

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 12 July 2023

a) Question from John Geddes to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport

“How much of Derbyshire's £47m Bus Service Improvement Plan money has been committed on extensions and improvements to timetabled bus services already announced, how much has been committed to other initiatives already announced, and when will the council be announcing how it plans to spend the rest of the funds during what is now only 20 months before the scheme ends in March 2025?”

Response:

“Thank you, Mr Geddes for your question and coming along today. Thanks also for your engagement and correspondence regarding buses and BSIP so far. I hope that will continue.

So to answer the points of your question in turn. £12m has been allocated towards improvements to bus services with £7m of this committed so far. You may have seen the 17 big service improvements already made on better timetables, extensions and route enhancement across the county. I am working now on going through network reviews and continued close working with the bus operators on additional services to further improve timetables and routes wherever possible.

I am also pleased to highlight that we have successfully received permission to extend the funding for these improvements for an extra year until March 2026 which will hopefully provide additional time for those services to bed in, to grow and become self-sustainable, so hopefully that is good news.

Then, as I know you will appreciate, the Bus Service Improvement Plan cannot and should not just be about extending services. As I think we would all agree in this Chamber we need to take this quite big £47m opportunity to better integrate and improve the infrastructure around public transport wherever we can to make it more attractive, reliable and easier to travel by bus.

So £6m has been allocated to improving and simplifying fares as well as launching some additional offers to support the Government's £2 fare cap with things such as the Wayfarer and the free Sunday/summer morning travel for six weeks. Other key initiatives include directing around half of the BSIP money towards bus infrastructure measures to address network pinch points, improve traffic signals and roadworks where we can with the first schemes on those going live over the next couple of months as well as developing the

information and connectivity around buses again with things such as the orange RTI signage, transport hubs and app improvements.

With this, just to answer the final part of your question, I know that communication is really key here so we do have a new dedicated BSIP Communications Officer who has recently started and is working on getting all the work and announcements out to as many residents and members as possible.

In terms of scrutinising the BSIP progress in detail there are regular stakeholder meetings, various groups, and reports added online to I think it is derbyshire.bus.info.

Sorry, that is quite a lot of information for one question but hopefully that provides a helpful summary of the current position and just to assure you and all the Chamber that we do have plans for the full £47m as well as pushing for further investment be it by devolution and the Government in what is I think a really key service for the county in future.”

Supplementary question:

“One of the key planks of the original Bus Service Improvement Plan submission was some additional trials of Demand Responsive Transport or DRT. Now Councils across the UK have tried DRT and none have achieved an affordable cost per ride. Lincolnshire, which is often quoted as the model, turns out to cover most of the cost out of their Adult Care transport funding. Elsewhere again and again trials burn through their project funding and then they close. In the last month schemes in North Yorkshire and in East Leeds have been announced as failures so I am asking will the councillor undertake that before instigating any further DRT trials in Derbyshire you will talk to those behind these failed schemes, see if you can get let in on these valuable lessons that are invariably quoted as the great justification for all the money they have burnt through, and will you undertake only to go ahead with trials in Derbyshire if they are designed to find out something genuinely new?”

Response:

“Thank you, Mr Geddes. As you know I think you are due to meet with officers next week to discuss this in detail and it will be really useful to hear your views and thoughts because I agree with you, Demand Responsive Transport I think is a key thing. I have heard representations so far - I have only been in post for a short while - both for and against so we have to take that into account but I completely agree with you that it is an expensive means of travel sometimes but that doesn't mean it doesn't have benefits. Absolutely commit to analysing and thinking carefully before we progress. I understand that officers have been doing some soft market testing on what is available and potential schemes that

could be of benefit in Derbyshire so we are just analysing that before we proceed any further and obviously we will speak to you and meet with you.

I am happy to speak to you as well and analyse it really carefully because we are eager to make the best use of the whole £47m that we can.”

b) Question from David Ingham to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change

“The Refreshed Council Plan/Delivery Plan and inter-related Departmental Plans, approved at Full Council on 22-03-23 include success measurements allied to the new CRM complaints and feedback system such as 100% statutory compliance and 20% reduction in complaints by 2025.

I note the system benefits of seeking and capturing compliments but regarding complaints I’m unclear what will ultimately be considered as complaints, captured and measured.

I have previously raised at Full Council known senior officer complaints that have not been captured in any reporting systems. Currently, there are also numerous complaints excluded from the corporate complaints procedure e.g. road/light repairs, finding care homes, SARs, FOI’s. There is also currently now the proposal to remove from the constitution the Ethics Statement and the channel of reporting officer complaints to Legal Services.

Precisely which complaints will ultimately be facilitated through the CRM system, recorded, reported, measured and which won’t?”

Response:

“Thank you, Mr Ingham, for your question. Due to the quite technical nature of your particular question I will ensure that you are given a detailed written answer on that one. Thank you.”

Written response following the meeting

“Thank you for your question submitted ahead of the Council meeting 12th July, 2023, in which you asked: ‘which complaints will be facilitated through the CRM system, recorded, reported, measured and which won’t?’.

Currently, and in line with our Council wide roll out of Granicus, our Customer Relationship Management system, we are undertaking a review of compliments, comments and complaints. We have an agreed timetable in place for a number of our key service areas to migrate from the existing processes for capturing complaints, over to the new system, and that is planned to happen

between the end of this year and March 2024. The initial services that will move to the new system are:

Children's Services, Adult Care, Place, General Feedback (this is under the Contact Us on the DCC webpage) and Representations (MPs etc).

In addition to the above, the review that we are undertaking will look at all areas of the Council where we receive complaints, compliments, and feedback from our residents. Our aim is to implement a standardised process for all areas, where feasible and not withstanding any statutory requirements that we have. This will not only make the process easier and more accessible for our residents but will also enable us to review the detail for each service area and support our process of continually looking to improve the services that we offer.

The only process that is not due to migrate and will remain as is now, are the complaints from the Ombudsman as they are submitted directly onto the LGO's website (Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman). This will remain as is now."

Supplementary question:

"I note from the response it appears FOI's/SAR's may not eventually go into the CRM system. Ombudsman complaints also. As I previously mentioned I note there is a move towards 100% statutory compliance in such areas being used/measured for allied success determination.

Given this, would Councillor Lewis agree to make a request in accordance with the allowed Scrutiny Procedure to suggest that FOI/SAR/Ombudsman complaint performance metrics be referred to the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - Resources for consideration this year and if not agreeable to do so please provide an explanation why he doesn't feel it is necessary/appropriate?

I consider these are areas that would really benefit from a review by Scrutiny and would also clearly be helpful for the Council going forwards in terms of Council Plan/Departmental Plan delivery. The next scheduled Scrutiny meetings are being held in September 2023 and December 2023."

Response (from Councillor Spencer in Councillor Lewis's absence):

"Thank you for your supplementary question.

You are correct that the refreshed Council Plan/Delivery Plan, approved at Full Council on 22 March 2023, included an action to implement a complaints and feedback system with associated success measures.

You will note from the initial response provided to you, that there is no intention to include complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in the CRM system as they are submitted directly onto the LGSCO's website. An annual report of complaints to the LGSCO is already provided to both Cabinet and Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee.

FOIs and SARs were not part of the original scope for the CRM as they are not treated as complaints and fall outside the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy. The process for dealing with FOIs and SARs is governed by information governance legislation and set out in separate information request procedures, with oversight from the Council's Information Governance Group. Therefore it was not the intention for such requests to fall within the scope of the Council Plan/Delivery Plan action and success measures you refer to.

In light of the above I do not consider it necessary for performance metrics to be referred to the Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - Resources for consideration."