

**ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL**



**Ashfield**

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

## Agenda

### Scrutiny Panel A

Date: **Tuesday, 15th March, 2016**

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Time: **6.30 pm**

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

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# SCRUTINY PANEL A

## Membership

**Chairman:** Councillor Catherine Ann Mason

**Vice Chairman:** Councillor Joanne Donnelly

**Councillor:**

Benjamin Bradley

Helen Joy Hollis

Lauren Amber Mitchell

Helen Ann Smith

Anthony Neil Brewer

Glenys Christina Maxwell

Paul Roberts

## FILMING/AUDIO RECORDING NOTICE

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## 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.



**R. Mitchell**  
**Chief Executive**

## **AGENDA**

## **Page**

1. **To receive apologies for absence, if any.**
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests.**
3. **To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd November, 2015.** 5 - 10
4. **Scrutiny Review - Effective Public Transport within Ashfield.** 11 - 16

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## SCRUTINY PANEL A

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

on Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2015 at 6.30 p.m.

**Present:** Councillor C.A. Mason, in the Chair;  
Councillors B. Bradley and P. Roberts.

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors A.N. Brewer and H.J. Hollis.

**Officers Present:** L. Cain and M. Joy.

### **SA.7 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **SA.8 Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 1st September, 2015, be received and approved.

### **SA.9 Scrutiny Review – The Impact of Street Works in the District**

The Chairman opened the item and advised that the attached report contained further insights and draft recommendations following the last meeting of the Panel and the discussions held with the County Council's Traffic Manager, Peter Goode.

Whilst the original scope for the review was a lot wider in terms of the proposed methodology for gathering evidence, having spoken with Peter Goode and in light of the information provided by him at the meeting, the Panel had agreed that it would be more pertinent to examine the use of communication tools such as bulletins to local Councillors, the Council's website, social media, local media and advisory signs to disseminate information efficiently and effectively and thus improve the communication and information on street works within the District.

Following this revised direction, the Scrutiny Manager reminded the Panel that they had expressed their satisfaction with the responses to their questions from the County Council representative Peter Goode and had been guided through the processes for scheduling and carrying out street works within the County.

It was apparent that the systems currently in place appeared to work well, albeit acknowledging that there was always going to be disruption caused by any works undertaken and the best course of action was to ensure that there was adequate information available to both Councillors and local communities.

With this in mind, the Scrutiny Manager advised that the following draft recommendations had been put together for consideration:-

(1) Road Signage detailing road works and clearly displaying website address/contact details for the planned works;

Peter Goode had indicated at the last Panel meeting that an upgrade of signage to include details of the road works and website address/contact details was something that the County Council could consider and should not prove too costly to implement.

(2) A regular briefing note be provided to District Councillors detailing planned works;

It had been suggested that a briefing note could be circulated to District Councillors giving notice of planned street works taking place in the Ashfield District. This would enable Members to cascade the information to affected local residents to mitigate against any potential disruption and to avoid any unnecessary complaints being lodged.

(3) Analysis work be undertaken on complaints relating to road works to ascertain levels impact and resolution;

The Scrutiny Manager had asked Peter Goode if he could supply the Authority with some data relating to number of complaints received in relation to planned street works. It was agreed that some comparison work could be undertaken to ascertain a more accurate picture of where affected residents lodge their complaints in relation to disruption from street works.

(4) Email alerts are considered for the District Council, particularly for emergency works;

It had been agreed that e-mail alerts for emergency works would be useful for District Councillors to disseminate the information quickly to affected residents. It was also suggested that contact details for external utility companies could be included on the Council's website to enable any complaints/queries to be fielded and dealt with directly by service providers should any emergency works need to be carried out.

(5) That consideration of current use of press and social media be assessed in relation to communicating road works;

It was acknowledged that the Council could take steps to utilise the local press and social media more efficiently to communicate details regarding planned and emergency road works.

In conclusion, the Panel were requested to consider the draft recommendations for submission to Cabinet in the near future.

**RESOLVED**

that Cabinet be requested to approve the draft recommendations (outlined below) following completion of the light touch review in relation to the impact of street works within the District:-

- (a) the County Council be requested to undertake the following:-
- to consider providing road signage which details the planned road works and clearly displays a website address and contact details should they be required;
  - to consider providing District Councillors with regular briefing notes which detail planned works to be carried out within the Ashfield District;
  - to provide data in relation to number of complaints received relating to road works within the Ashfield District to enable the Council to ascertain levels of impact and resolution at both District and County level;
  - to consider the provision of e-mail alerts for the District Council and Councillors, particularly for emergency works;
- (b) the Council assess their current use of press and social media in relation to communicating planned and emergency road works to local communities and consider its future potential for the quick and efficient dissemination of information to affected residents as appropriate.

#### **SA.10 Terms of Reference for Potential New Scrutiny Review - Effective Public Transport in Ashfield**

The Chairman opened the item and advised the Panel that the 'Impact of Public Transport within Ashfield' review topic had been recommended for consideration to assess how well current public transport facilities were meeting the needs of the community. In addition, the Panel could examine whether there were any areas for improvement that could be considered by service providers, partners and the Council. It was intended that the meeting would be for scoping the topic before inviting any key expert witnesses to address the Panel as part of the review process.

The Panel were asked to consider and give some thought to the topic including how effective transport services were in their wards, were the needs of the community being met, were there any obvious gaps in service and were the current levels of transport provision in any way effecting local businesses or employment opportunities.

The Scrutiny Manager then proceeded to present the report and advised the Panel that there were two key documents that affected local public transport namely, the Local Plan and the Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan 2011/12 to 2025/26. Both the documents complimented each other with the County Council providing advice to the Council both on the emerging Local Plan and specific development proposals. There was a recognised ongoing need to manage traffic management arrangements and residual traffic impacts from development.

To assist with the debate, some excerpts from the Council's draft Local Plan in relation to anticipated transport priorities were also circulated for Members' information.

Whilst considering which aspects of public transport provision were more worthy of review at this particular time, the Scrutiny Manager made some suggestions regarding areas of focus as follows:-

Community Cohesion;  
Access to Services;  
Do services meet the needs of the community;  
Alternative transport methods (i.e. Cycling);  
Impact on businesses and economy;  
Can the external travel companies do more (concessions, revised routes etc?)

A debate followed and Members quickly established that they wished to review and consider whether the current bus service provision around the District met the ongoing needs of the local communities. Various issues were discussed which included the following:-

- concerns surrounding the current bus services for Skegby, Stanton Hill and the Carsic Estate;
- the perception that bus companies were more interested in making a profit than looking after the needs of their customers;
- the levels of current Government subsidies/incentives for providing public transport and how they are utilised by the bus companies;
- whether 'areas of deprivation' are taken into account when bus companies assess potential bus routes within the District;
- the types of concessions currently available to older people;
- the potential benefits of the new 'oyster card' being developed for the Nottinghamshire area.

#### RESOLVED

that the Scrutiny Manager be requested to undertake the following in readiness for the next Panel meeting scheduled for January 2016:-

- (a) to note that the Panel agrees to undertake a review of 'Effective Public Transport within Ashfield' with a remit as follows:-  
  
"to consider the current bus service provision within Ashfield and examine whether it continues to effectively meet the needs of local communities";
- (b) to invite representatives from the Trent Barton Bus Company and the Council's Planning Department to an informal meeting of the Panel to consider the current levels of bus provision within Ashfield and to enlist their views/responses as part of the scrutiny review process;
- (c) to request the County Council to provide some information in relation to the processes/procedures currently in place for identifying bus service requirements and routes and the types of passenger concessions currently available;



- (d) to consider the best methods for ascertaining residents' views in relation to the current bus service provision within Ashfield, customer service standards, accessibility of stops and routes and general suggestions for improvements.

The meeting closed at 7.17 p.m.

Chairman.

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# Agenda Item 4

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY PANEL A **DATE:** 15 MARCH 2016

**HEADING:** NEW SCRUTINY REVIEW OF EFFECTIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN ASHFIELD

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:**

**KEY DECISION:** NO **SUBJECT TO CALL-IN:** NO

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At the last meeting of the Panel, Members discussed and approved a new scrutiny topic on the effectiveness of local transport in the District. During this discussion the remit for the review was debated and approved as the following;

“to consider the current bus service provision within Ashfield and examine whether it continues to effectively meet the needs of local communities”.

During the initial scoping meeting members raised a number of issues relating to bus services in the District including some concerns relating to;

- the current bus services for Skegby, Stanton Hill and the Carsic Estate;
- the levels of current Government subsidies/incentives for providing public transport and how they are utilised by the bus companies;
- whether ‘areas of deprivation’ are taken into account when bus companies assess potential bus routes within the District;
- the types of concessions currently available to older people;

This report provides some further information relating to setting the scene for local transport including consideration of national context, local planning and possible areas for further exploration.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are requested to note the information contained within this report and consider further areas for discussion as part of the review process.

## 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

Reviewing the Impact of effective public transport in Ashfield is a topic that was suggested for review as part of the workplan consultation process. In considering this topic it is anticipated that Members will consult fully with service providers, users and Nottinghamshire County Council.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED (with reasons why not adopted)**

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.

#### **5. INTRODUCTION**

In considering the impact of public transport in Ashfield, Members of the Panel recognise that the Council's influence upon public transport is limited within the statutory framework, however as transport plays a vital role in the vitality of the Ashfield, it was considered an important area to consider.

#### **6. BACKGROUND**

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 Act removed the licensing function from the Traffic Commissioners in relation to bus services and replaced it with one of registration. This left the market open for operators to determine which routes they wished to run and subject to registering the route details with the Commissioners they were free to do so. Individual operators were responsible for timetabling and the introduction of new routes (or the discontinuation of existing ones). This depended on the operator's opinion of demand and its potential commercial viability. The role of Traffic Commissioners is to licence the bus operators, deal with disciplinary issues and check on the quality and safety of the service offered.

#### **Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan.**

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.

The vision is neither urban nor rural specific but the methods of achieving the vision will differ

between urban and rural environments. The County Council uses the appropriate range of infrastructure, operational, technological, resources and information measures that are available to them in delivery of the vision. The measures used to deliver the vision will be dependent upon the issues identified and their ability to deliver value for money outcomes.

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.

Buses are the major provider of the passenger transport network across the county. The most recent national survey of public satisfaction with local bus services in Nottinghamshire identified a satisfaction level of 70% (the highest of the County Council's that responded to the National Highways and Public Transport Survey). More recent local surveys put this figure at 89%. In 2009/10, over 35 million passenger bus journeys originated in the county, which is an increase of almost 8% since 2005/06.

In Nottinghamshire, 96% of households are within 800 metres of an hourly or better bus service (0600-1800 Monday to Saturdays). Within the more rural parts of the county, access to an hourly or better bus service is less good, particularly in the villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings. 80% of bus services in the county are operated on a commercial basis. In 2010/11, the County Council spent approximately £7m to provide additional services to supplement the commercial bus network marketed under the 'Notts Bus' banner.

These services support and complement the commercial network by providing services in the more rural parts of the county that have limited or no services or by providing services in the early mornings, evenings or weekends. Without this support, the more rural parts of the county would have a reduced level of service with some parts having no services at all.

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.

## **The Local Transport Act 2008**

The Local Transport Act 2008 introduced changes to enable local authorities to influence the standard of bus services in their local area in order to better meet local transport needs. It introduced three main options for local authorities (in addition to their existing powers to subsidise socially necessary bus services) through:

1. Voluntary partnership agreements – an agreement entered into voluntarily by one or more local transport authority and one or more bus operator and possibly other relevant parties. The agreement can cover any matter that the relevant parties have control over or power to Deliver
2. Quality (statutory) partnership agreements – a statutory agreement between one or more local transport authority and one or more bus operator. The local transport authority can stipulate frequencies, timings, minimum fares, age of the fleet etc. as long as the bus operators have no 'admissible' objections. Any operator that does not meet the service standards are prevented from using the facilities provided as part of the agreement (for example, bus lanes) and enforcement action can be taken against any bus operator who breaches the terms of the agreement
3. Quality contract schemes – the local transport authority writes contracts concerning the timings, frequencies, fares etc. that bus companies then bid to run. These alternatives provide the County Council with options to improve the network coverage, timings, fares and frequencies of bus services. Where it is deemed necessary and beneficial the County Council will use these powers to improve the standards of bus services across the county.

### **Quality of buses**

The reliability and punctuality, speed of the journey, quality of the vehicle (low floor, age of fleet, fuel efficiency) and the conduct and attitude of the drivers are all important aspects of the quality of the service provided to customers. The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (2000) outline the requirement that all new buses up to 7.5 tonnes had to be fully accessible from 1 January 2005; all existing buses weighing up to 7.5 tonnes must be fully accessible from 1 January 2015; and all single and double deck buses over 7.5 tonnes must be fully accessible by 1 January 2016 and 1 January 2017 respectively.

### **Bus Operators in the District**

In reviewing this topic there are a number of bus operators in the District that could assist the Panel. These include;

- Trent Barton
- Stagecoach East Midlands
- NottsBus
- TM Travel
- Our Centre
- G & J Holmes
- AOT Coaches

A number of these providers have been contacted to gain an understanding of bus routes, considerations, usage and performance. Further information on this will be provided at the meeting.

## **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 recognised that in considering this topic, 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.

## **6. 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.

### **Financial:**

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.

## **Health and Well-Being / Environmental Management and Sustainability:**

There are no immediate implications contained in this report, however it is recognised that effective public transport links in to Health and Well-Being / Environmental Management and Sustainability.

## **Human Resources:**

There are no immediate human resource implications arising from this report.

## **Diversity/Equality:**

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

## **Community Safety:**

There are no community Safety implications contained in this report. This will be considered should the review be approved

## **Other Implications:**

There are no immediate Unison implications contained within this report.

## **REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTACT OFFICER**

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