

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES** held on 28 July 2021.

P R E S E N T

Councillor S Bull (in the Chair)

Councillors N Gourlay, D Greenhalgh, J Nelson, P Niblock, R Redfern and J Siddle.

Also in attendance were C Hegarty and C Henning (Place Department).

7/21 **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 February 2021 be received.

8/21 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS** There were no public questions.

9/21 **THE NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP)** Chris Hegarty from the Public Transport Unit attended the meeting to provide Members with information on the National Bus Strategy and an update on the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan that was being produced in response to the strategy.

On 15 March 2021, the Government had published the first National Bus Strategy for England. The main objective of the Strategy was to reverse the long-term decline in bus use nationally which had been exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. It aimed to achieve this by making bus services more frequent, reliable, better co-ordinated and cheaper. To enable this, Government wanted to see major improvements in a variety of areas including bus priority measures, vehicle emission standards, the provision of service information, simplified ticketing arrangements and the joint marketing of services. Government has committed to provide £3bn of new transformation funding nationally to help drive forward these improvements.

Central to these changes, the Strategy expected all local transport authorities (LTAs) in England to play a much bigger role than they did currently in the way bus services were operated in their area. The Strategy expected all LTAs in England to replace the deregulated model in their area with one of two options: Franchising or Enhanced Partnerships. Mr Hegarty provided details of both options.

By 30 June 2021, the Council and bus operators would need to commit in principle to establishing EPs across Derbyshire. From initial discussions with the local bus operators in Derbyshire, it was noted that all had expressed a willingness to take part in the process. By 31 October 2021, the Council

must publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan. This would be developed by the County Council in collaboration with bus operators, local businesses, district and borough councils and passenger groups and it would focus on what needed to be done to deliver the bus network that the LTAs wanted to see. From 1 April 2022, an EP would need to be in place covering all of Derbyshire.

After the BSIP had been submitted at the end of October 2021, it was anticipated that there would be a period of extended negotiation with the bus operators to finalise the details of the EP.

Members made reference to demand responsive buses undercutting commercial taxi services. In rural areas many companies who had run a standard service found that it wasn't commercially viable, so the demand responsive buses were filling that gap.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hegarty for his presentation and requested that he return to the Committee within the next 12 months to provide Members with an update.

10/21 PLACE DEPARTMENT: OBJECTIVES, PRIORITIES & ISSUES – AN ORIENTATION FOR IMPROVEMENT & SCRUTINY Chris Henning, the newly appointed Executive Director – Place, attended the meeting to provide Members with an overview of the objectives, priorities and issues for the Place Department.

In conjunction with the Council Plan refresh 2021-25, the main priorities for Place were resilient, healthy and safe communities; high performing, value for money and resident focused services; and a prosperous and Green Derbyshire.

The following questions/issues were raised by Members and duly responded to or noted by the Executive Director:

- A request that the Digital Derbyshire website was updated.
- The need for 'on-street charging facilities' was highlighted and concern was expressed that due to certain challenges, grant funding had been diverted to putting facilities in car parks.
- Further information was requested about charging costs for electric vehicles.
- The future plans for Belper Mill, which was now considered a priority.
- Hierarchy of highway maintenance.
- Possible links between the closure of small schools and carbon emissions from old buildings.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr Henning for his most informative presentation and his support for the scrutiny process.

11/21 **WORK PROGRAMME** Actions that came under the remit of the Places Committee were presented for Members' consideration. A discussion took place with regards to the future Work Programme of the Committee and Members were requested to inform the Chairman and the Improvement & Scrutiny Officer of any areas they would like to be included in the Programme.

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