

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SERVICES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3, CIVIC CENTRE, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: V M Evans (Chair) presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
U C Clay A M Cook	N J Davies P Lloyd	G J Tanner T M White

Officers:

S Davies - Head of Highways and Transportation
C Swain - Group Leader - Transportation
J Parkhouse - Democratic Services Officer

23 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C R Doyle.

24 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interest was declared:

Councillor V M Evans - Agenda as a whole - employed by First Great Western - personal.

25 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Services Cabinet Advisory Committee held on 12 January 2015 be approved as a correct record.

26 **QUALITY BUS CONTRACTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The Group Leader, Transportation provided a report on Bus Quality Contracts and Partnerships. She outlined the background history of the statutory framework relating to Bus Quality Contracts and Partnerships and highlighted that the Quality Partnership Scheme (Wales) Regulations 2009 provided guidance for the implementation of Statutory Quality Partnerships within Wales.

The provisions of the Quality Contract schemes as contained in the Transport Act 2000 were provided, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. This made it easier for Authorities to apply for a scheme and removed the requirement that the scheme must be the only practicable way of implementing the policies in a Local Authority's bus strategy. It was highlighted that in 2011, the Competition

Commission put the cost of implementing a Quality Contract scheme at up to £1m with annual running costs of approximately the same amount.

In addition, details regarding Statutory Quality Partnership schemes were outlined and examples of such schemes were provided at Appendix A. Details of the current partnership working with bus operators in Swansea were also provided and it was noted that partnership working with First Cymru had improved over the past year in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel into public transport and social inclusion and also as a result of meetings and correspondence between senior Councillors, Chief Officers and the Managing Director of First Cymru Buses.

Reference was made to the significant changes that had taken place in Welsh Government funding for bus services in recent years and it was noted that the Council had to reduce expenditure on subsidised bus services to the value of £235,000 in response to reductions in funding from Welsh Government and to meet increased local bus service contract prices following a reduction in the level of bus service operator's grant (fuel rebate) paid to bus companies. It was added that in 2014/15, funding from the Welsh Government for subsidised bus services remained at the same level as 2013/14 but as part of the Council's agreed budget proposals, there was a reduction of £70,000 in the budget for subsidised bus services leading to the withdrawal of one bus route.

It was outlined that Quality Contracts required significant long term financial commitment. The statutory consultation process means that there is a long lead-in time prior to the Council applying to the Welsh Government for approval to implement the scheme as there are likely to be objections and claims for compensation from bus companies who would lose their right to offer a service to the public. If the Quality Bus Contract option is to be pursued, more detailed financial costing will be required. The Council's current expenditure on subsidised local bus services is £1.042m, of which £464,000 is Welsh Government grant.

It was concluded that given the uncertainty over funding in the short term, it was unlikely that the Council would be in a position to commit to the long term funding of a Quality Contract or Statutory Quality Partnership Scheme. There is, however, scope for developing voluntary partnership schemes to achieve the Council's policy commitments as these can be implemented more quickly and do not require the longer term financial commitment associated with a Quality Contract.

Members asked a number of questions of the Officer who responded accordingly. Discussions centred on the following:

- Private cars and taxis using bus/metro lanes, particularly in Hafod;
- Cost implications of bus quality contract schemes;
- The possibility of partnership working along a number of access roads into the city centre, such as Fabian Way, Neath Road, Carmarthen Road and Llangyfelach Road;

- The overspend on the Welsh Government concessionary travel budget mainly due to bus operators in North Wales improperly recording concessionary passenger journeys;
- The lack of co-ordinated transport services within the city centre/Swansea as a whole;
- The general approach of local bus operators to providing a public service;
- The need to make essential improvements to services and to undertake research into the options available.

AGREED that:

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) the commitment to pursue quality bus schemes be deferred for further political discussion and reported back to the Committee.

27 **WORK PROGRAMME.**

The Chair presented an updated Work Programme 2014/15 for information.

28 **DATES OF FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2014/15 MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 2 P.M.):**

NOTED the dates of future Committee meetings for the remainder of the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm

CHAIR