

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

held on Tuesday, 7th June, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### **PRESENT**

Councillor L Gilbert (Chairman)  
Councillor G M Walton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Barratt, P Butterill, H Davenport, K Edwards, R Fletcher,  
M Grant, P Groves, P Hoyland and B Silvester (substitute)

### **Apologies**

Councillors D Druce

### **93 ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor R Menlove – Environment and Prosperity Portfolio Holder  
Councillor D Stockton – Cabinet Support Member

### **94 OFFICERS PRESENT**

Caroline Simpson – Head of Regeneration  
Chris Williams – Transport Manager  
Jenny Marston – Principal Transportation Officer  
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

### **95 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **96 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/ OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present wishing to address the Committee.

### **97 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **98 SCRUTINY TOOLKIT**

Mark Nedderman, Senior Scrutiny Office gave a brief presentation on the Scrutiny Toolkit and the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

### **99 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor containing the work programme inherited from the 2010/2011 municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

## 100      **FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS**

The Committee considered extracts from the current forward plan.

RESOLVED – That the extracts be noted.

## 101      **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

## 102      **OPTIONS FOR REVISED PUBLIC TRANSPORT CRITERIA**

Note: Although the report had been published in two sections, the first section in part 1, the 'open' part of the agenda, the committee concluded that it would be impossible to discuss any aspect of the report, without reference to matters that were included in the section two 'exempt' part of the report, and therefore the committee proceeded with its discussion with the public and press excluded.

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Places relating to proposals to introduce revised public transport support criteria to guide future investment in local bus, rail and community transport services subsidised by the Council.

Currently 80% - 85% of the bus network in Cheshire East was operated commercially with the remaining 15% - 20% was subsidised by the Council. The Council currently spent £2.8m on subsidising local bus services, which were not commercially viable but were considered to be 'socially necessary'. In addition, the Council provided £450,000 of funding to support community transport. Chris Williams, Transport Manager, informed the Committee that it was for the Council itself to determine how much it spent on public transport, but Members were reminded that the Council's budget for public transport had been reduced in 2011/2012 by almost £500,000.

The statutory duty for local transport authorities to support services which were deemed 'socially necessary' did not include a clear definition of what this meant in practice, so it was for each local authority to decide what it considered to be 'socially necessary' and prioritise the range of community travel needs. There was a specific duty to identify the needs of older and disabled residents; a duty that the council currently discharged through the support for community transport and other means such as prioritising services likely to be used by older or disabled residents, and had been specifically taken into account in identifying and applying appropriate support criteria.

The local bus services which are supported by the Council had resulted from historical arrangements inherited from the previous Cheshire (Local Transport Plans (LTPs) between 2001 and 2011.

The criteria considered subsidy per passenger only and did not take account of wider social, economic and environmental considerations, nor did it specifically include the duty to consider the needs of elderly or disabled people. This assessment did not reflect the range of community travel needs and was not linked to the wider transport strategy contained in the new LTP. The criteria also did not reflect the specific transport aspirations of Cheshire East Council which had emerged since Local Government Reorganisation. The criteria adopted were therefore considered to be inappropriate for the needs of Cheshire East Council, and therefore revised criteria were required.

To assist Members in deciding what transport services were considered to be 'socially necessary' in Cheshire East, a range of potential criteria had been explored, including:

- Assessment of utility of service / journey purpose (e.g. health, employment)
- Assessment of travel time
- Cost per passenger journey
- Total revenue / total cost ratio by service
- Number of passengers – total, average, minimum
- Passenger trends / commercial potential
- Availability of alternative transport services (e.g. community transport), particularly in respect of residents with significantly impaired mobility
- Deprivation measures, socio-economic measures or geographic criteria
- Specific links to economic regeneration
- Travel to work corridors
- Impact on carbon emission (e.g. air quality management area, congestion hotspots)
- Settlement size, with larger settlements typically favoured over smaller
- Integration between modes of transport
- Ability to attract external funding / cross-departmental internal resources

Members of the Committee specifically raised concerns relating to the fact that there were no criteria to take account of the specific needs of the elderly or young people particularly for those living in small rural communities.

In response to a question on the availability of statistical information on the profile of bus users, Chris Williams informed the Committee that concessionary fare data could help the Council to identify which of the current routes was the most heavily used by those sectors of the community.

The Committee was assured that the current proposals did not contain any changes to the dial a ride service.

Caroline Simpson, Head of Regeneration informed the Committee that although the bus companies were not aware at this stage of any specific proposals to reduce the subsidy on certain bus routes, the Council had already had discussions with the bus companies on the process to review the criteria. The bus companies had subsequently confirmed that they were content to proceed with an open negotiating position, to allow them flexibility to consider retaining some services that the Council may propose to withdraw the subsidy from.

RESOLVED –

That the Strategic Director Places be requested to report back to this Committee at its next meeting on 21 June with the following additional information:

1. Revised criteria to take account of the specific needs of the elderly and young people;
2. More details of passenger profiles and specific information to identify which routes are heavily used by concessionary travellers;
3. An amendment to the rating of the Health/Medical/Welfare criteria contained in appendix 1, from 3 to 4;
4. Additional information on the detailed calculations that have been used to produce the final scores in appendix 1;
5. Analysis of the likely impact of the proposals on rural communities which are expected to be more severely affected than urban communities;
6. Further information on the wider issue off Community Transport with a view to the Committee considering setting up a Task and Finish group to review in detail that aspect of public transport.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.30 pm

Councillor L Gilbert (Chairman)