

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room - Sessions House on Thursday, 10 May 2018.

PRESENT: Mr P W A Lake (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mr M A C Balfour, Mrs C Bell, Mr R H Bird, Mr A Booth, Mr I S Chittenden (Substitute for Mrs T Dean, MBE), Mr G Cooke, Mr D Farrell, Mr R C Love, Mr J P McInroy, Dr L Sullivan and Mr J Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Lightowler (Head of Public Transport) and Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

18. Membership

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the change in membership; Mr Balfour replacing Mr Sweetland, be noted.

19. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

(Item A4)

Mr Balfour declared an interest in the Bus Transport and Public Subsidy Select Committee as he had been the relevant Cabinet Member during the Topic Review.

20. Bus Transport and Public Subsidy Select Committee - One Year On

(Item A5)

1. Mr Whiting, as Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste, introduced the Select Committee year on update. He expressed his thanks for the hard work of the Select Committee members and commended the positive response of the Officers in the Transport team.
2. Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport at KCC, provided an overview of the work undertaken to further respond to the recommendation of the Select Committee report which was endorsed by County Council in March 2017. He advised that some significant developments had taken place since the Directorate had last updated the Scrutiny Committee as part of the initial implementation plan agenda item in October 2017.
3. The key update of note was the development of the Big Conversation which sought to achieve significant public involvement and consultation on alternative models for delivering rural transport. He advised the committee that work on this

project would have implications for ongoing activity around implementing the recommendations.

4. Mr Lightowler provided an update on the individual recommendations, referring to the detailed progress report contained within the papers.
5. Mr Lightowler responded to Member questions regarding some of the recommendations:
 - U-Travel Pass (low update in Thanet and East Kent) – Mr Lightowler explained that lower commercial fares for children had reduced demand for the Young Persons Travel Pass and other season ticket options. He advised the committee that Stage Coach had taken a commercial risk on this process but it was hoped that it would balance out and may lead to other positive options around the county.
 - Bus and Rail connectivity – Mr Lightowler confirmed that this was not within the scope of KCC's remit but advised that the necessary engagement between the operators and their customers was encouraged by KCC.
 - Community Infrastructure Levy – Mr Lightowler explained that KCC was working with all District Borough Councils to examine how best to access funding and prioritise schemes.
 - Member Bus Panel – Mr Lightowler and Mr Whiting explained that progress with developing the Member Bus Panel had been deferred until after the Big Conversation so that it could be set up with a clear direction around responding to the key concerns raised by Kent residents and transport users.
 - Use of smaller buses – Mr Lightowler confirmed that there had been significant cost implications for the operators around using smaller buses, with the miles per gallon savings not high enough to offset the other costs.
 - School transport issues – Mr Lightowler confirmed that the operators did consider their routes and seek to take school transport needs into account. Where problems have occurred and families have lost access, KCC Public Transport would look into this.
 - Timetable changes / poor communication – Mr Lightowler and Mr Whiting advised the Committee that KCC had been working with operators to highlight the need to keep their customers informed and also that KCC was working to educate the public in advance of the Big Conversation about Public Transport responsibilities and processes.
 - Community Transport Licensing issues – Mr Lightowler explained that these licenses were covered by EU law but that a derogation exists in the UK allowing operators to work without licenses. Non-commercial operators became able to compete with the large companies. This guidance had recently changed because of an EU court decision brought about by a challenge from the large companies. He explained that this was expected to only affect one Kent based small operator.
6. Members commended the positive work of the Select Committee for developing the report and recommendations. The Committee commented that in some areas, more progress would have been welcomed and that the delayed implementation of some of the recommendations was disappointing. Although it was noted that progress had been made that consideration should be given to receiving a future update on progress at another Scrutiny Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that the Select Committee one year on update be noted, that the Public Transport team be thanked for their work on the issues and that Mr Lightowler and Mr Whiting be thanked for attending to provide the update.

21. Social Isolation Select Committee - Timetable

(Item A6)

1. The committee considered the draft timetable for the Social Isolation Select Committee, the establishment of which was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 17 April 2018.
2. Members discussed the importance of aiming to complete the topic review within the agreed timetable. While some Members commented that it was important to allow sufficient time for a detailed and thorough piece of work, the committee recognised that any extensions to the timetable would result in delays to the start of the next Select Committee's topic review.

RESOLVED that the timetable for the Social Isolation Select Committee (reporting to County Council in March 2019) be agreed.

22. KCC Policy and Practice on Highway Related Insurance Claims

(Item C1)

Noted that the item had been deferred to a future Scrutiny meeting.