

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 31 October 2001.

PRESENT

Mr. Mike Jones CC, Deputy Chairman (in the Chair)

Mr. D. C. Bill CC	Mrs. V. P. Bill CC
Mr. P. D. Boulton TD, CC	Mr. B. Chapman AE, CC
Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC	Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. P. A. Hyde CC	Mr. R. Jenkins CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC	Mr. M. B. Page CC
Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC	Mr. N. J. Rushton CC
Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC	

By Invitation

Mr. H. Barber CC – Leader of the Council.
Mr. A. Donovan – Chief Executive – Age Concern Leicestershire.

38. Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 17 October 2001.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October, 2001 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

39. Questions asked by electors under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

40. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5)

41. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

42. Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure

Rule 16.

44. Presentations of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that there were no petitions to be presented.

45. Change of Order of Business.

The Chairman requested and obtained the Commission's approval to change the order of business from that set out on the agenda.

46. Future Arrangements for the Provision of Travel Concessions

The Commission considered a report of the Acting Director of Planning and Transportation concerning the decision of the Cabinet on revised arrangements for the provision of travel concessions. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission also considered the following documents, copies of which are also filed with these minutes:-

- Comments of the Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee
- Comments from Ms Lynda Belton – Chairman of the Leicestershire and Rutland Visually Impaired Council.
- Comments from Lt. Col. P.A. Roffey DL; CC and Mr. R.M. Wilson, CC.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. A. Donavon of Age Concern Leicestershire who had been invited to the meeting during the consideration of this matter.

The Chairman then invited Mr. Donavon to address the meeting. Mr. Donavon advised the Commission of the following concerns that had been expressed to him by elderly people regarding the proposed changes:-

- (i) there was no prior consultation with groups/organisations representing elderly and disabled people on the proposals. The first that elderly and disabled were made aware of the proposals was by way of an article in the Leicester Mercury, and many were still confused about what was being proposed;
- (ii) the statement that there was 'widespread abuse of the scheme' had caused great distress and no evidence had been provided to support this statement;
- (iii) the proposals to target the scheme to disabled people and those in need was welcomed. However, elderly people generally did not consider themselves to be disabled even though they might have mobility difficulties and it was important that such persons were not overlooked by the new system.
- (iv) the restriction on travel before 9.30 a.m. would have a major effect on elderly people who, generally speaking, preferred early morning travel.

In response to the comments by Mr. Donovan the following points were

made:-

- (a) in relation to the lack of consultation the proposals had been the subject of protracted and difficult negotiation with the District Council and the revised arrangements had only recently been agreed by the Leader of the County Council and the Leaders of District Council;
- (b) the proposed scheme, would now be considered by the District Councils who would be asked to confirm their agreement to the scheme;
- (c) the proposed scheme would still enable disabled/elderly people to continue to use flat fare and/or free travel passes. In addition there would be no charge for tokens or passes.
- (d) the scheme, as agreed with District Councils, set out the minimum standards to be applied across the County. Any District Council wishing to consider enhancements to the scheme could do so but they would also need to meet the full costs of any such enhancements.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting, Mr. H. Barber, the Leader of the Council who had kindly agreed to attend the meeting during the consideration of this matter and the item relating to the Best Value Review of Public Transport Services.

During the discussion on the implementation of the scheme the following points/concerns were expressed:

- (i) consideration should be given to those elderly persons, who were not registered as disabled who needed to use public transport on the limited occasions such as visiting the doctor/dentist and would prefer to use taxis rather than buses;
- (ii) the position of elderly people who might live on a regular bus route but who would have difficulty using the buses on certain occasions such as weekly shopping trips;
- (iii) the process of ascertaining entitlement for bus passes/tokens (the "10 minute walk rule") could cause difficulties. The assurance given that in borderline cases the benefit of doubt should be in favour of the elderly persons was welcomed;
- (iv) the proposal not to fund travel before 9.30 a.m. and on trains would cause considerable difficulties particularly for disabled people as evidenced by the representations made by the Leicestershire and Rutland Visually Impaired Council;

RESOLVED

- (a) That the Cabinet be advised that
 - (i) the Commission is generally supportive of the proposed scheme

which had been agreed with the Leaders of the seven District Councils, and considers it to be one which is more comprehensive than the defined national minimum and strikes an appropriate balance between the costs of operating the scheme and the benefits to elderly and disabled persons;

- (ii) the Commission has noted the commitment given by the Leader of the Council that the proposals in the report relating to withdrawal of tokens are conditional upon the provision of an improved bus service and that there would, therefore, be a phased withdrawal of tokens;
- (b) That the Cabinet be asked to consider further the implications and impact of the proposal not to fund travel before 9.30 a.m. and travel on trains, particular in relation to disabled people, and to ensure that the information gathered for consideration by the Cabinet is circulated to all members of the Council.

47. Best Value Review of Public Transport Services Outcome of Consultation and Draft Implementation Plan.

The Commission considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Acting Director of Planning and Transportation concerning the Cabinet's response to consultation undertaken on the Best Value Review of Public Transport and a draft implementation plan. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission also considered the comments made by the Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Monday, 29th October. A copy of their comments is also filed with these minutes.

During the debate on this report the following comments were made:-

- (i) the Leader indicated the Cabinet still supported the concept of the Ivanhoe Stage 2 subject to appropriate funding being made available for developing and operating the service.
- (ii) the conclusions of the Panel that steps should be taken to ensure that support for the Ivanhoe Stage 1 rail was passed to the Strategic Rail Authority should be actively pursued and that in the event that this was not possible the County Council should consider further how it would wish to proceed with the implementation of the Review;
- (iii) the possibility of the County Council operating an in-house bus service should be kept under review.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the response of the Cabinet to the consultation undertaken on the Best Value Review of Public Transport, be noted.
- (b) That the draft implementation plan, be supported.

48. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED

That the next meeting of the Commission be held at 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 14th November, 2001.

CHAIRMAN

31st October, 2001
10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.