

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



Council Offices,
Urban Road,
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 8DA

Agenda

Scrutiny Panel A

Date: **Thursday, 23rd January, 2020**

Time: **10.00 am**

Venue: **Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield**

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

l.cain@ashfield.gov.uk

01623 457317

SCRUTINY PANEL A

Membership

Chairman: Councillor David Walters

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Ciaran Brown

Councillors:

Trevor Locke

Lauren Mitchell

Caroline Wilkinson

Rachel Madden

Warren Nuttall

FILMING/AUDIO RECORDING NOTICE

This meeting may be subject to filming or audio recording. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Members' Services on 01623 457317.

SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel A to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



Carol Cooper-Smith
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

1. To receive apologies for absence, if any.
2. To receive the minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 12th September , 2019. 5 - 8
3. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.
4. Introduction to Local Bus Provision in Ashfield. 9 - 14
5. Community Engagement Review Update.

This page is intentionally left blank

SCRUTINY PANEL A

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 12th September, 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor David Walters in the Chair;

Councillors Dale Grounds (substitute Member for Councillor Trevor Locke), Rachel Madden and Warren Nuttall.

Officers Present: Rachel Newton and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor Tony Brewer.

SA.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SA.5 To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July, 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th July, 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SA.6 Scrutiny Review: Community Engagement

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Scrutiny Research Officer to present the report. The Panel were advised that the purpose of the report was to provide further information around community engagement and an update on the progress of the developing Community Engagement Strategy.

At the last meeting of the Panel Members had discussed the various types of engagement and the most effective ways of utilising the different channels of interaction with local residents and groups. The Council has many different methods that it uses to undertake community engagement. They include surveys, consultation, open public meetings, Place Based Working Schemes, Petitions, Citizens Panels and Youth Forums.

Each channel was found to have its own merits for the specific topic it was exploring, however, not all approaches were suitable to support the inclusion of all residents. Members were concerned about the inability of certain groups to engage with the Authority due to barriers such as illiteracy, innumeracy and other difficulties with written and digital mechanisms.

A discussion took place around the role played by Elected Members whilst out in their respective Wards, it was agreed that face to face contact is an invaluable way in which to encourage local residents to involve themselves in consultation on local issues. However, some Members had previously reported that they felt under informed about events or initiatives taking place within the District, regular Group meetings have now been arranged which provide updates in order to address this.

In the past display screens had been placed at the council offices to support the dissemination of information by means of an audiovisual platform. Members felt that the reintroduction of the screens should be explored and further that the introduction of larger, mobile screens sited at events, funded through the regeneration fund would be a positive move towards meaningful engagement and assist in limiting communication barriers.

The Scrutiny and Research Officer advised the Panel that a number of other local authorities had undertaken to live stream their meetings, it was possible to link into the existing Auditel system and offer this at Ashfield. In the past the live streaming to social media had been received positively and did achieve an increase in meaningful contact between residents and the Authority.

In addition to the above the possibility of holding meetings off site across the District should be explored to support community working and engagement by making the meetings more accessible to local residents who may not have transport in order to attend meetings held at the council offices.

RESOLVED that

- a) the information contained within the report be noted; and
- b) the platforms for engagement discussed at the meeting be explored and the findings reported back to the next meeting of this Panel.

SA.7 Scrutiny Review: Commercialisation and Income Generation

The Chairman introduced the item and invited the Scrutiny Research & Support Officer to present the report. The Panel were advised that Commercialisation and Income Generation was added to the Scrutiny Workplan for 2019/20 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The key areas identified as those of interest were:

- Ashfield District Council's main source of income generation;
- Gaining a greater understanding of the Council's commercial property investments;
- How Ashfield District Council will help reduce its budget funding gap, partially through income generation.

The core funding sources responsible for generating income to the Authority are Council Tax, Business Rates, Revenues Support Grant (RSG), New Homes Bonus and Investment Properties.

Discretionary services are provided by the Authority and account for further income generation, the Panel felt that they had the potential to be developed further by reviewing efficiency and through enhanced promotion.

Members discussed the purchasing of commercial property and were in support of receiving a report from the Service Manager, Commercial Development providing a detailed analysis of the process and budgetary effect that the acquisitions have made and are expected to achieve in the coming years.

The Scrutiny Research & Support Officer took Members through the Terms of Reference for the Commercialisation and Income Generation Review, ensuring that they were happy with the proposed process.

RESOLVED that

- a) the information contained within the report be noted;
- b) the Terms of Reference as appended to the report be adopted;
- c) as part of the review process, the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Streets, Parks and Town Centres and the Service Manager, Commercial Development be engaged to provide the Panel with a more detailed understanding of income generation falling within their respective remit.

The meeting closed at 11.04 am

Chairman.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL A	Date:	23 JANUARY 2020
Heading:	INTRODUCTION TO LOCAL BUS PROVISION IN ASHFIELD		
Portfolio Holder:			
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

In June 2019 a new scrutiny topic considering bus provision in Ashfield was approved for the Scrutiny Workplan 2019/20. The remit of the review was agreed as follows;

- Consideration of local Bus provision in Ashfield;
- How elderly isolation and loneliness can be impacted by limited bus routes;
- Effectiveness of bus provision on local businesses;

This report provides an overview of the current services in Ashfield, background information and research.

Recommendation(s)

Members are requested to;

- note the information contained within this report;
- consider further areas for discussion;
- approve the terms of reference

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

A Scrutiny review of local bus service provision in Ashfield was suggested for review as part of the workplan consultation process in 2019. In considering this topic it is anticipated that Members will consult fully with service providers, users and Nottinghamshire County Council

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered as part of this review to date. All options considered will be detailed in a final report to Cabinet in due course.

Detailed Information

The Transport Act 1985 radically altered the way in which bus services were operated and funded. The key influence leading to the legislative change was the increased use of the private car and the consequential drop in bus patronage. The cost to the taxpayer of maintaining the network started to approach unsustainable levels and this led to deregulation of the bus industry by way of the 1985 Act.

The Transport Act 1985 places a requirement on local authorities to have regard to the needs of their residents and to provide financial support for local bus services as they see fit to meet those needs. The duty is 'to have regard to the needs', rather than the actual provision of services. In particular, there is a requirement to consider the specific needs of older and disabled people, with powers to provide funding for service 3 provision, such as community transport. There are also duties under the Equalities Act 2010 as both elderly and disabled residents are covered by protected characteristics.

Regional Context

Nottinghamshire County Council are the responsible authority for setting the direction and objectives of the County's public transport networks. The strategy for local transport (including buses as part of public transport) is set out in the Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan. The current Local Transport Plan covers the whole of the County and runs until 2026.

In relation to buses and public transport as a whole, the plan recognises that there is still significant scope for people to reduce the numbers of short car journeys and undertake more healthy active travel for such journeys. Similarly, there is scope to further increase public transport patronage instead of car journeys where good bus and rail services already exist.

The County Council recognises the essential role that passenger transport provides in the development of a sustainable transport system and has therefore developed an Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy alongside LTP3, which amongst other modes of public transport, encompasses buses. The vision for the Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy is to develop an integrated passenger transport system that is;

- available to all
- high quality
- understood by all and easy to use, and
- affordable.

Within the Strategy it is recognised that there are a number of real and perceived barriers to people using passenger transport that will need to be wholly or partially overcome to deliver the strategy, including;

- availability of passenger transport services in terms of coverage, periods of operation and frequency
- lack of direct routes to destinations, length and speed of journey
- poor image of passenger transport
- personal safety and fear of crime either on route to waiting facilities, at waiting facilities or on board

- relative cost of passenger transport services
- vehicle and driver standards/quality
- unreliable services, and
- lack of information on available services.

The County Council works in partnership with commercial bus operators and other stakeholders to ensure that the bus network adequately serves as many local communities as possible. This entails the provision of a high quality, frequent bus service for as many hours as possible that enables them to access key services and facilities within the budgetary limitations.

The performance management framework, developed by the County Council, independently assesses the socially necessary bus services that the County Council subsidises so that transparent decisions are made when budget pressures occur, whilst allowing the objectives of the plan in relation to buses. The framework and the variables used are reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of the LTP and to consider changes in priorities when necessary. Similarly, the area transport reviews to determine the most effective delivery of all of the different forms of public transport services in an area are undertaken periodically to ensure the most efficient use of the resources available.

Impact of Buses on Social Inclusion, Isolation and Loneliness

Improved bus services can contribute greatly to improving the accessibility of jobs and services to people experiencing, or at risk of, social exclusion, and consequently lie at the heart of the North Nottinghamshire LTP. Achieving social inclusion is an important objective for the County Council, and for many other local partners.

Rural isolation in the north-east has its own problems of access to jobs, education and services. Social need exists not just geographically, but also with specific groups. These include the elderly, young people, and those with physical and learning disabilities, many of whom fall within the scope of social services provision, and others such as ethnic minorities.

In considering this topic for the Scrutiny Workplan, Members acknowledged that bus services can often provide a lifeline for many older people. For those without easy access to a car, having accessible and affordable public transport is vital to leading an active and independent life.

The national bus concession means people in later life are able to reach key services and friends and family, without making difficult financial choices. The concession allows older people to travel off-peak on buses anywhere in England for free. Eligibility is currently tied to State Pension age for both men and women. It is considered a crucial universal benefit that is greatly valued by older people.

Community and Voluntary Transport Schemes

Community and voluntary transport schemes offer services for people who have difficulty using, or are unable to use public transport services. One such scheme that receives grant funding from Ashfield District Council is Our Centre. Our Centre is a local transport company that provides transport solutions for individuals or groups.

Review Objectives

Public transport has the potential to make an impact on a number of areas affecting quality of life in the district, including social inclusion (as a means of access to services and amenities), promoting a flourishing local economy (improving accessibility for both employees and customers) and the

environmental implications of choices about transport and travel. In planning this review, Members of the Panel should consider the main issues, stakeholders, objectives and potential outcomes. The reasons provided for putting the topic on the workplan are that public transport plays a key role in the following;

- Social inclusion
- Economic growth
- Reduction in environmental pollution
- Meeting the needs of the community

It is considered that in reviewing this area, Members will gain a greater understanding of the need for effective public transport, how this impacts the district and whether there are currently any gaps in provision that are adversely affecting the area. It is also recognised that Members of the Panel will need to engage the following stakeholders;

- Nottinghamshire County Council
- External service providers
- Planning
- Regeneration
- Community

Members should also be aware that effective transport links in to many other major pieces of work currently being undertaken by Ashfield District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Therefore, Members will need to gain an understanding of these areas to ensure that any work undertaken adds value.

Moreover, consideration on the focus of this review and potential outcomes should also reflect whether the Panel could narrow the focus to one or more of the following;

- local bus services covering Ashfield as a whole;
- the effectiveness of current services;
- the gaps in provision that are impacting those areas of the community that do not have sufficient coverage. This includes issues of social and economic exclusion.

Further details on this topic will be presented at the meeting.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Consideration of this topic contributes towards our commitment to;

- Health and wellbeing of our residents.
- Economic Regeneration
- Place and Communities

Legal:

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Finance:

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications discussed as part of the review process will be informed by Finance advice and involvement.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
None at this stage, all risks will be considered as part of the review scoping meeting.	None at this stage, all risks will be considered as part of the review scoping meeting.

Human Resources:

There are no immediate human resource implications arising from this report

Equalities:

Equality issues relating to this review will be considered as part of any work undertaken.

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency

None

Reason(s) for Exemption

None

Report Author and Contact Officer

Mike Joy, Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services
Tel: 01623 457232
m.joy@ashfield-dc.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank