

**Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 16 July 2019**

**221. Bus Review: Further Actions**

The Chair introduced this item, noting the complexity of the report which was due to the long-running and complex nature of the review. Very positive engagement had been obtained from Essex County Council and the bus operators at the main review session in 2018, but input since then had only been received from Essex County Council and Arriva.

A member of the Panel noted that, whilst the provision of travel information packages by developers to new residents was very helpful, they had significant experience of large-scale developments not providing these for incoming residents. This added to the difficulty of effecting a modal shift concerning travel options.

Members of the Panel noted the difficulty in understanding the feedback and operator views listed in the report and highlighted the lack of recommendations within the report. The priority of reducing car usage and traffic levels was also highlighted, especially where travel distances precluded the use of bicycles for journeys. It was argued that efforts to persuade people to use rural bus services would only be efficacious if a frequent and reliable service could be guaranteed, accepting the likelihood that this would require a very large subsidy at least in the short-term. This should lie in the remit of Essex County Council, although it was not currently within their strategies. CBC funding could technically be possible, but extremely difficult to make possible. A Panel member posited that the investigation of impacts on parking revenues of a modal shift in use of transport options should also be carried out in order to better inform the Council's approach to this matter.

The Panel noted that the bus operators had made commitments relating to improved service provision, within their evidence, and that they could be invited back to explain what progress they had made towards meeting these commitments.

The Panel emphasised the lack of progress in improving bus provision and increasing bus usage over the years. This was an important strategic issue for the Borough and was identified in the Strategic Plan and the administration's strategic priorities, set out in the Budget report the Panel had considered earlier. The Panel considered whether to recommend that Cabinet consider the evidence gathered in the bus review and use it in consideration of the development of a public transport strategy. This would also feed in to other strategic priorities, such as addressing social isolation and improving public health. It was also suggested that if Cabinet should proceed with a public transport strategy, this should then be brought back to the Panel for pre-scrutiny before being approved.

**RESOLVED** that: -

(a) The Panel reviewed and noted the response received in answer to its requests for information;

*RECOMMENDED to CABINET* that: -

(a) The evidence and engagement collected within the review of bus services be referred to Cabinet and Cabinet be invited to consider using the evidence as part of the basis for drafting a Public Transport Strategy, in line with the Council's Strategic Plan 2018-21 and the administration's strategic priorities.

(b) Should Cabinet proceed with a Public Transport Strategy, this should be made available for the Scrutiny Panel to conduct pre-scrutiny, prior to its approval.

**The report to the Scrutiny Panel on 16 July 2019 is also attached for members information**