

SCRUTINY PANEL A

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

on Thursday, 23rd January, 2020 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor David Walters in the Chair;

Councillors Ciaran Brown, Trevor Locke,
Rachel Madden, Lauren Mitchell, Warren Nuttall
and Caroline Wilkinson.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

SA.8 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12th September, 2019, be received and approved as a correct record.

SA.9 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

Councillor Warren Nuttall declared a Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interest in relation to agenda item 4 (Introduction to Local Bus Provision in Ashfield.) His interest arose from the fact that he currently holds the position as the Council's representative on the Our Centre Board.

SA.10 Introduction to Local Bus Provision in Ashfield

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services introduced the report and reminded Panel Members that the topic had been added to the Scrutiny Workplan following consideration at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting during 2019.

The Panel acknowledged that a generic review of 'local bus provision in Ashfield' might prove to be quite far reaching with Members having limited powers to influence any particular outcomes that could benefit Ashfield residents. It was therefore agreed that the review should focus on how public transport has the potential to make an impact on areas affecting quality of life for local people including:

- social inclusion
- accessing jobs
- promoting the local economy
- environmental implications.

The County Council, being the responsible authority for setting the direction and objectives of the County's public transport network, had produced a Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan that would run until 2026. The Plan had recognised that there was still significant scope to improve the County's transport network to ensure the provision of reliable services whilst improving access to services and minimising any negative impact on users.

In relation to the District Council, Members were asked to note that the recent funding allocation of £25m to both Kirkby and Sutton through the Town Centres Fund would enable the Council to invest a portion of the funding into enhancing local infrastructure and transport provision in conjunction with the proposed regeneration of the town centres.

As part of the review, the Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services felt it might be beneficial for the Panel to talk to the following representatives to gain a further understanding of partner provision and perspectives:-

- Nottinghamshire County Council's Transport Manager;
- a Trent-Barton (national bus company) representative;
- an Our Centre (local voluntary bus service) representative;
- the Council's Assistant Director, Planning and Regulative Services.

Members took the opportunity to debate the preferred direction for the review and considered, amongst other things:-

- the rising prices being charged for bus travel within Nottinghamshire and the resulting reduction in patronage;
- the excellent service being provided by Our Centre (local voluntary bus provision) and the challenges the organisation faces in obtaining ongoing funding and support;
- concerns regarding social exclusion and how isolation and loneliness can contribute towards failing mental health;
- the recent lobbying of Nottinghamshire County Council in reaction to their cutbacks to bus services on primary routes;
- a suggestion to raise the issue of increased bus provision to prevent social exclusion at the next Joint Health Scrutiny Committee meeting with a request for any available funding to assist with ;
- the inadequate bus service provision within Skegby, Huthwaite and Stanton Hill;
- Trent-Barton's recent reduction in valuable bus route provision and its perceived lack of investment in new buses resulting in regular breakdowns and disrupted services;
- the inequality in provision of public transport infrastructure i.e. the lack of electronic information boards, shelters and seating within the Rural areas;

- the excellent public transport system that serves Hucknall including bus, tram and train provision but its inability to reach the outer estates within Hucknall West Ward;
- the gaps in provision relating to providing transport at key times to enable workers to access jobs in more remote areas and business estates and a suggestion to consider this aspect when engaging with both local and county wide bus providers;
- the need for bus companies to keep abreast of new estate developments with a view to extending bus routes to encompass them within their larger transport networks;
- acknowledgement of the current Ashfield demographic and the fact that many residents do not have access to cars and require decent public transport provision to access family, work and social activities.

RESOLVED that

- a) the following terms of reference be agreed for the Scrutiny review of local bus provision within Ashfield:-

“To undertake a review to consider the current gaps in local bus provision within Ashfield and how this impacts on social exclusion issues and the health and wellbeing of residents. To also give consideration to environmental sustainability issues in relation to future bus provision.”

- b) the Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services be requested to extend a Panel meeting invite to the following representatives to assist Members with the review:-
- Nottinghamshire County Council’s Transport Manager;
 - a Trent-Barton (national bus company) representative;
 - an Our Centre (local voluntary bus service) representative;
 - the Council’s Assistant Director, Planning and Regulative Services;
- c) the Scrutiny Research Officer email all Members requesting their individual views in relation to current bus provision within their wards and whether there are any particular gaps in service that are impacting on particular groups or residents.

SA.11 Community Engagement Review Update

The Service Manager, Scrutiny and Democratic Services reminded Members that the Panel had originally commenced the review into Community Engagement at its last meeting held on 12th September, 2019. As part of the review, it was intended that the Health and Wellbeing Team Leader, Andrea Stone, would continue to develop the Council’s Community Engagement Strategy and present an update of the document to the next meeting.

However, due to emerging priorities within the Health and Wellbeing Team including the Towns Centre Funding opportunities and the development of the new Leisure Centre in Kirkby in Ashfield, officers had been redirected to other work streams and development of the Community Engagement Strategy had been held in abeyance to be completed at a more appropriate time.

It was therefore intended that an update report would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

The meeting closed at 10.45 am

Chairman.