



Cabinet

17 March 2010

Report of the Policy Development Committee: Review of Public Transport options between Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Clare (Mar10/08)

1. When setting its work programme for the current year the Policy Development Committee requested a review of options available for public transport users to travel between Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Clare with a view to providing more direct and regular services.
2. Philip Magill, Suffolk County Council's Transport Planning and Procurement Manager, attended the meeting held on 10 March 2010 and had also provided information to Members in advance of the meeting, detailing the existing bus services running between these locations.
3. Mr Magill explained the current situation with regard to provision of bus services since deregulation in 1985, which meant services were either run by an operator, as they saw fit, with the costs met through fare income, or, where no operator was willing to provide a service, the Public Transport Authority could choose to sponsor a service. The services between Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Clare were all operated as sponsored services. The Borough Council had a limited role in the delivery of public transport services.
4. As with any service, the dilemma was to provide enough market coverage to make it commercially viable, or with minimum support, and it was for this reason that the service between Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill, for example, deviated significantly from the A143 to serve as many nearby villages as possible.
5. Mr Magill explained that the request from the Committee for information regarding services between Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill could not have come at a more opportune time, as these had recently undergone a significant review, with changes to be introduced in August 2010 involving a service operating principally along the arterial A143 with a minimum number of detours. This main route would be fed by demand responsive services to provide travel opportunities for those living in areas more remote from the A143. These changes had come about as a result of extensive and in depth analysis of public transport demand. Services to Clare and around the A134 corridor would be reviewed in a similar fashion at a later date.

6. The Committee asked questions of Mr Magill and discussed a number of issues, including the difficulty in providing evening and weekend services; the use of Demand Responsive Transport, which did not run to a strict timetable but which took people directly to their destination of choice if there was no suitable passenger transport alternative; promotion of services available; subsidising of fares; sizes of buses used; and real time passenger information.
7. The Committee thanked Mr Magill for his time spent with the Committee this evening, and looked forward to hearing about the planned service review for Clare at a later date.

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