



Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 November 2023

Follow Up: Scrutiny Working Group – Bus Services

Purpose:	This report provides background and advice to the Committee in following up on the Scrutiny Working Group which looked at issues relating to Bus Services. Lead Cabinet Member / officers have been asked to report on progress since the Working Group, including issues raised by the Working Group.
Content:	<p>The Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure, Councillor Andrew Stevens, has provided a report which is appended for questions and discussion.</p> <p>The Committee is provided with the correspondence between the Working Group and Cabinet Member following its meetings which contain the views / concerns of Scrutiny councillors. The Committee should follow up on agreed action in response to any Working Group suggestions for improvement.</p>
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the information provided, ask questions, and make comments and recommendations as necessary.
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Andrew Stevens (Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure)
Lead Officers:	Mark Wade, Director of Place Stuart Davies, Head of Highways & Transportation
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Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer:	Amanda Thomas

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee has overall responsibility for the Scrutiny Work Programme. Each year, the Work Programme includes several 'one-off' topic-based Scrutiny Working Groups to look at specific issues of concern. These are usually set up as single meetings

to call in relevant Cabinet Member(s), officers, and other relevant persons, to examine the issue and feedback views and recommendations to the Cabinet Member(s). As such the Committee takes responsibility for following up on Working Groups, to check on progress with the topic / issue(s) and response to any specific suggestions / recommendations made and agreed action coming out of the Scrutiny session.

2. Bus Services Scrutiny Working Group

- 2.1 The Bus Services Scrutiny Working Group originally met on 7 July 2021 to discuss issues including bus network coverage and levels of service, community transport provision and integration with other forms of transport. The Working Group met with the then relevant Cabinet Member, Councillor Mark Thomas, and Senior Officers. Representatives of First Cymru and Cardiff Bus also participated to give their perspective on things. The Working Group was given the opportunity to meet again by the Committee, and a second meeting took place on 14 March 2022 to conclude the Working Group's activity. It has now been 18 months since the Scrutiny Working Group, and therefore the Committee should follow up on progress on the issue(s) and action following any suggestions coming out of the Scrutiny session and find out how things have progressed / developed.
- 2.2 Main Working Group Findings: The Working Group highlighted the need for regular bus services to all areas of Swansea to reduce isolation and start a shift away from car use to using public transport. It emphasised the importance of bus companies and public transport more generally contributing to carbon emission reduction. The Working Group recommended that regular meetings are held between Councillors and First Cymru to raise and discuss issues and felt it was very important for the Authority and bus companies to listen to people who currently do not use buses in Swansea, as well as people who do, to help shape current and future bus services. The importance of joining up bus and rail times so services are more coordinated and the introduction of cross ticketing between bus and rail were also issues emphasised. The further meeting in March 2022 enabled discussion on developments including a trial of hydrogen buses, improvements to bus shelters, and the possibility of Council playing a bigger role in providing bus services. Councillors were pleased to hear about various projects and improvements planned, though felt that public dissatisfaction with services and their reliability remained a big issue.
- 2.3 The correspondence between the Working Group and Cabinet Member following these two meetings is **attached**, showing the range of issues that were discussed, feedback and concerns, and Cabinet Member's response provided at the time.

2.4 Link to the two Scrutiny Working Group meetings:

7 Jul 2021

<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=701&MI d=9507&Ver=4&LLL=0>

14 Mar 2022 -

<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=701&MI d=10680&Ver=4&LLL=0>

2.5 Current Scrutiny Councillors who participated in the Working Group: Lyndon Jones (Convener), Chris Holley, Lynda James, Paul Lloyd, Cheryl Philpott, and Mike White.

2.6 By carrying out a follow up the Committee can then close off this Scrutiny activity and work, as appropriate.

3. Cabinet Member Report

3.1 The current lead Cabinet Member, Councillor Andrew Stevens, Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure, has provided a report on progress, in the context of the Scrutiny activity, on Bus Services. See ***attached***.

3.2 Lead officer(s) will be present to assist and facilitate the discussion. Bev Fowles, Director of South Wales Transport / Vice-Chair of Coach and Bus Association Cymru, has also been invited along by officers to give the Committee a perspective on things from a local SME bus service operator, particularly in terms of Welsh Government proposed reform / legislation on how bus services are provided in the future, including franchising local bus services. Coach and Bus Association Cymru is a trade association representing the interest of smaller bus operators in Wales.

3.3 The Committee will hear from the Cabinet Member / officers before questions and discussion. At the conclusion of the session the Committee may wish to write to the Cabinet Member with any observations, views and recommendations arising from the follow up discussion.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications from this report.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Letter correspondence between the Bus Services Scrutiny Working Group and Cabinet Member: Letters dated 9 August 2021; 17 August 2021; 8 April 2022; and 27 April 2022
- Cabinet Member Report on Bus Services