order for 20 double-decks for delivery in 2008, and I am pleased to confirm that four of these will be allocated to this route.

5. I would like to reassure Members that the work of this Committee does not end when the recommendations reach the Executive but we demonstrate our tenacity in holding the Executive to account by revisiting the recommendations and being updated on progress and where required suggesting further improvements. This continues to be an ongoing piece of work and we continue to be involved in it.

Scrutiny Review

Winter Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group

The Task Group is comprised of myself and Councillors Geoffrey Cullern (the Chairman of the Task Group), Martin Smith, Tim Swales and Chris Pearson.

The review will involve a detailed assessment of winter maintenance routes considering the Highway Maintenance Network Hierarchy and through consultation with Parish Councils, the public and partners, County Council engineers and other experts will look at other winter maintenance factors, such as access and isolation.

Letters have already been sent out to Parish Councils to alert them of our intention to consult and we will be in touch again very soon to confirm how this will be undertaken. However we are keen to hear the views of you; our colleagues, as representatives of your communities and we take on board the comments of Councillor Blackie when our interim report was presented to the Executive. We agree with Councillor Blackie that it is of paramount importance that we take into consideration local issues within this review.

County Councillor Eric Broadbent

Chairman

Transport and Telecommunication Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

December 2007

ANNEX A

| Recommendation | Integrated Passenger Transport Update | Comments from Committee |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The County Council explores the costs and feasibility of a county wide young persons travel card.</p> | <p>We have contacted all the major commercial bus operators in North Yorkshire. In the main each company has a scheme which allows half fare travel up to the age of 18 on payment of a small admin charge. The exception is EYMS at Scarborough who do not operate a scheme. We will discuss the possibility of them introducing such a scheme at our next meeting.</p> | <p>Encouraging to see the availability of half price travel for young people. Look forward to the response from EYMS.</p> <p>Understand on contracted services this is for students under 16.</p> <p>Would it be possible to extend this to students under 18?</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The County Council examines opportunities to minimise disruption to bus services as a result of road closures and road works.</p> | <p>We have (and will continue to) worked with the Highways Area Managers to improve the availability of information about road closures. This has helped us work with Bus Operators to agree suitable alternatives and ensure that information is available to the public.</p> | <p>We are already seeing benefits but need to make sure that this continues.</p> <p>Would be useful if the website could include details of emergency closures and advice on alternative travel arrangements.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The County Council develop Punctuality Improvement Plans with the four main bus operators.</p> | <p>This will be an ongoing project in discussions with operators and progress will be subject to available funding through the LTP.</p> | <p>We can see how it could improve the reliability of buses if a priority light system was in place. Reliability was picked up in our review as extremely important to bus users and in encouraging bus use. Pleased to hear we are already working with Harrogate and Scarborough Borough Councils on this.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>Future specifications for contract services on priority 1 and priority 2 corridors include a requirement for Real Time Information to be provided by buses.</p> | <p>This will be part of the specification for future contracts through our Area Review programme.</p> | <p>Encouraged to hear that funding will be available to roll this out to the Selby area through the Local Transport Plan (LTP2)</p> |

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|---|--|---|
| <p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The County Council accelerates the programme to roll out bus tracker across the county.</p> | <p>We have agreed a three year LTP funding package to facilitate this. 2007 / 08 is year 1.</p> | <p>This is ongoing work that the Committee would like to be kept informed of progress</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>Officers pursue the opportunities of joint marketing initiatives with the bus industry.</p> | <p>We have had some initial discussions with operators and will arrange for it to be discussed at the next available joint operator meeting.</p> | <p>As part of our review the bus operator questionnaire picked up the willingness of bus operators to develop a joint marketing programme. We are aware this is currently being discussed with operators.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>District Councils are encouraged to include all Community Transport services as part of the North Yorkshire Concessionary Fares Scheme.</p> | <p>District Councils are aware of this aspiration, and in the main they are supportive of the principles behind it, however funding will be an issue. This is scheduled to be discussed at the next joint Chief Executives meeting.</p> | <p>We share the concern of the District Councils on the funding of the Concessionary Fares Scheme when the national scheme begins in April 2008 but would continue to support the idea of the inclusion of Community Transport.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>Officers review the role of the four Rural Access and Transport Partnerships to ensure that issues around bus services are properly addressed at local level.</p> | <p>Discussions have been held with the Chairs of each of the partnerships. They have all indicated a willingness to accept this role as part of a wider review of the role of the Transport & Access Partnership Groups. This review is currently ongoing.</p> | <p>This is a major development in the inclusion of local people in developing the services in their area. It is encouraging that the people involved in them are willing to take on this role.</p> |