

**Subject:** Supported Bus Service Network – Extract from the proceedings of the Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

**Date of Meeting:** 19 July 2012

**Report of:** Strategic Director; Resources

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**Wards Affected:** All

## **POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**4.00 pm 14 June 2012**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillor J Kitcat (Chair) Councillors Littman (Deputy Chair), Davey, Hamilton, Mitchell, A Norman, Peltzer Dunn, Shanks, G Theobald (Opposition Spokesperson) and West.

**Other Members present:** Councillors Bennett, Brown and Mears.

### **PART ONE**

#### **13. SUPPORTED BUS SERVICE NETWORK**

- 13.1 The Strategic Director; Place introduced the report which outlined the proposed allocation of bus service contracts across the city for those routes that it was felt should be subsidised as they were not commercially viable to bus operators. A full consultation process had been undertaken with user groups and passengers and tenders sought for the various routes. The procurement process was a complex one with contracts being awarded for a 4 year period and information about which routes were being recommended not available until the report was published with the agenda. He also noted that the initial tender submissions had been in excess of the budget identified for the services but following negotiations the deficit had been reduced and the current level of services proposed able to be funded.
- 13.2 The Chair stated that he had received several requests from councillors to speak on this matter and therefore intended to call on them before opening the matter up to questions and debate by the committee. He then called on Councillors Brown and Bennett to address the meeting.

- 13.3 Councillor Brown referred to the N0.81 service and stated that the depth of feeling in support of the service was highlighted in the 160 letters that had been received and which she wished to present to the Chair for the record. The majority of people had only been alerted to the proposal at the weekend and yet they had responded in this way. If the proposal went ahead then a number of people in the Ward be affected, with no alternative evening bus available it would restrict their movements and freedom.
- 13.4 Councillor Bennett stated that there were many elderly people who were dependant on the service and it would mean that they became prisoners in their own homes. There were also a number of host families for foreign students and again they would be directly affected by the loss of the service. She therefore urged the committee to consider the matter and to maintain the service.
- 13.5 The Chair thanked the Members and stated that their concerns would be taken into consideration as part of the debate on the matter. He then invited Councillor Mears to speak on the item.
- 13.6 Councillor Mears stated that as a Ward Councillor for Ovingdean she wished to argue for the retention of the No.52 bus service. She believed that Ovingdean would become the only outlying area in the city which would not have a direct service into the city. She stated that commuters and those residents wishing to get to the Royal Sussex Hospital would find that they had to change at the Marina, which was not a welcome proposition. Furthermore, there were a number of young people who would be directly affected, and their case had been very well expressed earlier in the meeting. She hoped that further consideration would be given to matter and a way found to retain the services that had been highlighted. It was a very short-sighted approach and one that could be resolved if appropriate action was taken.
- 13.7 The Chair thanked Councillor Mears for attending the meeting and stated that the points raised would be considered. He also noted that all 3 political groups had voted for the budget at Budget Council and had thereby supported the level of funding identified for bus services. He stated that the Government had also reduced the level of funding to bus companies and cut grants to the local authorities, which made it difficult to meet the costs of the services provided. He stated that the council would look at alternative mechanisms for supporting the bus services.
- 13.8 Councillor G. Theobald stated that he wished to pay tribute to the two young people who had come to the meeting to raise their concerns and to those others who had very quickly responded to what were a series of dramatic cuts. He believed that there would a significant number of people in the city who were still unaware of the impact of these cuts and would find that they had lost a service. He also queried how the figures for usage on the school buses differed and whether parents had been advised of the loss of these services when considering which schools to send their children to. He referred to the latest bus information and queried whether the No.81 would continue to operate from the city centre to the open market, when the route from Goldstone Valley to the city centre was cut.
- 13.9 Councillor Mitchell queried whether an equalities impact assessment had been undertaken and how it would have related to the proposed loss of services and also

whether both through and saver tickets would be recognised and accepted across all service providers.

- 13.10 The Strategic Director; Place confirmed that through and saver tickets would be accepted across all services as it was listed as a condition in the new contract. He also noted that all the routes had been evaluated and measured and information from the bus companies taken into account.
- 13.11 Councillor West noted that reductions in bus services were happening all across the country with significant cuts being made in certain areas. The council had attempted to keep the level of the reductions to a minimum across the city and was looking to use other factors such as One Planet Living to generate future savings that could be used to support other areas.
- 13.12 Councillor Shanks stated that she had recently travelled on the No.96 bus and a total of 35 children had used it along its route. The pupil numbers travelling from Westdene to Hove Park and Blatchington Mill would be reducing and therefore it was more appropriate to discuss with the Heads and parents options for enabling those children to get to the schools rather than maintain a costly service.
- 13.13 Councillor Hamilton noted that whilst councillors from the 3 groups had voted for the budget, that was in its entirety and it did not mean that some were aspects were not favoured by one or other of the groups. He suggested that in the context of the overall budget of the council there was an opportunity to reprioritise and put funding into the bus service and then look to find alternative savings or funding arrangements.
- 13.14 Councillor A. Norman stated that Brighton and Hove had to be the council's concern not other areas and queried the information given in the report in regard to the evidence for bus usage, in comparison to that provided by others. The loss of the No.96 service would result in pupils having to use alternative services resulting in lengthy journeys and longer days. She was also concerned that Ward Councillors had not been consulted on the proposals and noted that the Woodingdean and Westdene LAT had expressed concern over the loss of the No.27 route.
- 13.15 Councillor G. Theobald then moved an amendment on behalf of the Conservative Group as follows:
- “To amend recommendation 2.2 with the addition of the wording “with the exception of routes 27, 22, 52 and 81” and an additional two recommendations 2.3 and 2.4 as shown in bold italics:
- 2.1 That the Policy & Resources Committee award contracts for the supported bus routes as set out in Appendix 1 in Agenda Item 14 which is a Part Two Report.
- 2.2 That contracts for the additional services, shown in paragraph 3.14, are not awarded on the grounds of insufficient budget, ***with the exception of routes 27, 22, 52 and 81.***
- 2.3 That a report be brought back to the Policy & Resources Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> July identifying funding for the routes 27, 22, 52 and 81.***

**2.4 That officers urgently re-examine the evidence given for terminating the 96 school bus route and that no changes are implemented until September 2013 at the earliest.”**

- 13.16 Councillor Peltzer Dunn formally seconded the amendment and asked for clarification in regard to the financial comments in the report in that they implied the decision had been made some months ago not to include routes in the original tender process.
- 13.17 The Director of Finance stated that the contracts were for a 4-year term with the possibility of an extension. They were not due to be let for a single year and if that was decided, it was likely that the tender process would have to be revisited as all routes had been included in the original procurement process. In regard to the No. 96 service however, if it was treated as a single route it was unlikely that it would need to be taken through a procurement process. If all routes were affected then there would be a need to go through a procurement process as the contract was based on a four-year term rather than a single one.
- 13.18 Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that the presentation from the two young ladies earlier had been excellent and had highlighted the fact that the use of £38k to maintain a service out of a budget of over £700m was possible should the desire be there to do so. He stated that adults found commuting to London tiring and the same situation faced the school children in terms of the length of time it would take to get to school. He believed it would have an effect on their education and their educational achievement.
- 13.19 Councillor Mitchell stated that she wished to move an amendment on behalf of the Labour & Co-operative Group as follows:
- “To delete recommendation 2.2 and replace with a new 2.2 and to insert two additional recommendations 2.3 and 2.4 as shown in bold italics:
- ~~2.2 That contracts for the additional services, shown in paragraph 3.14, are not awarded on the grounds of insufficient budget.~~
- 2.1 That the Policy & Resources Committee award contracts for the supported bus routes as set out in Appendix 1 in agenda item 14 which is a Part Two Report;
- 2.2 That Policy & Resources Committee agrees, in principle, to the award of the contracts and continuation of the services listed in paragraph 3.14 of the report for one year.**
- 2.3 That the Strategic Director: Place (in consultation with the Leaders of the three political groups), be authorised to take all steps necessary to the continuation of the services and award of the contracts as detailed in paragraph 3.14 of the report for year, including compliance the necessary procurement and Transport Act processes,**
- 2.4 That P&R notes the financial implications as set out in the note from the Director of Finance.”**
- 13.20 Whilst she had a great deal of sympathy with the Conservative amendment, the Labour & Co-operative amendment specifically identified funding that could be used to maintain

the services for another year and provide some breathing space. She was concerned about the impact the loss of services would have on the elderly and isolated as well as school children and urged the committee to support the amendment.

- 13.21 Councillor Hamilton formally seconded the amendment and stated that it was obvious from the responses to the proposed loss of services were essential to people and he hoped that all the points raised would be taken on board and the amendment accepted.
- 13.22 The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that as the Labour & Co-operative amendment was linked to the TBM out-turn item which had been carried, no funding was indentified and therefore a report would be required for the next committee meeting, in order to clarify the funding position, should the amendment be approved.
- 13.23 Councillor Littman stated that whilst he understood the reasons for the two amendments, the council had been placed in an impossible position and had to look at the viability of each service and make a decision. The No. 96 service had a declining number of expected users and the cost of the subsidy was high, therefore it was better to look at other ways of supporting the school children.
- 13.24 Councillor Peltzer Dunn accepted that the Conservative and Labour & Co-operative amendments sought to achieve the same end and hoped that the Conservative amendment would be supported, but if not, then he would support the Labour & Co-operative one.
- 13.25 The Chair noted the comments and stated that there was a need to consider Item 14 which was exempt from disclosure to the press and public and therefore adjourned the part one meeting at 6.00pm and asked for people to leave the chamber.
- 13.26 The Chair reconvened the meeting at 6.25pm following the consideration of Item 14 in closed session and stated that he felt the matter had been fully debated and would therefore put the amendments to the vote. He then put the Conservative amendment to the vote and noted that with 5 for and 5 against, in not having a majority in favour the amendment fell. He then put the Labour & Co-operative amendment to the vote and noted that with 5 for and 5 against, in not having a majority the amendment fell.
- 13.27 The Chair then put the recommendations as listed in the report to the vote, which was tied at 5 for and 5 against. He therefore used his second and casting vote in order to carry the recommendations 6 : 5.
- 13.28 **RESOLVED:**
- (1) That it be agreed to award the contracts for the supported bus routes as set out in Appendix 1 in Agenda item 14 which is a Part Two Report.
  - (2) That it be agreed that the contracts for the additional services, shown in paragraph 3.14 of the report, be not awarded on the grounds of insufficient budget.

## PART TWO SUMMARY

### 14. SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES NETWORK – EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

- 14.1 The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Director; Place concerning supported bus services network, which was exempt from disclosure to the press and public.
- 14.2 **RESOLVED:** That the additional information contained in the report be noted.

### 15. PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

- 15.1 The Committee considered whether the item and the decisions thereon contained in Part Two of the Agenda should remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.
- 15.2 Councillor Mitchell noted that under the previous committee system there had been an opportunity for the Opposition Groups to refer an item to Full Council for information. She believed that this was possible under the new arrangements and therefore requested that Item 13, Supported Bus Service Network be referred to the Council meeting in July.
- 15.3 Councillor G. Theobald stated that he supported the request on behalf of the Conservative Group.
- 15.4 The Chair noted the request and stated that it was possible for each Group to refer an item to full council for information and confirmed that this would be actioned and that an item would be included on future agendas so that each Group could utilise this facility.
- 15.5 **RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the item contained in Part Two of the agenda remain exempt from disclosure to the press and public.
  - (2) That Item 13, Supported Bus Service Network be referred to Council for information.