

COUNCIL MEETING – 17 NOVEMBER 2016

Recommendation to Council from the Executive meeting held on 11 October 2016

E/16/52. Passenger Transport Strategy

The Executive considered a report from the Executive Member for Community Services that set out the draft Passenger Transport Strategy for Central Bedfordshire. The Strategy referred to users of road based public transport, such as commercially operated local bus routes and community transport, as well as fleet transport for the provision of home to school transport and home to day setting transport for vulnerable children and adults.

The Chairman invited the lead petitioner for the petition against proposals affecting the 188 and 190 bus services to speak. Mrs Gibson expressed concern about the proposed changes to bus services within the rural areas and the impact this would have on communities in Central Bedfordshire.

The Deputy Executive Member for Community Services explained that a decision on the bus routes would not be considered until the Council had adopted the Passenger Transport Strategy. Following the adoption of the Strategy each route would be assessed before decisions were made.

The Chairman invited the two members of the public to speak:-

- Mr Barrett spoke on behalf of South Beds Dial-a-Ride and referred to the recommendation from the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) proposing a delay in changes to the Community Transport element of the Strategy, specifically the Dial-a-Ride service, in order to allow further discussions to take place; and
- Dr Egan explained that she was a trustee of Dial-a-Ride and supported the recommendation from the Sustainable Community OSC Committee. She also expressed concerns about the consultation process.

The Deputy Executive Member explained that the continuation of the existing grants for the Dial-a-Ride Service might lead to a breach of procurement legislation. By adopting the proposed tender process, the operators would have some certainty in relation to future funding. A delay of 1 year from April 2018 was not required as discussions were already taking place with the Service and other interested parties to find solutions.

The Head of Public Protection and Transport described the various consultation processes that had been carried out.

In response to questions, the Deputy Executive Member explained that the Council had to consider ways in which to make savings by delivering services in different ways to avoid making cuts. The Director of Community Services reiterated that the delay of 18 months in the community transport element was not necessary as discussions with providers were ongoing and there remained several months within which these could be concluded.

Reason for decision: To ensure that the Council has a Strategy that delivers transport services that are safe, effective and fit for purpose.

RECOMMENDED to Council

that the Passenger Transport Strategy for Central Bedfordshire, as set out at Appendix 1 to the Executive report, be adopted.