
ROAD PASSENGER REVENUE SUPPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the County Council's Environment Services Select Committee's recent deliberations on local transport subsidies and proposes that Rochford Council make representations to the County about the need for subsidies within the district.
- 1.2 The County Council has a duty under the provisions of the 1985 Transport Act to: 'secure the provision of such passenger transport facilities as the Council consider appropriate to meet any public transport requirements within the County which would not in their view be met apart from any other action taken for that purpose'.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The County Council's Environment Services Select Committee met on 3 August 2000 at the request of the Strategic Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder, to consider the future of public transport and in particular local transport subsidies.
- 2.2 The Select Committee invited various organisations within the County with an interest in public transport issues to make presentations in order to help them consider their views on the matter. The Chairman of Transportation and Environmental Services attended the meeting to listen to the presentations and subsequent debate.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the Select Committee is not in a position to make any decisions on this matter, but its findings will be taken into account when the Cabinet next considers the issue.

3 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND PRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 To assist Members, a copy of the report presented to the Select Committee is attached as Appendix One. The main issues raised in the report can be summarised as follows:
 - 12% of bus mileage services in Essex are paid for by the County Council
 - Commercial operators continue to withdraw marginal services, both in rural and urban areas, placing increased pressure on the Council
 - The budget estimate for 2000/2001 for local bus and community transport services is £2.8 million and £613,000 respectively
 - A 2% reduction in the commercial network would require an increase of 20% in the Council's budget

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- Consultants have recommended that, regardless of the resources available, the County should adopt a clear strategy for providing revenue support
 - Consultants also recommended that funding for community and voluntary transport should be based on outputs (number of journeys undertaken per passenger) rather than inputs (funding of a post or 'service')

3.2 Presentations were made to the Select Committee by:

- Essex Buses
- Confederation of Passenger Transport Operators
- Uttlesford Community Travel
- Association of Essex Councils
- Rural Community Council of Essex
- Tendring District Council
- Maldon District Council

The comments from each of these organisations are briefly summarised in Appendix Two to this report.

4 IMPLICATIONS FOR ROCHFORD

- 4.1 It was clear from the presentations to the Select Committee and indeed from the comments made by the committee members that there is much concern about the current subsidy arrangements and that people living in the rural parts of the County are considered to be losing out.
- 4.2 However, at the same time it is recognised that there is not an unlimited supply of funds available to support rural bus services or community transport facilities and that hard decisions would inevitably need to be made.
- 4.3 Members in Rochford have long been concerned about access for those people living in the rural parts of the district and the County's deliberations on subsidy arrangements presents an ideal opportunity for these views to be considered.
- 4.4 It seems that the process is at an early stage as yet, and it is understood that there will be formal consultation with districts and other organisations in due course. It is suggested that at this stage, Members might wish to voice in writing their concerns about rural bus provision and to reinforce concerns about community transport services.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Effective transport links to the rural parts of the district are essential to allow residents access to jobs and to combat social exclusion.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In the current financial year, the district's contribution to the dial-a-ride service is estimated at £32,000. The district also funds bus/rail passes and taxi vouchers and in 2000/2001 this is estimated at £61,300.

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 All Parish Councils have an interest in the arrangements for the provision of subsidised bus services and community transport.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That, subject to additional comments from Members, the district's concerns about rural bus services and community transport be forwarded to Essex as part of the developing debate on the future arrangements for the subsidy of such services. (HCPI)

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Background Papers:

Report on Road Passenger Transport Revenue Support considered by the County Environmental Services Select Committee on 3 August 2000.

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