

## **SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD - COMMUNITIES AND PLACE**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Advisory Board - Communities and Place held on Friday, 10 March 2023 at 10.00 am at County Offices Kendal

### **PRESENT:**

Mr SB Collins (Chair)

Mr D English

Mr D Gawne

Mr J Lister (Vice-Chair)

Mr AJ Markley

Mr CP Turner

### **Also in Attendance:-**

Mr J Beard	-	Chief Fire Officer
Mrs L Davis	-	Democratic Services Officer
Mr P Greenup	-	Assistant Director for Highways and Transport
Mrs T Moran	-	Policy and Scrutiny Project Officer
Ms C Notman	-	Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

### **PART 1 – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

#### **30 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr F Cassidy, Mr McEwan, Mr Hamilton, Mr D Wilson and Mr R Dobson.

#### **31 MEMBERSHIP**

There were no changes to membership to note.

#### **32 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

#### **33 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED**, that the press and public be not excluded during consideration of any items on the agenda.

#### **34 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 30 November 2022 be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Further to Minute 26 – Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment – members agreed to bring to the attention of the new Authorities, the need for safe methods of disposal of items that contain mercury, such as energy saving lightbulbs and fluorescent tubes.

## **35 BUS SERVICES**

Members received a report that provided an update on bus service provision across the county. The background was explained by the Assistant Director Highways and Transport.

Members heard on 21 October 2021 Cabinet considered a report from the Cabinet Working Group – Transport in Cumbria, attached at appendix 1 and 2. The report and its associated appendix were based on witness sessions held by the Group, national and local policy context and research. Having considered the contents of the Group's report a response was provided by the Executive Director – Economy and Infrastructure (appendix 3) which was considered by Cabinet. Alongside the report of the Cabinet Working Group, on 21 October 2021 Cabinet also approved the organisation's first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) (appendix 4). The BSIP included a request to secure £64m of Government funding to deliver a range of improvements to local bus services across Cumbria. Members noted that whilst 31 councils were successful in attracting additional funding over 40 including Cumbria County Council were not. Despite the disappointing news the aspirations of the plan and the measures proposed within it still remained and officers would continue to work with partners to explore other potential sources of additional funding to help the new authorities realise their ambitions to improve public transport and public transport infrastructure.

Members were informed that BSIP was currently being reviewed and this would be utilised to reiterate the ambitions to the DfT and hopefully secure funding in future years. The Council would also shortly be agreeing an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (EPP&S) with the county's bus operators which will formalise the content of the BSIP. In due course it was likely that the 2 new authorities would publish their own BSIPs and develop their own EPP&S.

Members were aware that the Council had secured £1.5m funding from the DfT as part of its Rural Mobility Fund. In Summer 2023 a series of digital demand responsive transport solutions would be launched as pilot schemes serving the rural areas surrounding 4 of Cumbria's market towns. These would cover a 15 mile radius of Penrith and Wigton and a 10 mile radius of Egremont/St Bees and Ulverston. The schemes would serve rural areas surrounding the above stated towns currently with little or no scheduled bus services. It was anticipated that the transport would improve access to education, healthcare, employment and the leisure and retail offer in addition to supporting the night-time economy. Engagement was undertaken with Members and the wider community in advance of the pilot scheme launch and during the subsequent evaluation exercises. It was hoped that if the schemes were successful and self-financing they could be implemented in other areas of the county. The Council had £0.381m funding from the DfT as part of its Funding for Supported Bus Services initiative and following dialogue with Members

it was suggested that a series of scheduled bus services were introduced serving areas with little or no current provision. It was proposed that the services would run on a selected number of days during the week and be delivered by the Council's in-house transport delivery team, Cumbria Transport Operational Team (CTOT). This would provide a service for local communities and better utilise the CTOT vehicles which were predominantly only used for home to school transport and adult day opportunities routes. The routes initially identified were listed in the report. Further research into options around the development of improved rural accessibility was also being undertaken through a rural mobility framework. This would be complete by May 2023 and would support the implementation of the current Local Transport Plan (the Cumbria Transport and Infrastructure Plan) alongside the development of successor plans by Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils.

Members, in discussion, recognised that bus routes had to be financially viable and utilised by the community they served. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport confirmed that under LGR the Service would be split in two. A member stated that in-house services could be better utilised and suggested that partnership working with private providers takes place on this. Members expressed the wish for integrated modes of transport such as aligned timetabling arrangements between bus and rail services.

Members raised issues on bus services in their individual areas. In discussion of Community Groups running bus services, the Assistant Director – Highways and Transport reported that the County Council supported community groups wherever possible.

Members welcomed digital demand responsive transport solutions and noted that proved technology would be used for its pilot scheme, the aim of it being to provide rural bus services to town centres and other bus service routes. Accessible (DDA) minibuses would be used for this.

To conclude members asked that the issues raised at the meeting be brought to the attention of the two new authorities. These included having sustainable transport and working with private providers to improve bus services.

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport was thanked for his attendance and informative report.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

## **36 COMMUNITIES AND PLACE REFLECTIVE REVIEW**

A report was considered that provided the Board with the opportunity to share their views on significant scrutiny areas for the future. These views would be captured and shared with Members and Senior Officers of the two new unitary Councils established in Cumbria on 1 April 2023 to inform work programming within the new Scrutiny arrangements.

Members were aware that Scrutiny Members undertook some evaluation activity over the summer of 2022 on the Council's scrutiny function and a review of the

activity of each Scrutiny Board and Committee. The findings of the evaluation and review activity were captured in the Scrutiny Review report considered by Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) in September 2022. An abridged version of the report was attached as Appendix 1 of this paper for Members' reference. As part of the closure of the County Council and the transition of responsibilities to Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council from April 2023, each Council Scrutiny Board or Committee was being given the opportunity to reflect on the significant issues and service areas.

In discussion, Members recognised the value of scrutiny and its usefulness as a tool to influence decision making at both strategic and local levels and examples of this was given. The importance of good officer support was highlighted.

Members highlighted some future scrutiny items that they wished to be captured and shared going forward. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer welcomed the feedback from members.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

### **37 BOARD BRIEFING**

A report from the Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Advisor was considered. This provided members with the County Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

As it was the last meeting of the Board, members were invited to submit final comments.

**RESOLVED**, that

(1) the Forward plan of Key Decisions be noted.

### **38 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that this was the last meeting of the Board in the life of Cumbria County Council.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their contribution to the work of the Board over the years. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport thanked members for their support.

The meeting ended at 10.55 am