

**SPECIAL POLICY & RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING**

Appendix 1 to Agenda Item 5

6th September 2012

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Subsidised Bus Services – Extract from the Council Meeting held on the 19 July 2012

Date of Meeting: 6 September 2012

Report of: Strategic Director: Resources

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Wards Affected: All

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

**4.30pm 19th July 2012
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Councillors Randall (Chair), Meadows (Deputy Chair), Barnett, Bennett, Bowden, Brown, Buckley, Carden, Cobb, Cox, Davey, Deane, Duncan, Farrow, Fitch, Gilbey, Hamilton, Hawtree, Hyde, Janio, Jarrett, Jones, Kennedy, A Kitcat, J Kitcat, Lepper, Littman, Mac Cafferty, Marsh, Mears, Mitchell, Morgan, A Norman, K Norman, Peltzer Dunn, Phillips, Pidgeon, Pissaridou, Powell, Robins, Rufus, Shanks, Simson, Smith, Summers, Sykes, C Theobald, G Theobald, Wakefield, Wealls, Wells and West.

PART ONE

7(A). SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES

7.1 The Mayor stated that under the Council's petition scheme, if a petition contained 1,250 or more signatures, it could be debated by the Full Council and such a request had been made in respect of an e-petition concerning Subsidised Bus Services.

7.2 The Mayor invited Ms. Hill to present her petition.

7.3 Ms. Hill thanked the Mayor and stated that a total of 1,789 people had signed the combined paper and e-petition which read as follows:

"We the undersigned petition the council to continue the current funding of subsidised bus services in Brighton and Hove.

Bus services exist so that people can get around without the need for a car, and reducing subsidies will make it more difficult to reduce car ownership and usage. The proposed cuts will mostly affect those who cannot afford a car, cannot walk far, or cannot pay for a taxi. We urge the council to find the modest sums required to continue bus subsidies from other projects and avoid this backwards step.”

- 7.4 Ms. Hill stated that she hoped the council would find a way to ensure that the bus services were maintained and that a solution would be found for the No.52 service that served Woodingdean.
- 7.5 The Mayor noted that there were two amendments to the report’s recommendations and stated that he would therefore called on Councillor Robins to move the Labour & Co-operative Group’s amendment followed by Councillor G. Theobald to move the Conservative Group’s amendment.
- 7.6 Councillor Robins moved the Labour & Co-operative amendment which sought to add further recommendations to the report.
- 7.7 Councillor Mitchell formally seconded the amendment.
- 7.8 Councillor G. Theobald moved the Conservative Group amendment which also sought to add further recommendations to the report.
- 7.9 Councillor A. Norman formally seconded the amendment.
- 7.10 Councillor J. Kitcat noted that all parties had voted for the budget in February which had included revisions to the bus services and noted that had the amendment moved at the June Policy & Resources Committee been carried, the £1m saving achieved since then would not have been made. Having set out the council’s position the independent operators had chosen to maintain a number of services on a commercial basis and following the information presented at the last Policy & Resources Committee, it was possible to subsidise a number of the other routes so that they were available. There was a need to look at the school routes and to find a more flexible alternative to simply continuing with the subsidy in view of the falling numbers of pupils.
- 7.11 Councillor Mitchell stated that she believed it was appropriate to lobby for the retention of services and noted that the previous Labour Administration had worked closely with the bus company to improve services and provision such as accessible bus stops and real time bus information.
- 7.12 Councillor Davey stated that he could not support the proposed amendments as elements would require retendering of the contracts and this could not be achieved within the required timescales of the Traffic Commissioner.
- 7.13 Councillor Mears suggested that the current Administration had placed ideological views above the interests of the city. She noted that the owner of the Big Lemon had contacted ward councillors to say that buses would be sourced to meet the requirements of the contract, but she suggested that this should have been done in the first place. She also questioned the process which had resulted in the report to the July P&R Committee which identified an error in the contract award that had resulted in the No.52 service being awarded to the Big Lemon and a saving that was used to subsidise

other services. She hoped that an explanation would be forthcoming on how such an error could have been made.

- 7.14 Councillor G. Theobald stated that he would be seeking further discussions to see if the full route for the No.52 service could be supported as it was the only service that enabled residents of Woodingdean to get in to the centre of the city and to the main hospital. He hoped that the Conservative amendment could be supported as there was a need to ensure that contract requirements for low-floor buses and through-ticketing could be met by the provider.
- 7.15 Councillor West referred to the One-Planet Living project and noted that the council and the city needed to reduce their carbon footprint and water-usage and that the funding allocated for the project would enable savings to be generated and then used to support other services such as the bus routes. The decision to adhere to the procurement process had been vindicated as a saving had been achieved and services maintained.
- 7.16 Councillor Brown stated that the retention of the No.81 service had been welcomed by residents of Hove Park Ward as they would have been left with no service at all.
- 7.17 Councillor Simson referred to the No.52 service and queried whether in reviewing the contract the number of students from the Language School using the service had been taken into account, as this was on the increase, but was likely to go down if the restricted route was the only one available. She also noted that it would cost bus users more as they would have to purchase a second ticket once their journey ended at the Marina and therefore it was likely to discourage more people from using the service. She believed that there was a clear need for a full No.52 service that covered Woodingdean and Ovingdean and did not require having to change at the Marina.
- 7.18 Councillor Peltzer Dunn queried why there had been a need to discover an error in the award of the contracts to provide a solution to the situation that had been created and why so many people had been put through a period of worry only to find that there had been no need to do so.
- 7.19 Councillor Smith stated that he believed residents of Woodingdean, Ovingdean and Rottingdean had been treated as second class and denied equal accessibility to a service that enabled them to get to the centre of town or to the hospital. He did not believe that many would be willing to change at the Marina and therefore it was likely that more people would enter by car and thereby increase numbers in the city.
- 7.20 Councillor Jarrett stated that the budget proposals had been voted on by all Groups and it was normal practice for a successful contractor to have the necessary equipment in place at the time the contract came into operation and not before.
- 7.21 Councillor Kitcat stated that he was pleased to see that two new operators would be providing services within the city and that they would meet the contract requirements in regard to their fleet. He believed that the procurement process had shown that a number of routes could be maintained on a commercial basis and this would not have been the case had the decision in June been to retain all the subsidies as they were.
- 7.22 The Mayor noted the comments and thanked Ms. Hill for attending the meeting and presenting the petition. He then put the Labour & Co-operative amendment to the

report's recommendations to the vote which was carried. He then put the Conservative amendment to the report's recommendations to the vote which were carried.

7.23 The Mayor then put the recommendations as amended to the vote which was carried.

7.24 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That in view of the decision taken at the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on the 14th June, 2012 the petition be noted;
- (2) That the Council welcomes moves from Brighton & Hove City Council and Brighton & Hove Bus Company that enable the 21B, 22, 24, 26, 27, 81A, 81, 74 and 96 bus services to continue running be welcomed;
- (3) That officers be requested to report to the Policy & Resources Committee at its next meeting confirming the completion of contracts to run the 81, 81A, 21B, 96 and 74 services;
- (4) That, in addition to (2) and (3) above, officers be recommended to seek to identify the necessary funding and continue discussions with the bus companies with a view to running a direct service, with through ticketing, connecting Woodingdean and Ovingdean to the city centre and to report back to the Policy & Resources Committee with an Urgency meeting taking place if necessary due to the short timescales;
- (5) That officers be requested to seek to ensure that any new contract approved for the service 52 contains a requirement (if it doesn't already do so and subject to legal and procurement advice) for wheelchair accessible buses to be used on this route and that it is integrated into the 'Real Time' bus information system or a suitable alternative system and to report back to the Policy & Resources Committee on the outcome of the contract negotiations.

7.25 The Mayor then moved that the reports listed at Item 21 in the agenda and 21(A) in the addendum should be noted.

7.26 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report (Item 21) be noted.
- (2) That the report (Item 21(a)) be noted.