

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 6 November 2013

Time: 18.00 hrs.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: S Walker (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), L Bell, L Harrington, C Latif, J Mead, G Snell and P Stuart

In attendance: Councillor R Raynor, Portfolio Holder Economy, Enterprise and Transport
Mrs Sybil Graham and Mrs Barbara Swainston (Community Bus Users), Ian Edwards, Community Bus Driver, David Neilan and Angie Reynolds of HCC

Start/End Time: Start Time: 18.00 hrs.
End Time: 19.15 hrs.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence nor declarations of interests.

2. MINUTES – 10 OCTOBER 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Head of Leisure, Environmental Health & Children Services updated Members on a number of actions arising from the meeting of 10 October 2013:

Item 5 - Stevenage's Commitment to Carers: The Officer advised Members that having received no further amendments or recommendations following the Committee's consideration of the draft report at the last meeting, a final report would now be going to Executive for consideration in December 2013.

Item 6 - Child Poverty: The Officer informed the Committee that Officers from Herts County and SBC will be invited to a future meeting. Members would receive a brief presentation which would provide the Committee an opportunity to view the issue at County, Borough and Ward levels.

3. DISCUSSION ITEM ON COMMUNITY TRANSPORT IN STEVENAGE

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mrs Graham and Mrs Swainston, two regular

users of the SBC Community Transport bus service, Ian Edwards, a driver of the Community Transport bus and HCC Community Transport officers, David Neilan and Angie Reynolds. Members of the Committee were invited to interview those in attendance.

The Chair informed the meeting that the purpose of the meeting was not to rank providers but to identify what Community Transport provision was available in the town and where possible to work together to meet demand.

In response to a question about the service, both Mrs Graham and Mrs Swainston welcomed the service and stated that it provided more than a bus trip. The SBC Community Transport bus provided an opportunity for older and disabled people who would otherwise be housebound to leave their homes on day trips and most importantly to socialise with other people in similar situations.

On the issue of cost, both users indicated that it was affordable but recognised that if fares went up, it might deter regular users from going on some of the trips. They acknowledged however that costs were going up. People on a state pension may only be able to afford perhaps one leisure trip a month.

The users welcomed the personal touch provided by the drivers and the staff in the office.

In response to a question, both users claimed that they had never heard of the Dial a Ride service provided by the County Council.

Ian Edwards, the Community Bus driver described his typical day as varied, it included picking up users to go to community centres or dropping them off at shops, and that in instances where gaps existed between jobs he would take the opportunity to undertake any administrative work in the office or visit potential venues that have been identified. The driver indicated that leisure trips were fully booked. He stated that the services catered for a wide spectrum of people but was mostly used by older people that are less mobile. He also advised that due to his close relationship with clients he was able to check and monitor their health and personal safety issues such as the onset of dementia and report any noticeable changes to relevant departments or officers.

David Neilan, Hertfordshire Integrated Transport Partnership acknowledged the differences between the various services. He informed the meeting that County supported the Dial a Ride scheme, which was a pre booked and door to door service. It catered for those who were primarily independent and more mobile, whilst SBC catered for those less mobile as the SBC driver would help wheel chair passengers on and off the bus. He also noted that an element of personal touch existed with Dial a Ride clients as most of the drivers of the vehicles were well known by users. David also mentioned that County also provided community, health and voluntary transport schemes such as volunteers using own vehicles, health shuttle buses and car schemes.

In response to a question about accessibility and capacity, David Neilan acknowledged that the service did not discriminate against any user but would not be able to cater for the needs of all residents as that there was a waiting list.

In the case of the dial a ride service David Neilan indicated that a number of options were being considered for the service but since it was set up to cater for individuals as opposed to groups, it could be a challenge.

Members welcomed a suggestion that providers work closely together and to jointly advertise each others' services.

Members noted that publicity should inform customers what services were available with a description of the service and the costs clearly stated so that users can make an informed choice. The Committee noted that there were overlaps in the services of the various providers but acknowledged that they met different needs. There were 5 types of Community Transport available in town:

- Commercial Bus service which is free to pensioners with a bus pass
- CVS Volunteer Car Service for specific journeys for which which users pay a mileage rate (43p a mile) and still required reasonable mobility.
- HCC Dial a Ride for which users pay a mileage rate of £1.70 for the first mile and 40p for each further mile. Wheel chair assistance is provided for individual journeys.
- SBC Community Bus charged various rates for local shopping trips or day trips £5.80 for journeys up to 15 miles and £14 for journeys up to 30 miles. Wheel chair access was provided for group trips and assistance was provided by the driver.
- HCC Health Shuttle Bus charged £5.50 per journey (£10 return) for the Lister Shuttle Bus for journeys to Health appointments at the hospital.

The Chair thanked everyone and in particular Mrs Graham and Mrs Swainston who had contributed to the discussion.

4. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None

PART II

6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None

Chair