

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES of a special meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Economy, Transport and Environment held at County Hall, Lewes on 12 December 2014.

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Mike Pursglove (Vice Chair), Angharad Davies (substituting for Claire Dowling), John Hodges, Rosalyn St. Pierre and Barry Taylor.

LEAD MEMBERS: Councillor Carl Maynard (Lead Member for Transport and Environment)

ALSO PRESENT: Rupert Clubb, Director Communities, Economy and Transport; Karl Taylor, Assistant Director Operations; Nick Skelton, Head of Transport & Operational Services; Neil Maguire, Public Transport Service Manager; Sue Buxton, Principal Transport Officer ; Rebekah Herring, Solicitor; and Alastair Mackie, Peter Brett Associates (PBA).

Councillor Ruth O’Keeffe

Scrutiny Lead Officer: Martin Jenks

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

32.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Claire Dowling.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

33.1 None.

34. URGENT MATTERS

34.1 None.

35. ESCC PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING STRATEGY AND REFORMULATED SUPPORTED BUS NETWORK

Introduction

35.1 The Chair introduced the report to be made by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to Cabinet. The Director reminded members of the context of this report and the need to meet the savings target that has been agreed as part of the three year savings plan. The County Council may have to find an additional estimated savings of £70 - £90 million in the years up to 2020. Members were reminded that it is important not to lose sight of these financial challenges. The savings to be found from the proposed reformulated supported bus network (RSBN) are for the 2015/16 financial year.

35.2 The purpose of considering the report at this meeting is to agree comments on the proposals to go to Cabinet, and which will be taken into account as part of Cabinet’s decision. The Committee’s comments should be focussed on anything over and above what has already been considered as part of the Members Advisory Group (MAG).

Consultation Process

35.3 The Public Transport Team (PTT) has been following the corporate strategic commissioning process since the last Cabinet Report in December 2013. The process has identified the transport needs and has also enabled a consideration of any gaps in meeting those needs. The draft Strategic Commissioning Strategy ensures the best outcomes for East Sussex Residents.

35.4 The PTT has worked with the Scrutiny Committee and the Members Advisory Group (MAG) throughout the process, has shared the findings from the consultation and confirmed that there will be no changes to the priorities contained in the draft Strategy as a result. The proposed reformulated supported bus network (RSBN) has changed as a result of the findings from the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and the public consultation.

35.5 The PTT undertook a twelve week consultation following a robust process and was carried out at a formative stage in the decision making process. There were over 3600 responses, which included 14 petitions (one of which had over 6800 signatures).

35.6 On-bus surveys were undertaken on an 18 month rolling programme before the public consultation. The on-bus surveys involved a surveyor interviewing all the passengers on the bus at the time of the survey. Surveys were carried out throughout the year to build up an accurate picture of bus use. They showed that education journeys were the primary use of supported buses and that shopping journeys were the second most popular use. However, bus use does vary slightly across the County. This is detailed in the technical appendix (appendix 3) of the report.

35.7 The main consultation findings were:

- Respondents were concerned about the reduction in the options for bus travel and the reduction in frequency of some bus services.
- Although some respondents understood the need for a 30% fare increase, most respondents disagreed with the increase in fares.

35.8 A large number of consultees commented on the proposals through the consultation. However, officers considered that the results demonstrate “want” rather than “need” and therefore did not alter the priorities that were identified in the draft Strategy. Several members of the Committee commented that since the consultation had closed, they had continued to receive comments from residents about the supported bus proposals.

35.9 Nick Skeleton confirmed that Lewes District Council was approached as part of the consultation.

35.10 The Chair invited comments on the consultation process from members of the committee. The comments made are summarised below.

On Bus Surveys

35.11 Cllr St. Pierre suggested that the on bus surveys focussed on passengers to see where they were going. What the on bus surveys did not capture are the views of people who do not use the buses, especially where they do not link up with rail services, or where there are no existing bus services e.g. serving the local GP surgery in her electoral division. She considered that the ESCC consultation was missing that key point.

35.12 Nick Skelton replied the fact that people are not using the bus to get to the GP surgery implies that they have alternative means of getting there and therefore the travel need is being met. ESCC does work with the NHS to see how to facilitate access to medical services. Furthermore, the PTT has looked at linking bus services to train services in Cllr St. Pierre’s electoral division, but this was shown not to be cost effective.

35.13 With regard to the bus services that used to serve the GP's surgery in Cllr St. Pierre's electoral division, if a service ceased, it shall have been for a reason which is likely to have been due to lack of use. When looking at services that have been discontinued it is important to understand the reasons behind the decision to cease the service.

35.14 Cllr Hodges asked on which services the bus surveys were carried out (i.e. from which town to which village and on what dates?). Cllr Hodges found it difficult to reconcile the findings from those surveys with the views expressed at the 21 different public meetings that he has attended. Nick Skelton stated that the on-bus surveys were carried out on all routes across the bus network on an 18 month rolling programme. This ensured that surveys were carried out throughout the year to capture seasonal changes in bus use.

Eastbourne DGH and Conquest Hospital Bus Link

35.15 Cllr Pursglove raised the issue of bus service provision between the two hospitals. Such a service would enable patients to get to the hospitals and would also enable visitors to go and see relatives in the hospitals. This may be financially viable, as people would be more willing to pay for a bus than for a taxi or for parking at the hospital. A shuttle service could also be used to link doctor's surgeries to the hospitals. Cllr Taylor acknowledged that whilst this is an issue, it is not one which should be discussed as part of the proposals for the supported bus network.

35.16 Nick Skelton commented that where a service does not exist already, this indicates that people are meeting the relevant transport need in other ways. With restricted financial resources, it was not possible for the proposed reformulated supported bus network to look at services that are not already being provided. Alastair Mackie (PBA) indicated that research into this issue has shown that travel from surgery to surgery is not particularly useful for people as they do not tend to travel to numerous surgeries or between GP and hospital. The travel need is to get people from home to the local GP and back again.

35.17 Rupert Clubb re-iterated Alistair Mackie's point that very few people travel between the two hospital sites. The rationalisation of services between Eastbourne and Hastings was a decision taken by the East Sussex Hospitals Trust (ESHT) and it is an issue for ESHT to resolve for example, by paying for a shuttle bus service. There are examples where Health Trusts have paid for this service (Hayward's Heath) and therefore it is ESHT who should take the lead and work out how to pay for such a service. This issue has recently been the subject of a report to the Lead Member for Resources following on from a resolution of Eastbourne Borough Council. Members of the PTT will work with the ESHT to help them put in place a solution for this issue.

Commissioning Strategy Priorities - Impact on Off Peak Use and Shift Workers

35.18 Cllr Davies was concerned that there was an oversight in relation to priority 2 of the Commissioning Strategy and that the Members Advisory Group (MAG) had made a mistake in agreeing priority 2 as it only focusses on "peak times" access to employment. The reduction in frequency to 2 hourly during off peak times will have a negative impact on shift workers.

35.19 Councillor Hodges and Councillor O'Keeffe supported this point. Cllr Hodges was concerned about the impact on shift workers as many businesses operate 24 hours a day. Cllr O'Keeffe expressed concerns that as a large proportion of trips were for shopping purposes, a reduction in off peak services would lead to a reduction in shopping trips. The reduction in bus frequency may make some bus services less financially viable. Cllr O'Keeffe acknowledged that she had not initially thought the impact on shoppers would be an issue, but now thinks there will be a problem because of the number of people that have raised it with her.

35.20 Nick Skelton replied that the majority of the services on the current supported bus network do not help shift workers as they only operate between 08.00 and 18.00. So it is unlikely that shift workers would be relying on supported bus services due to the way the supported bus network is currently formulated.

35.21 Cllr Davies stated that she believes that shift workers do currently use the hourly services and that they can cope with a 1 hourly service but would not be able to rely on 2 hourly bus services. She repeated her question whether a two hourly service saved enough money to justify its impact.

35.22 Nick Skelton responded that a significant part of the savings, which has enabled retaining a five day a week service, has been as a result of reducing to a two hourly frequency. This is because bus operators can use resources (buses and drivers) more efficiently and can for example, have one driver and one bus serving two routes. The savings from this aspect of the proposals are really significant.

35.23 The Public Transport Team (PTT) has undertaken further detailed analysis of the impact on the economy, medical trips, the environment, and any potential conflict with the LTP. The Committee's discussion of these issues is detailed below. These points are also addressed in appendix 1 of the Cabinet report and the Technical Appendices of the Strategy (appendix 3).

Impact on the Local Economy

35.24 The Public Transport Team (PTT) has considered the impact of the proposed reformulated supported bus network in detail. Where services are lost it is believed people will find other ways of meeting their transport needs and plan their journeys to adjust to the reduction in frequency of some services. From the analysis that has been done, the team concludes that the impact on the economy is likely to be minimal.

35.25 The Strategy acknowledges that it is important to ensure that people can still get to work and so priority 2 reflects this by ensuring that facilities are in place so that people can travel to work at the beginning and end of the working day.

35.26 The overall spend in the local economy generated by use of the supported bus network is estimated to be around £19.6million. This figure will largely be maintained, and it is likely to be the incidental spend that will be lost as a result of journeys not being made. The anticipated loss of income is £165,000 of the overall £19.6million.

Bus Journey Incidental Spend and Reverse Spend in the Local Economy

35.27 Referring to estimates, Cllr St. Pierre asked what "incidental spend" means, and how the local economy will broadly stay the same. Alastair Mackie (PBA) told the Committee that the figures were calculated using national averages based on research carried out by Leeds University, which estimates that the typical spend per passenger using a bus for shopping is £30 per trip. This was applied to the percentage of trips made for shopping on the East Sussex supported bus network to give the £19.6million figure.

35.28 Cllr St. Pierre suggested that in her electoral division the proposed reduction in bus frequencies (from 7 days per week to 2 days per week) will impact on students and twilight workers who currently go into Lewes to get the bus and spend money, while they are waiting. If people cannot use the bus to get to work or college anymore they will not go into Lewes and the local economy will lose income.

35.29 Alastair Mackie (PBA) replied, saying that what Cllr St. Pierre was referring to is the incidental spend, as opposed to bus users travelling specifically for the purpose of shopping. It was agreed that some of that incidental spend will be lost as a result of the changed network but this is estimated to be £165,000 out of £19.6million. For those making dedicated shopping trips, it is likely that they will make alternative arrangements, if

they cannot use the bus service. Some will alter the timing of their trip to fit in with when they can use the bus. Some will make fewer trips, but will spend more on each trip as their shopping requirements will stay the same.

35.30 Cllr St. Pierre raised the issue of reverse spend, where people travel out from urban areas into rural areas for leisure purposes. For example, walkers who go out and spend money in the pubs. They will be unable to travel by bus for their organised walks and so this money will be lost to the local economy. Rupert Clubb responded that committed groups of walkers will continue to organise walks, but may need to alter their route to somewhere they can access by bus. It is likely that such reverse spend will not be lost to the local economy.

Impact on Local Businesses

35.31 Cllr Hodges stated that he has already made written representations and has responded to the consultation and so he has not laboured the point in meetings, but he considered that there should have been a much more detailed analysis of how the projected changes would affect businesses. The existing analysis does not include consideration of the importance of getting staff to work outside peak hours. He considered a huge amount of money shall be lost to the local economy.

35.32 Cllr Hodges stated that the PTT should consider what it means to businesses that cannot get staff to work outside peak hours. Productivity and outputs shall be reduced, impacting on their ability to repay loans funded on the basis of previous projections.

35.33 Cllr Stogdon considered that questions based on generalised assertions were insufficiently detailed. If Members wished officers to respond at meetings, detailed and specific examples need to be provided to officers in advance.

35.34 Cllr Hodges asked for clarification of Cllr Stogdon's point and asked if officers would be allowed to answer his question. Cllr Stogdon clarified that for officers to properly deal with a point, it needed to be based on detailed evidence and examples.

35.35 Cllr Hodges stated that in order for the decision that is to be taken on the supported bus network proposals to be fair, ESCC needs to have taken into account every business's views.

35.36 Rupert Clubb responded that the consultation carried out by the PTT was fair. Businesses were invited to comment through the consultation, but ESCC cannot force people to respond to consultations. The current supported bus network is used by around 7,500 passengers per day. It is anticipated that the future usage will still be over 7000 passengers per day. This is a fall of just over 7% of an East Sussex population of approximately 435,000. In this context, 500 passengers is a relatively small number.

35.37 Rupert Clubb stated that he understood elected Member's views that if one passenger is affected then that is one passenger too many. However, Members should note that this decision was being made against a background of limited financial resources and in that context a relatively small number of people will be affected.

35.38 Nick Skelton added that the on-bus passenger surveys show that 9% of passengers use bus services for employment, which is a relatively small number and that priority 2 of the Commissioning Strategy is intended to safeguard respondents' ability to get to and from work during peak times. The majority of services on the supported network currently finish at 6pm and so would not aid shift workers at the moment. Therefore there is unlikely to be a significant impact on them due to the proposed changes to the supported bus network.

35.39 Cllr Hodges acknowledged that there was an element of truth in what Nick Skelton had said, but he was not talking about people who finish at 2am or 3am in the morning. He was referring to shift workers, who finish during normal work time and who need to get home after they have finished their shift during the off peak time period.

35.40 Cllr Hodges referred to one business example impacted by the proposals, which he had mentioned to the Karl Taylor during the consultation, concerning a proposed investment of £0.5million of funding in a new visitor centre for Hastings Country Park. The Country Park is now going to lose visitors on their busiest day, which is a Sunday, because there will be no Sunday bus service, and this is an example of the sort of thing that can affect businesses.

35.41 Nick Skelton re-iterated that the existing services stop at 6pm in the vast majority of cases and so those people who would need to travel after 6pm would not be using supported busses, in any event. The changes under discussion would result in the loss of 2 Saturday services, 2 evening services and 5 Sunday services. This is a low number of services and many of the ones that might have been reduced have been commercialised.

35.42 Cllr Hodges stated he thought that the proposals do impact on part time workers. Rupert Clubb responded that if those services are not there at present, then the changes that are being proposed to the network will not impact on part time workers in the way that Cllr Hodges is suggesting. People who need to get back from work, by a taxi if needed, are doing that now, and so the changes made to the reformulated supported bus network (RSBN) are not going to impact on those existing travel habits.

Impact on medical trips

35.43 Nick Skelton stated that an analysis of the proposals indicates that 85% of people will have access to a 5 or 6 day a week bus service, which operates on a two hourly frequency or better. Approximately 5% of journeys on the supported network are made for the purpose of attending medical appointments. This equates to approximately 400 people per day. It is estimated that 25 medical journeys a day will be lost due to the proposed changes.

35.44 However, 9 out of the 12 routes that will be affected do have access to alternative public transport. This issue was identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). Consequently the proposed funding for Dial-a-Ride services is to be increased to provide Dial-a-Ride services on at least 3 days per week. The PTT has also worked with the providers of these services which will result in Dial-a-Ride services being available on 4 to 6 days per week (depending on the part of the County you are in).

35.45 Furthermore, there are opportunities through the NHS for patients to choose the days they attend medical appointments, especially for routine non-emergency appointments (which tend to be the high percentage of appointments accessed by bus).

35.46 Cllr O'Keeffe told the Committee that she has had a volume of correspondence on this issue, where her residents were saying that although 'choose and book' theoretically existed, it was not working in practice. In her view, the issue of medical appointments is affecting more people. At the very least it suggests that ESCC should be working with the health service as there is a growing demand for transport for medical trips.

35.47 Cllr Davies suggested that the NHS services are required to be flexible with appointments. It is the responsibility of the patient to explain that they can only attend on certain days if they are restricted by the availability of bus travel, and then the NHS has a duty to be flexible with the appointment.

35.48 Cllr Hodges expressed his gratitude for the commercialisation of the 20, 22, and 26 bus services which serve the Conquest hospital. However, the 28 Sunday service is being lost which serves the West Hill and the eastern end of The Ridge in Hastings. This would cause a problem getting to the Conquest hospital on a Sunday.

35.49 Alastair Mackie (PBA) told the Committee that the figures for medical appointments were estimates based on a relatively small number of journeys. It was therefore harder to produce estimates that will not vary. The travel patterns for medical appointments are not so predictable but the overall number of people using the bus for this purpose is considered to be relatively low.

35.50 Cllr Hodges considered that ESCC should look wider than patients, and it should also look at the travel needs of the staff who work at the hospitals.

35.51 Cllr St. Pierre suggested that if the on bus survey was carried out in the summer, fewer people would be ill at that time. Cllr St. Pierre is very concerned about 2 day per week bus services in her electoral division. Clinics are not flexible at all, for example, the cancer clinic is run on a specific day and there is no scope to change it. Therefore, if someone in her electoral division cannot get a bus on that particular day, they cannot access the clinic.

35.52 Cllr St. Pierre stated that there are different dial-a-ride services throughout the County, some supported and others not. There are 5000 people living in the villages north of Lewes. Could ESCC guarantee that there will be sufficient availability of Dial-a-Ride services for all those people?

35.53 Nick Skelton replied that the on-bus surveys are carried out on a rolling 18 month programme which means they are carried out throughout the year during all seasons. There are some services which it is proposed will run on 2 or 3 days per week, but in the majority of cases the frequency will stay at 5 or 6 days per week, but on a 2 hourly frequency.

Environmental Impact

35.54 An analysis of the proposed reformulated support bus network has been undertaken and it is estimated 93% of the current users of the network will continue to use it. This means that there will be just under 500 people who may no longer use the bus, which indicates that the environmental impact will be negligible. There is no conflict between the Strategy and the Local transport Plan (LTP).

Road Congestion

35.55 Cllr Hodges stated that the environmental impact people are concerned about is not air quality, but the quantity of vehicles that will be on the road. For example, 26% of traffic from the link road will be diverted on to The Ridge and ESCC should not add to this due to people no longer being able to use buses. In terms of the LTP conflict, Cllr Hodges considered that ESCC have let businesses down as they may have set up their businesses in remote locations on the basis that there would be support from public transport.

35.56 Cllr Taylor's view was that the evidence does not indicate that changing the RSBN will automatically create additional congestion and traffic on the roads. The number of people using the affected services by definition is low, and therefore should not translate into a lot more cars on the road.

35.57 Cllr St. Pierre thought that the impact will not be spread evenly across the County because not all routes are being cut. The impacts will be localised where services are reduced (e.g. the impact on the A27 and earwig corner, if 15 people no longer use a bus then there will be 15 more cars on the road). At pinch points on the road network there could be a significant impact.

35.58 Cllr St. Pierre also asked if the PTT had considered the impacts on road accidents and particularly the number of KSI (killed and seriously injured) accidents. Rupert Clubb stated that there is no evidence of a link between KSI's and the proposed changes in bus services.

Impact of Proposed Fare Increases

35.59 Cllr O'Keeffe commented that it is not just the proposed cuts to bus services that need to be considered, but also the impact of fare rises. This might change the cost benefit analysis for some people in favour of using a car, and lead to more car use.

35.60 Nick Skelton responded that the impact will be spread out over the whole day. In terms of the costs aspect, the County Council's officers and consultants have looked at how this would affect passenger numbers. The demand for bus services is fairly inelastic, (i.e. they are not very sensitive to price changes). Over half of the people using a supported bus service do not pay a fare, either because they have a concessionary bus pass, or are school children who have a freedom pass or a free pass. Furthermore the increase in fares will not apply to season tickets and would only affect the daily fare rates.

35.61 Cllr O'Keeffe asked if the fare increases were likely to discourage the people who are actually putting money into the bus network. Nick Skeleton responded that it is estimated that 93% of passengers will continue to use the supported network, and therefore there will be little impact on the number of fare paying passengers.

Subsidy Levels

35.62 The proposed reformulated supported bus network (RSBN) would see a significant reduction in the level of net subsidy and average subsidy per passenger. The current subsidy ranges between 6p and £11.97 per passenger. The subsidy level for the proposed RSBN ranges between 2p and £4.83 per passenger. Overall the net passenger subsidy on the proposed reformulated supported bus network will be lower, with the average net subsidy decreasing from 81p per passenger to 59p per passenger.

35.63 Cllr Hodges asked how a route which was previously subsidised could be become commercially viable, and how close some of the other routes are to becoming commercially viable.

35.64 Nick Skelton told the Committee that the commercialisation of 23 routes has saved the Council £190,000, which is a smaller part of the overall saving. Furthermore, operators can decide to commercialise a service at any point in time. Those services that have a low net subsidy have tended to be the ones that have been commercialised. The PTT has a history of working with providers to get to a position where subsidised services become increasing financially viable, and will continue to work to commercialise services where possible.

35.65 Cllr Hodges asked if ESCC was subsidising bus competition. Nick Skelton replied that ESCC does not subsidise bus competition and that all bus provision is de-regulated. Neil Maguire clarified that any operator can run a route. E.g. in Eastbourne there were two companies (Renown and Eastbourne Buses) running the same route. Arguably if there are enough bus passengers then a bus company will operate a service. However, ESCC does not fund services where there is competition as this would suggest the route is commercially viable.

35.66 Cllr St. Pierre asked whether, if a company approaches the PTT with a new route, the County Council can stop them from running a route. Neil Maguire replied that any operator is free to start running a service after 56 days notice. Unfortunately, they can also stop running a service after 56 days notice.

Dial-a-Ride Services

35.67 Cllr St. Pierre asked what the subsidy was for Dial-a-Ride bus services. Alastair Mackie (PBA) said the subsidy is calculated in exactly the same way as the subsidy for all other services / passengers. There is typically a higher subsidy per passenger for dial-a-ride because of the lower number of users. As an example they are:

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| Eastbourne | £4.76 per passenger. |
| Lewes | £3.68 per passenger. |
| Seaford | £1.47 per passenger. |

35.68 Cllr St. Pierre suggested that given the subsidy levels for Dial-a-Ride services, ESCC could be subsidising additional bus routes instead, which would be of wider application and would be available at specific publicised times. Nick Skeleton responded that when looking at the decision about the supported bus network, it was the annual costs of running a bus service, rather than the per passenger subsidy, that were important. Whilst the subsidy per passenger for Dial-a-Ride may be higher, the costs over the year are much lower than providing a five day per week bus service. Cllr St. Pierre said that she did not agree with Nick Skelton's comments.

35.69 Cllr Taylor asked if Dial-a-Ride services were only available to elderly and disabled people in East Sussex, who cannot access alternative modes of public transport. Neil Maguire said that Dial-a-Ride is a generic term. It is transport for people who cannot use ordinary public transport. However, this can be for a variety of reasons and would include anyone that could not use other public transport.

Alternative transport models and funding options

35.70 Nick Skeleton outlined the funding applications that the department had made which included the successful applications that had secured additional funding for the bus network.

35.71 Cllr Hodges asked if a local authority other than the County Council was entitled to bid for a grant under the Better Bus Area fund. Neil Maguire confirmed that only the local transport authority (i.e. the County Council) could apply to this fund, which also had to be made in partnership with a bus company.

The Amended Reformulated Supported Bus Network

35.72 The PTT believe that the proposed reformulated supported bus network (RSBN) will meet the priority needs outlined in the Commissioning Strategy. In the revised network, Dial-a-Ride services will now operate 4-6 days a week and some of the school services will remain 'open door' services accessible to the whole community.

35.73 The bus services offered by the proposed RSBN have improved. Of the current 101 subsidised services, 90 will continue and 23 routes have been commercialised, with only 7 routes changing to a 2-3 day service off peak. The number of routes affected has decreased since the consultation was undertaken. Now only 2 evening, 2 Saturday and 5 Sunday services will be withdrawn.

35.74 Members of the Committee asked a number of questions on specific routes as detailed below (see appendix 4 page 93 for details of commercialised routes).

- Cllr Hodges asked if the service 344 Hastings to Rye service will be commercialised for 6 days per week from 9-5. Neil Maguire responded that the proposal is for an hourly service Monday to Saturday.
- Cllr Hodges asked if there are any proposals to re-engage with providers in the future in a further effort to get more services commercialised. Nick Skelton said the PTT currently works with providers on an ongoing basis to commercialise routes wherever possible and that this practice will continue in the future.
- Cllr Hodges asked if the PTT could let him know what it would cost to keep the Sunday service on the 344 and 28 services in Hastings. Neil Maguire agreed that that he will send the costs to Cllr Hodges.
- Cllr O’Keeffe asked for clarification with regard to route 127 of what “will remain the same” means in the presentation for commercialised services. Does that mean will stay the same as the existing levels, or will stay the same as what had been proposed in the RSN?

Neil Maguire replied that Compass had said that they would be prepared to commercialise routes based on a 2 hourly service, but that if Cabinet said 2 hourly was not acceptable and it was to be provided on an hourly frequency, they would stand back (in other words they would not commercialise on a one hourly basis). It would therefore cost ESCC to provide the service. Routes 121 and 123 will change from hourly to 2 hourly under the proposed commercialisation. Routes 340, 341 and 344 will continue hourly, Monday to Saturday.

- Cllr Hodges asked if a two hourly service cost twice as much as a one hour service and vice versa. Nick Skelton replied that there is no “one size fits all” approach to valuing the services. They are not expecting any additional announcements of commercialised services but could not rule it out completely.
- Cllr St. Pierre asked about the 125 Barcombe service. It seems to be serving some communities 5 days per week but only going to Barcombe 3 days per week, is this right?

Neil Maguire said that the 125 service is complicated as it serves two communities. There was a tender proposal for 5 days per week at the same price as 2 days per week. Therefore, there would still be a Barcombe service 5 days per week. Lewes to Alfriston would be provided 6 days per week by Compass on a commercial basis.

- Cllr Taylor asked if the PTT have secured assurances from the commercial providers that where they are commercialising a route they will do it over a long period of time. In other words, if they are no longer viable will those services simply stop.

Neil Maguire said that this has been a very important part of the discussions. It was very important that the proposals they received were viable. They are as confident as they can be that all the routes which have been commercialised are sound proposals.

35.75 Cllr Maynard assured the Committee that there is a constant dialogue with commercial providers to seek changes to existing services and establish commercially viable new services. Elected Members are encouraged to contact the Passenger Transport Team (PTT) with any specific enquiries.

36. URGENT ITEMS

36.1 No urgent items were raised for discussion.

36. NEXT MEETING

36.1 The meeting ended at 16.30.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 18 March 2015.

COUNCILLOR RICHARD STOGDON
CHAIR