

Council

25 October 2012

Agenda Item 46

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Extract from the Proceedings of the Special Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on the 6 September 2012 – Supported Bus Routes

Date of Meeting: 25 October 2012

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: Name: **Mark Wall** Tel: **29-1006**

E-mail: mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Wards Affected: All

Action Required of Council:

To receive the item referred from the Policy & Resources Committee for information.

Recommendation:

That the extract and the report be noted.

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**4.00 pm SEPTEMBER 2012
COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

MINUTES

Present: Councillor J Kitcat (Chair); Councillors G Theobald (Opposition Spokesperson), Hamilton, Jarrett, Mac Cafferty, Mitchell (Opposition Spokesperson), A Norman, Peltzer Dunn, Shanks and Wakefield.

Other Members present: Councillor Mears.

PART ONE**6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- 6.1 **RESOLVED:** That Items 4, 5 and 7 be referred to the Council meeting on the 25th October, 2012 for information

5. SUPPORTED BUS ROUTES

- 5.1 The Strategic Director; Place introduced the report and stated that it outlined the various responses to the resolutions that were approved by the Full Council at its last meeting in July. He also noted that due to the sensitivity of some of the contractual information, a similar report had been produced which would need to be considered in part two of the meeting.
- 5.2 Councillor Mitchell noted the report and stated that it had been a long journey to reach the position that existed today. She noted that various routes had now been retained and that the two school routes, No's 74 and 96 would continue for a further year. However, it appeared that the No.52 remained truncated and that the residents of Ovingdean remained without a direct service to meet their needs. She accepted that they could change at the Marina in order to pick up the Compass service, but questioned whether this would meet their needs and therefore could not support the resultant position as outlined in the report. She also referred to the paragraphs at the bottom of page 3 and queried how it would work and the top of page 4 and stated that it was a shame to find that the Government had chosen not to support mandatory operational cross-ticketing for bus services. She suggested that it was something that should be aimed for in view of the technological advances that were being made. She also queried why it was that parents were being asked to meet an extra £8.00 a week cost for the purchase of tickets on the No. 74 and 96 services to enable their children to get to and from school. They had previously been able to purchase Saver tickets which enabled their children to get into school early or from school having attended after-school clubs, as well as at the usual time, but now had to purchase a ticket from the council for the normal school-run service.
- 5.3 The Chair stated that having undertaken the procurement process, it had enabled both the council and the bus companies to identify those routes that the bus companies were able to continue to operate without a subsidy. In regard to the school bus services, it had been made clear in January that a review was required and that it could lead to services being provided in a different way. The charge of £8.00 per week was paid direct to the council for the cost of the service to enable children to get to and from school, rather than it being paid to the bus company. He agreed that operation cross-ticketing should be mandatory and noted that information held by the current 'smart' card operated by Brighton & Hove Bus Company could be made available to others but that the company chose not to do so.
- 5.4 Councillor Shanks noted that children could use their ID card to get cheaper fares and that they did not necessarily need to have a Saver ticket. She also noted that a number of children using the No. 74 and 96 services would be eligible for the scholar pass and therefore would not have to pay the additional £8.00 a week.
- 5.5 Councillor Mitchell queried whether the parents of the children who used either of the services had been consulted on the additional charge and suggested that they were effectively being charged twice.
- 5.6 Councillor G. Theobald stated that he felt parents been treated unreasonably in that they had been led to believe the two routes would continue for another year and yet they now found they were expected to meet an additional cost. He was also concerned about the No. 52 route and the fact that due to time-tabling changes, residents were

unable to get to the station and commute to London. It appeared that there was no link-up at the Marina with other services and he asked if the situation could be reviewed or the time-table changed to ensure that the previous early services were re-introduced.

- 5.7 Councillor Mears stated that she believed the residents of Ovingdean had been disregarded and were now the only community to not have a direct route into the city or the station. She believed that they had been unfairly penalised and were being forced to take alternative transport in order to get to work, get their children to school and get into the city. She did not believe that people would want to have to change at the Marina and questioned why they would want to wait for a change especially in the winter months. She believed that there had not been sufficient consideration to the needs of residents in Ovingdean and hoped that something could be done to help.
- 5.8 Councillor A. Norman stated that she wished to thank the Strategic Director and the officers for their work and in bringing the report forward. However, she was concerned about the No. 96 route and noted that whilst viable options to support the route had been put forward previously they had not been accepted and the report lacked information on how this route would operate. She was concerned that most young people would already have a saver ticket to enable them to travel around the city and were now being asked to find an additional £8 a week to get to and from their school. She also noted that parents had been told the service would be kept as long as it was needed and yet they now faced an additional cost, which for some families would not be afforded and added further pressure on them. In view of the small amount of income that would be generated from the £8 a week charge she queried whether such a relatively small amount could not be covered by the council instead and asked for confirmation as to when parents were informed of the additional cost that was to be made.
- 5.9 The Lead Commissioner for City Regulation & Infrastructure stated that the through-ticketing agreement should provide for a wider choice and greater flexibility to enable travellers to get to their destinations. He stated that there was now an overlap between the No.47 and No.52 services and this provided more options. He suggested that officers could meet with Councillor Theobald to look at the time-tabling variations and identify how they could be utilised to meet the needs of commuters.
- 5.10 Councillor Hamilton noted that the annual saver ticket could still be used on some school routes and suggested that this should be explained as it was strange that only the No's. 96 and 74 were singled out in this way. He also queried whether the consideration had been given to the nature of the No. 47 and 57 routes which covered East Saltdean and whether they could have been combined to save costs and enable a direct No.52 service to be maintained.
- 5.11 Councillor Peltzer Dunn asked if the number of children affected on the two routes could be confirmed.
- 5.12 The Chair noted that saver tickets could be used on other routes and that it was only the No. 74 and 96 where the additional charge was being made. However, it was necessary in order to ensure that the routes were retained and stated that he would provide a written answer in regard to when parents were informed of the intention to make the charge.

- 5.13 The Lead Commissioner for City Regulation & Infrastructure stated that the No. 47 and 57 routes had been listed as separate routes within the contract documents and therefore could not have been regarded as a single operating route as part of the tender process.
- 5.14 Councillor Shanks stated that she was not able to confirm the number of children affected on the two routes, but would do so in writing and noted that there had been around 35 last year using them. She also noted that the £8 a week was effectively only an extra cost if a saver ticket was also purchased.
- 5.15 Councillor Peltzer Dunn suggested that based on the information provided at the meeting the total cost to the council would be approximately £9,600 if the cost of all the children using the two routes was to be met by the council. He suggested that it should be possible for the Authority to find the necessary resources to meet the cost for a year.
- 5.16 Councillor Jarrett stated that he believed the procurement process had been effective and had enabled the authority to reduce its subsidies as routes had been identified which the bus companies would continue to run even without a subsidy. The difficulty caused with the No.52 and for residents in Ovingdean was the outcome of the process and not through choice but rather based on a financial basis.
- 5.17 Councillor Shanks noted that the original intention had been not to run the No. 74 and 96 routes but having taken account of the views of residents and the petition, and in reviewing the process these had been included and parents had been informed that a charge may also be required to enable the routes to be maintained.
- 5.18 Councillor G. Theobald queried whether the time-tabling of routes could be looked at again or altered.
- 5.19 The Lead Commissioner for City Regulation & Infrastructure stated that it was not possible to revisit the time-tabling of routes as this had had to be submitted to the Traffic Commissioner and published. However, discussions could be held with the bus companies and any changes agreed and then raised with the Commissioner to see if a revised time table could be approved.
- 5.20 The Chair noted the comments and put the recommendation to note the report to the vote, which was carried with his casting vote.
- 5.21 **RESOLVED:** That the action taken by officers as detailed in the report following the resolutions approved at the Full Council meeting on the 19th July 2012 be noted.