



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 18th March 2020

ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

1st December 2020

Present:

Councillor Furneaux (in the Chair)
Councillors Barfield, Cairns, Callison, Harness, Hasthorpe, Sheridan and Wilson

Officers in attendance:

- Anne Campbell (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jonathan Ford (Senior Transport Officer - Engie)
- Luke Greaves (Head of Highways and Transport – Engie)
- Simon Jones (Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer)
- Mark Nearney (Assistant Director Housing and Interim Assistant Director Highways, Transport and Planning)
- Rebecca Schofield (Solicitor)
- Dave Tipple (Relationship Manager)
- Clive Tritton (Interim Director of Economy and Growth)

Also in attendance:

- Councillor Fenty (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing)
- Councillor Jackson (Leader of the Council with overall responsibility for Grimsby Town Deal)
- Councillor S Swinburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport)
- Councillor Patrick

SPE.53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence from this meeting.

SPE.54 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest from members in respect of any items on the agenda for this meeting.

SPE.55 EUROPARC BUS SERVICE

The panel considered a report from Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport regarding a review of existing service subsidy costs and options for future delivery. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport presented the report for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 December 2020.

Mr Nearney highlighted the key issues outlined within the report and invited members comments and questions.

Members raised the following issues;

Regarding the high cost to the authority of the subsidy, especially given the current budget position and the lack of engagement from local businesses, Mr Greaves acknowledged the high cost and explained that the authority had supported this service for some time. However, officers were working in the hope of securing alternative external funding sources to ensure a long term, strategic and sustainable financial solution to eliminate or reduce the subsidy of this service. Work continued to bid for funding for a 'bus bridge'. Mr Tritton corroborated the comments made and added the service did support some of the borough's most excluded areas, helping people to access jobs that they may otherwise not be able to get to. This report retained the subsidy for one more year and he acknowledged that it was unlikely the authority would be able to justify any extension to this if alternative strategic solutions could not be found. Mr Nearney added that this extension would allow all possible strategies and solutions to be explored. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport added that continued robust engagement with Stagecoach stressed the authority's position and hopes of securing a more collaborative solution to this funding / infrastructure dilemma.

It was also the view of a panel member that this was money well spent, given the Council's total budget and the relatively small amount given to subsidise this bus service to one of the most deprived areas in the town.

In response to a plea to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport to bring forward plans to provide a bus bridge which would help to make bus services to Europarc more sustainable, Councillor S Swinburn acknowledged this was something the authority were actively pursuing. Mr Greaves added that funding bids were in with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for the North. A live bid was in place with DfT. Officers were hopeful and announcements were due shortly. Regarding consideration of value for money on a project, Mr Ford advised that the business case for the bus bridge showed a good cost benefit ratio, which demonstrated high value for money and was a requirement of the DfT funding bid formulae. However, this was very different to how the Council would calculate value for money. The portfolio holder committed

to pursue this matter via Cabinet and make suitable recommendations when the outcome of funding bids was known.

RESOLVED – That the report and panel's comments be noted.

SPE.56 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that discussion of the following business was likely to disclose exempt information within paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

SPE.57 EUROPARC BUS SERVICE – APPENDICES 4A AND 4B

The panel received an appendix to the report referred to at item SPE.55 above.

RESOLVED – That the appendix be received.

Note - Councillor S Swinburn left the meeting at this point.

SPE.58 FUTURE DELIVERY OF THE REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP

The panel considered a report from the Leader of the Council containing an options appraisal and recommendation for the future delivery of the services currently delivered through the Regeneration Partnership. In introducing the item, Councillor Jackson explained the report was presented for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 December 2020. Mr Tritton gave a short presentation setting out the basis for the six recommendations within the report.

Members raised a number of issues including the previous cabinet working group, presentation of evidence to the working group, organisational culture, budget savings, commercial sensitivities, contract management, decision making structures, improving partnership relationships, access to information, financial concerns, improving attitudes, services brought back in-house, potential savings and the rationale for recommendations.

It was proposed by Councillor Hasthorpe, seconded by Councillor Harness to support the recommendations in the report and this was agreed upon a show of hands (five for three against).

RESOLVED – That the recommendations, as proposed within the report now submitted, be supported.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.