

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

5 MARCH 2012 - 2.30PM



**PRESENT:** Councillor Jolley (Chairman), Councillor Chambers (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Booth, Mrs Bucknor, Farmer, Miscandlon, Peachey, Scrimshaw and Stebbing.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Cornwell

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Owen

**OBSERVING:** Councillor Sutton

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jane Bailey, Gary Garford, Wendy Otter and Carol Pilson

**\* FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL \***

### **OS38/11    COMMUNITY TRANSPORT WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS**

Councillor Owen presented the Community Transport Work Programme Progress Update to the panel supported by Gary Garford - Corporate Director and Wendy Otter - Transport Development Manager.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

#### **Partnership Working with FACT**

- Councillor Stebbing asked if residents in Turves are making any use of the Fenland Association of Community Transport (FACT) bus, as this would be the only bus service available in that area. Wendy Otter confirmed that there are a number of FACT members in Turves, and they are making use of the service;
- Councillor Owen stated that it is important to remember that the FACT buses are for the use of all Fenland Residents. Often people think that the service is run for people with special needs in the community, but the buses are for the use of everybody. Councillor Jolley stated that better publicity is needed so that residents understand who can make use of this service;
- Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that once again she was disappointed that the report did not contain enough detailed information, and asked if the officers had any facts and figures that could back up the report, in particular where the report states that passenger numbers continue to grow. Wendy Otter stated that she did not have the information with her but would circulate to members following the meeting. Figures for usage have grown from 200 per month in 2008, to the latest figures which are between 1600 and 2000 passengers per month;
- Councillor Bucknor asked with regards to the Community car scheme, is this service linked with the FACT service. Councillor Owen stated that these two services work separately from each other;
- Councillor Booth stated that if it is perceived by the residents that the FACT buses are for the use of special needs or disabled people in the community, has the recent re-branding of the buses had any impact on this misperception? Has the re-branding attracted any younger people to make use of the service? Councillor Owen stated that not many young people make use of the FACT bus service, and so the re-branding has not impacted on that;

- Councillor Peachey stated that if this service is available to all, and yet residents do not perceive it to be for all, maybe consideration could be given to putting another name on the buses so that they are clear that they are for everybody to use.
- Councillor Peachey asked if residents need to be members to make use of the service. Wendy Otter confirmed that residents need to be members to access the service, and that membership is £10 per year. Councillor Owen stated that the bus only collects residents when it has been pre-booked, and cannot be stopped in the street, this is due to licensing. Wendy Otter confirmed that under the current licence held the FACT bus services can only be used by a person if they are a member of the scheme and have pre-booked;
- Councillor Miscandlon asked is Pondersbridge covered by this service? Councillor Owen stated that this area is not covered;
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that it would be beneficial to leaflet the more remote areas so that they understand that the service is available to them. Councillor Owen stated that he understands that FACT will have leafleted all areas;
- Councillor Booth stated that the membership fee has recently been increased from £5 to £10 and asked if this has had any impact on the take up of membership. Councillor Owen stated that the increase has had no impact on the take up of membership, and the membership numbers have continued to increase;

### Fenland Youth Bus

- Councillor Bucknor stated that recently a group of children in her ward had wanted to arrange a trip to a skate park and asked how much the FACT bus trips cost. Wendy Otter stated that she could not provide that information at this time but agreed to see Councillor Mrs Bucknor following the meeting where she could obtain some further information. Gary Garford stated that although we do not directly provide the FACT bus service we take an active role in helping to coordinate transport and improve services;
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that with regards to the difficulty in getting the Fenland Youth Bus scheme off the ground, and taking into account that the majority of young people use the internet, is this advertised on the Fenland Website? Wendy Otter confirmed that there is a small amount of information on the website, but the advertising has been focused in Manea as this is the area that the scheme is being piloted, she agreed to look at the website and see if any additions could be made;
- Councillor Jolley stated that once the Fenland Youth Bus is up and running, it will be a valuable asset to the area. This type of scheme does not take off over night. Councillor Owen stated that the young people do not seem to have had the confidence to use the service, but we are working to address this issue;
- Councillor Booth stated that with regards to the Fenland Youth Bus, are there plans to pilot the scheme in another area? Wendy Otter confirmed that there are plans to develop a second pilot;
- Councillor Booth stated that it would be a good idea to have the facilities for online booking for the Youth Bus, as young people are confident internet users, and may find this easier to use. Councillor Owen agreed that this was a good idea, and that they would look into it;
- Councillor Farmer stated that wherever you hold your trial you will find the same problems with the users, and asked what the long term plans for this project are. Councillor Owen stated that a lot of work has gone into make improvements to this service, and to encourage the young people to make use of it. Councillor Jolley stated that it is clear that a lot of work has gone into making this project work, and when it is piloted in another area, you will have the experience of knowing what worked previously. Gary Garford stated that the long term plan for this project is that it will become a community led scheme;
- Councillor Miscandlon suggested that the leaders of Scout and Youth Groups are targeted, as they maybe able to organise something as part of a group and this will be good publicity for the Youth Bus. Councillor Owen confirmed that Youth Groups in the area were targeted;
- Councillor Farmer asked if the schools had been contacted? Councillor Owen stated that involving the schools would open up the pilot much further, however he agreed to take the feedback to the team;

### Fenland Transport Directory and Subscribed Bus Services

- Councillor Farmer asked where the Fenland Transport Directory is available for residents. Wendy Otter stated that it is available in One Stop Shops, Libraries and GP Surgeries, there is also an electronic version that is available on the Fenland Website;
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that the Fenland Transport Directory is excellent. Wendy Otter stated that it has been very successful and popular, so much so that more copies have been printed;
- Councillor Farmer asked if call centre staff are familiar with the directory. Wendy Otter confirmed that call centre staff have received training and have access to an electronic version of the directory;
- Councillor Chambers stated that £100,000 was put aside for Community Transport, what has happened to this money? Councillor Owen confirmed that £100,000 has been put aside to be used for Community Transport. Gary Garford stated that this sum is available for Community Transport issues but while the bus subsidies are still in place we are hoping not to have to spend any of that money. The money will be used to look into the transport needs of the community;
- Councillor Jolley asked if that sum has been ring fenced for Community Transport. Gary Garford confirmed that the sum has been ring fenced for Community Transport, a small amount has been used for staffing to look into these issues. Wendy Otter stated that when the original announcement about the cutting of bus subsidies was made we understood that all the money would be cut, it is now clear that £1.5 Million will be put back in to look at these issues across the County;
- Councillor Booth asked if the £100,000 is a one off sum. Gary Garford stated that It is not capital it is a revenue amount. We are well placed to come up with an alternative to the bus services. Our need for Community Transport one of the greatest in the County. If we manage not to spend any of that money that has been put aside, it will have been a success as it will mean that we have sourced other funding for this work. However it is there as a contingency to fall back on. Ideally we want to use that £100,000 to target the gaps where there is no other funding available;
- Councillor Peachey asked for clarification that the £100,000 is ring fenced, and asked if officers are confident that this sum of money will carry over to the next financial year. Councillor Owen confirmed that the money is ring fenced for the use for community transport. Gary Garford confirmed that the money will be available for use in the next financial year;
- Councillor Booth asked if officers are trying to get more information on where the cuts to the subsidised routes will be. Gary Garford confirmed that information is starting to come through. Wendy Otter stated that for some bus services, only part of a route is subsidised and this makes the process even more complicated;
- Councillor Farmer stated that officers do not seem certain which parts of the routes are subsidised and it is clear that some of these subsidised routes are unsustainable. Gary Garford stated that the Fenland routes are subsidised from between 69p and £3.92 which are relatively low amounts when compared with other parts of Cambridgeshire;
- Councillor Farmer asked that with regards to the bus stop audits, are officers using data from Mosaic. Wendy confirmed that the mosaic data has been used as part of this project;

### Transport, Older People and Health

- Councillor Stebbing stated that he supports the Breath Easy Group and attends the support group meeting. He stated that people from Wisbech, Chatteris and March have access to pulmonary rehabilitation; however, people from Whittlesey have no facility to get them to their appointments. Wendy Otter stated that the car scheme is an option and depending on numbers the FACT bus is also an option, agreed to discuss further following the meeting;
- Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the report informs members that there are difficulties getting to hospitals for appointments and asked how officers are getting this feedback. Wendy Otter stated that this is a result of a questionnaire that was circulated to Fenland surgeries and hospitals. Approximately 1500 responses were received looking at access to

hospitals, healthcare and Doctors appointments. Access to hospitals came out as the biggest issue, it is a significant problem and an action plan looking at the issues will be developed as a result of the findings;

- Councillor Booth stated that with regards to the car schemes, a lot of these groups are struggling to find drivers, what are the future plans for these schemes? Councillor Owen stated that it is not within our remit to look for drivers, the people who run these schemes are responsible for recruiting new drivers, and I am sure they have these issues in hand. Wendy Otter confirmed that we are not doing anything specific to look for drivers;
- Councillor Booth suggested that this could be publicised in the Fenlander. Wendy Otter agreed that this is an option that they could look into;
- Councillor Farmer stated that with regards to medical appointments people have different needs; either a one off hospital appointment or on-going medical treatment requiring many trips to the hospital. Do officers take this into consideration? Wendy Otter stated that we have access to the East of England Ambulance data, we can use this to work out which of the patients would not need an ambulance and could make use of a facility like the FACT bus;
- Councillor Peachey asked what information was used when working out the pilot for the Doddington Hospital route. Wendy Otter stated that lots of data was looked at when planning that route, and information was obtained from the staff at Doddington Hospital and the questionnaire previously mentioned;
- Councillor Peachey asked if officers have any data on other routes. Wendy Otter confirmed that officers do have data on other routes, but this data has not been analysed to the same degree, it is hoped that if this service is successful it can be expanded;

#### Fenland Rail Development Strategy and Community Rail Partnership

- Councillor Peachey stated that with regards to the Fenland Rail Development Strategy where will the destination be? Wendy Otter stated that the service we are looking at is the Ipswich to Peterborough via Ely. we have been targeting the more local service as we believe that this offers the most realistic opportunity for increasing rail services from Manea and Whittlesey;
- Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked what the chances of expanding this to Wisbech. Councillor Owen stated that he could not see how Wisbech could be connected to the main line, but that improvements to the road route are being looked into. Gary Garford stated that we recognise the rail issues for Wisbech but one of the challenges is that this is not a through route to anywhere else;
- Councillor Peachey asked if we know how many people drive from March to Peterborough to catch a train there. Wendy Otter stated that those numbers are high when compared with other commuting patterns in Fenland;
- Councillor Booth stated that he understood that many trains do not stop at this station as the platform is too short and the trains are too long. Wendy Otter stated that that was once an issue, but more trains now have selective door opening;
- Councillor Stebbing asked if there is any possibility that the Whittlesey platform could be extended. Wendy Otter stated that Jeanette Milner is in contact with Network Rail, and we are planning some discussions to look at some of the larger work that needs to be carried out;
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that due to the deep water port on the East Coast Rail Track will be upgrading the line in preparation for the freight traffic. How will this affect passenger trains? Wendy Otter stated that there has been an increase in freight trains, but there is still room to accommodate more passenger trains;
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that we could be benefitting from this work as they may be upgrading the lines;
- Councillor Farmer asked if there is any scope to increase the platform at Whittlesey using section 106 money? Councillor Owen stated that the work should be funded by Network Rail. Wendy Otter stated that Network Rail has its own funding for this type of work, but we are looking to see if we can use some section 106 money too as it is anticipated that funding

for this work will come from many different sources. Gary Garford stated that section 106 is complex - you must demonstrate a correlation on what the money is to be spent on so it directly relates to the development;

- Councillor Stebbing stated that the Magna Park Development at Stanground will intensify traffic on that line for freight and this will affect passenger trains. Wendy Otter confirmed that officers are aware of this increase;
- Councillor Jolley thanked Councillor Owen, Gary Garford and Wendy Otter for their attendance at the meeting today.

**The Overview and Scrutiny Panel noted the Community Transport Work Programme Progress Report.**

4.00pm

Chairman