



Rutland County Council

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Record of a meeting of a SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE PLACES AND PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANELS held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham at 7.00 pm on Thursday 21 March 2013

PRESENT:	<u>Places Scrutiny Panel</u>	<u>People (Children) Scrutiny Panel</u>
	Mr M E Baines (in the Chair)	Mr M E Baines
	Mrs C Cartwright	Mrs C Cartwright
	Mr W Cross	Mr W Cross
	Mr D C Hollis	Mr D C Hollis
	Mr J M Lammie	(substitute for Mrs J Figgis)
	Mr B A Montgomery	Mr J M Lammie
	Mr M A Oxley	Mr M A Oxley
	Mr D L Richardson	Mrs L I Stephenson
	Mrs L I Stephenson (substitute for Mrs C L Vernon)	Miss G Waller
		Mr A S Walters
CO-OPTED MEMBERS:	Ms P Rubinstein	
OFFICERS PRESENT:	Mr D Brown Ms W Poynton Miss L Tyers	Operational Director for Places Assistant Director – Services for People Democratic Services
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr K Bool	Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services
APOLOGIES:	Mr J T Dale, Mrs J Figgis, Mr P Goringe, Mrs C L Vernon, Mr N M Wainwright, and Ms S Gullan-Whur	

834. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Montgomery declared on grounds of probity as he held a concessionary bus pass.

Mr Richardson declared on grounds of probity as his daughter attended a school in Rutland.

Ms Rubinstein declared on grounds of probity as she was a governor at Uppingham Community College.

835. PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received from members of the public.

836. QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions with notice had been received from Members.

SCRUTINY

837. REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE TRANSPORT TASK & FINISH GROUP

Report 77/2013 from the Transport Task and Finish Group was received and provided the Panels with the conclusions of the Transport Task and Finish Group's considerations and recommendations for the development of transport in Rutland. Subject to the Panel's comments, the recommendations would be referred to the Cabinet.

Prior to the consideration of the report the Chairman, Mr Baines, explained how any votes on the recommendations would be taken. Each recommendation would be considered in turn and then each Panel would vote on them.

Miss Waller presented the report and made the following points:

- The Task and Finish Group had met for over a year and had met with various organisations including transport providers and had also sent out questionnaires.
- If the recommendations were approved this evening they would be passed on to Cabinet where it was expected that officers would be asked to undertake more detailed work.
- A comment had been received from Mr Goringe (Diocesan (C of E) Co-opted Member) regretting the recommendation to cease direct financial support to families for transport to a denominational school but recognising the financial times the Council was working in.
- At a transport seminar on 20 March 2013, there was consideration of many of the areas examined by the Task and Finish Group including looking at public transport children could use and the growth of community transport.

The following general points were noted during discussion:

- The Task and Finish Group, and particularly Miss Waller, were congratulated on an excellent report.
- Mr Oxley welcomed the report which he said had exceeded his expectations. He particularly welcomed the recommendation on the extension of the bus route to Corby railway station. Uppingham Town Council had been requesting a hopper service for many years and that recommendation was encouraging. He did have concerns at the low number of schools who had taken part in the consultation.
- Mr Montgomery wished to highlight the merging of services at Whissendine as he had received regular complaints. There was a need for flexibility to alleviate problems with perhaps one of the two buses leaving a little later. Miss Waller advised that comments from the bus company about connectivity had been included in the report.
- Mr Richardson stated that many of the recommendations were actually work in progress and not full recommendations. Had the Task and Finish Group done any analysis of the government grants for transport to show what the income was as without that information it was not possible to determine sustainability? Mr Richardson advised that the information could be extracted from the Area Based Grant, which he had done and he agreed to forward a copy of the information to Mr Oxley.
- The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, confirmed that the Task and Finish Group had received details of the Council's budgets on transport.
- The Chairman, Mr Baines, advised that the Commanding Officer from the barracks had met with the group and he had particularly highlighted the issues

around Oakham for his personnel and their families.

Recommendations 1 and 2

- Mr Richardson sought clarification as to whether the Council was in breach of its responsibilities in relation to transport for denominational schools. Miss Waller advised that if the Council ceased to support a bus or train route that young people could use then it could be in breach of its responsibilities. The Council was not required to provide free denominational transport unless it was for a family who were on benefits. The 47 route was continuing so it would not be an issue but if in the future the Council did not support the route it could be challenged.
- The Chairman, Mr Baines, confirmed that there would need to be a consultation over denominational transport.

AGREED

1. Recommendation 2.1: That the Council give no direct financial support to a family for home to school transport to a denominational school unless that school is the nearest school to the child's home and is beyond statutory walking distance or the child is statutorily entitled; continues to support public transport provision which can be used by children to attend denominational schools and works with public transport providers to extend existing services to enable children to attend denominational schools.
2. Recommendation 2.2: That the Council provides home to school transport only where statutorily required to do so with the exception of post 16 transport as outlined in paragraph 2.6 of Report No. 77/2013.

Recommendation 3

- Ms Rubenstein sought clarification as to the number of villages which would be affected by the recommendation to ensure that there was only one pick up point in any village. Miss Waller confirmed that there would be a number affected as most villages had more than one bus stop, but children already had to walk three miles before being eligible for free transport.
- Mr Oxley asked whether the proposal would help bus companies to rationalise routes. The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, advised that in some villages there were operational reasons as to why they had two stops. Officers can include a single stop option in the next contracts to see if there would be any savings..
- Mr Richardson advised that he opposed the recommendation as it was written and that common sense should prevail as there would be safety issues with children having to walk. Miss Waller confirmed that the recommendation was only in relation to the villages and Cabinet may decide the recommendation was not sensible.
- The Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services, Mr Bool, advised that he thought it was a sensible recommendation and perhaps a slight change of wording was needed to include 'where possible'.

AGREED

3. Recommendation 2.3: That the Council ensures that there is only one "pick up"

point, where possible, in any village except Cottesmore where there should also be a pick up at the gate of Kendrew Barracks.

Recommendation 4

- Miss Waller advised that the recommendation was attempting to rationalise public service routes and was only in relation to secondary schools and not primary schools.
- Ms Rubenstein advised that she had concerns over reliability and timings, for example at Uppingham Community College. If a bus was cancelled or did not turn up who would be responsible. There were some practical issues that needed to be considered.
- Miss Waller clarified that the recommendation was with regard to registering home to school transport as a public service which would run to school times.
- Mr Richardson advised that he had reservations about the recommendation particularly around security of children. Was it suggesting that anyone could travel on a bus with school children?
- Miss Waller stated that the Council had a legal duty to secure the provision of education. There was also legislation around getting children to school but the Council was not required to provide a school bus. Cycles had been considered but due to the roads in Rutland it was not considered appropriate.
- Mr Lammie advised that whilst he agreed with the intentions of the recommendation he also agreed with the comments about the wording.
- The Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services, Mr Bool, advised that he saw the recommendation as a commercial opportunity for the bus companies as it would be a way of them getting into areas that they did not already serve. It could also be a huge benefit to some of the villages.

AGREED

4. Recommendation 2.4: That the Council reviews all home to secondary school transport so that it links villages to schools and, as far as possible, also provides a public service route which could be utilised by young people over the age of 11 rather than a pupil only service.

Recommendation 5

- The Chairman, Mr Baines, advised that commercial bus companies were not tendering for services in Rutland so the recommendation was about getting the best deal for Rutland and opening up possibilities.
- Mr Richardson stated that there had previously been talk about creating three school hubs around the secondary schools and could these take control over school transport. Miss Waller advised that Academies in principle could take control of transport but they did not have a legal duty to do it.
- Mrs Stephenson advised that in responses to the schools questionnaire they had stated that they did not have the knowledge to run transport. Mrs Stephenson undertook to email the results of the survey to Mr Richardson.

AGREED

5. Recommendation 2.5: That the Council reviews the provision of home to school transport so that when a public service route cannot be utilised by school/college

students contracts to each school are ordinarily let at the same time and, where possible, no village has more than one bus per school travelling through it. This could mean secondary school and further education students travelling on the same bus.

Recommendation 6

- Ms Rubenstein stated that she did not understand the recommendation. Often students undertook a combination of courses and had that been considered in developing the recommendation.
- Miss Waller clarified that if a student wanted to undertake a course such as a BTEC or A Levels they could not say they wanted to study in Leicester and have Rutland pay for it as courses would be available in Rutland. It would apply to courses which were not available closer to home or were more specialist in nature.

AGREED

6. Recommendation 2.6: That the Council reviews home to college transport to establish, as far as possible, public service routes for young people to access rather than contracting student specific services; considers extending the current "8" mile rule to enable young people to access a wider diversity of courses; considers limiting support to the nearest available course (for example "A" level, BTEC Business Studies, Extended Diploma in Performing Arts etc.); considers limiting support to young people (other than those with a statement of special educational needs) who are progressing to a Level 3 course or to a college based apprenticeship.

Recommendation 7

AGREED

7. Recommendation 2.7: That the Council negotiates with the bus companies to encourage them to offer termly season tickets for young people at a reduced rate to daily tickets.

Recommendation 8

- The Chairman, Mr Baines, confirmed that this recommendation was about monitoring to ensure value for money.
- Mr Oxley advised that he was surprised that checks on bus passes were not already in place as how could routes be costed properly.
- The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, clarified that some checks were already in place and the Council's auditors were currently looking at bus services to ensure that the systems in place were satisfactory.
- Mr Richardson asked whether an electronic swipe system had been considered as that would provide data and feedback. It was confirmed that this facility was already available on some buses.

AGREED

8. Recommendation 2.8: That the Council requires bus companies with whom the Authority contracts to check pupil/students bus passes on every journey and

undertake a "head count" once a term (i.e. 5 times a year).

Recommendation 9

- Miss Waller confirmed that the recommendation was offering and not requiring a mileage rate to parents to transport their SEN children/young to school/college. Ultimately it was the parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child attended at school.
- Mr Lammie stated that as a contractor the Council was in a strong position with taxi companies around SEN transport and it was important that this position was not diluted with this recommendation. The Assistant Director, Services for People, Ms Poynton, confirmed that the Council did not always use taxis for transport and contracts were based on individual needs.

AGREED

9. Recommendation 2.9: That the Council offers parents a mileage rate to transport their SEN children/young people to school/college as an alternative to providing transport for pupils/students who have transport included in their statements of special educational needs.

Recommendation 10

- Mr Richardson requested clarification as to what this recommendation was attempting to achieve. The Chairman, Mr Baines, stated that at the moment budgets were fragmented in various budget lines. Miss Waller stated that it was to ensure that budgets were where they should be and to try and simplify it.

AGREED

10. Recommendation 2.10: That the Council rationalises adult social care and SEN transport budgets so that the totality of each is in one Directorate's budget.

Mr Richardson requested that his vote against the recommendation be recorded.

Recommendation 11

- Miss Waller advised that this was a strategic recommendation as where a fleet was based was the biggest barrier to companies tendering for public transport contracts.
- Mr Oxley stated that there was already a depot at Ashwell and anything to encourage bus companies in Rutland was good.
- The Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services, Mr Bool, agreed that this recommendation should be explored further as it opened up possible opportunities for Rutland.

AGREED

11. Recommendation 2.11: That the Council negotiates with Translink (and/or other providers) to enhance public transport in Rutland and secures a bus depot in Rutland (possibly at Ashwell).

Recommendation 12

- The Chairman, Mr Baines, advised that this was a monitoring recommendation where the savings could be used towards enabling a hopper service in Uppingham.
- Mr Oxley stated that Uppingham did need a hopper facility and other sources of funding, such as a contribution by the proposed surgery, should also be looked at. The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, advised that any contribution would need to be looked at as part of the planning application to mitigate the transport implications of the proposed doctor's surgery.
- Mr Walters stated that the need for a hopper service in Uppingham needed to be separated from the rest of the recommendation and should not be reliant on savings being made.
- Mr Richardson asked whether Dial-a-Ride had been considered as a Call Connect service for the doctor's surgery would not work as patients would be required to book it a day in advance. Miss Waller confirmed that the number of Dial-a-Ride services was reducing and accepted that Call Connect had its limitations including booking.
- The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, advised that Call Connect served a different purpose and was for one off journeys rather than regular trips. A business case was being worked on for an Uppingham centric Call Connect service.

AGREED

12. Recommendation 2.12: That the Council maps usage on all bus routes to ascertain whether times can be amended/reduced to release funds to enable a hopper service to be provided in Uppingham to facilitate attendance at the new doctors' surgery.

Recommendation 13

- Mr Oxley was concerned to ensure that fare payers were not disadvantaged by concessionary pass holders using services before 9.30am. Miss Waller confirmed that the recommendation was about collecting data about when concessionary passes were used as the Task and Finish Group had received anecdotal evidence.
- Mr Montgomery advised that concessionary passes used to be able to be used in Oakham before 9.30am but now some routes were virtually empty before 9.30am and then packed after 9.30am when the passes could be used.
- The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, advised that much of the information around concessionary passes was already available.

AGREED

13. Recommendation 2.13: That the Council collects data on the number of users on all service buses, including the Oakham hopper, who are fare paying and the number who have concessionary passes in order to determine whether to abolish the "after 9.30am" rule.

Recommendation 14

- Mr Oxley advised that the timings of buses from Corby would need to be

considered as there were currently no services after 6.30pm and nothing on a Sunday.

- The Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services, Mr Bool, stated that issues such as discretion as to when buses left Corby Station if a train was late so people were not stranded in Corby also needed to be considered.

AGREED

14. Recommendation 2.14: That the Council extends the RF1 route to include Corby railway station and explored the viability of extending the route to link the villages to the south of Rutland Water to Uppingham.

Recommendation 15

- Mr Montgomery advised that it should be the Whissendine Good Neighbours Scheme who should present to the Parish Council Forum.

AGREED

15. Recommendation 2.15: That the Council invites Whissendine to present to the Parish Council Forum on its community transport scheme.

Recommendation 16

- Miss Waller confirmed that the Council currently funded Voluntary Action Rutland (VAR) to organise community transport and grant aided Community Spirit. Whilst gathering evidence as part of the review the Task and Finish Group had been led to believe that there was a difference in mileage rates paid by both organisations. The recommendation was about clarifying what the current position was about mileage rates.

AGREED

16. Recommendation 2.16: That the Council encourages VAR/Community Spirit to meet in order that an agreement is reached on the mileage rate paid to volunteer drivers.

Mr Richardson and Mr Walters requested that their votes against the recommendation be recorded.

Recommendation 17

- Mr Montgomery advised that there were some gaps in some of the villages for information at bus stops.
- Mrs Stephenson advised that the Rutland Access Group would welcome the recommendation about information being available in large print. The Operational Director for Places, Mr Brown, confirmed that information was already available in large print if requested.

AGREED

17. Recommendation 2.17: That the Council provides information on every bus stop in large print. The information should include the bus timetable and the bus company

number to ring to check if the bus is running.

Recommendation 18

- The Chairman, Mr Baines, advised that the recommendation was about bringing transport in line with other social services around direct payments.
- The Assistant Director for People, Ms Poynton, advised that she believed that payments could be made in these instances and the payment could go direct to the adult to make their own arrangements or to the carer. Checks would be undertaken and monitoring arrangements put in place as with other direct payments.

AGREED

18. Recommendation 2.18: That the Council develops a mechanism for direct payments to users of adult social care for their transport needs as an alternative to providing the transport itself.

Recommendation 19

- Miss Waller stated that VAR had advised the Task and Finish Group that one of their biggest stresses was over the number of short notice cancellations at Leicester Hospital. The recommendation was about gathering information, considering it and then hopefully influencing the hospital about its processes.
- Mr Cross stated that there was also an issue around the long waiting times at the hospital.
- Mr Richardson requested that Peterborough Hospital should also be included.

AGREED

19. Recommendation 2.19: That the Council consults with hospitals to make them aware of the difficulties of short notice cancellations and long waiting times.

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.18pm.

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