

Thorndon Parish Council 3.7.2014
County Councillor Report

Public Transport Report Delivered

I have previously reported that I have been working with fellow councillors and Officers to bring forward a report into how the County Council can best try to meet the needs of public transport users in the future.

We have had many meetings involving witnesses from user groups to community bus providers as well as the N.H.S.

The report has now been approved by the Cabinet (apart from recommendation 3) The report ended up with 12 recommendations.

1; SCC should develop a clear vision for the future of public transport, and a strategy developed with commercial and community transport operators, including the creation of county wide partnerships to integrate with scheduled provision, and invest in technology that will deliver multi-ticketing, and real time passenger information.

2; The development of a Public transport Forum, all operators as well as community groups will look into identifying local transport hubs, as well as building an evidence base of unmet need, devising options for community transport to operate more at peak times and during weekends and evenings. Challenge Hospitals to work with the forum, (at the moment community car schemes cover over 750,000 miles delivering patients for appointments with the NHS).

Design a planning protocol so that planning authorities ensure new developments take full account of public transport needs.

3; The Council should ensure that no further savings are sought from its discretionary budget without fully understanding the impact on users. (not yet agreed)

4; The Council should develop a programme of communication, including designing timetables with user groups so that timings fares and concessions are easily understood. Also work towards a single community transport brand, at the moment we have "dial a ride" Suffolk link" "border hoppa" etc.

5; The Council should lobby our County's MPs to make a greater contribution to the national Concessionary Travel Scheme, Increase support for young peoples travel needs through the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Also reinstate the category D1 (minibus) for drivers passing their driving test, to make it easier for Community transport operators to recruit younger drivers, and reduce fees for retesting of community transport providers.

6;Extend the take up of the Endeavour card, as well as promote a cashless smartcard.

7; local communities should take the lead in identifying their local transport needs, and devising their own solutions. Town and Parish councils should be the main drivers for this.

8; the County Council and local communities should work together to improve local bus infrastructure, particularly Bus stops and Shelters. Help to find funding for shelters and stops, as well as working with local businesses to provide waiting on their premises. Stage a design competition for a durable modular Shelter, that can be moved if routes change.

9;The county Council will work with Community Transport Operators to ensure young people can access education training or employment by booking regular trips.

10; The County Council should investigate options for an integrated Health, care and wellbeing transport service, similar to Transport Plus in Norfolk.

11; The county Council should ensure that Public transport is reflected in its priorities and its role in supporting peoples health is acknowledged across all policy areas.

12; The director of Economy Skills and Environment should present a progress report on the implementation of these recommendations within 12 months.

On the surface this report looks unremarkable, but it starts by stating we need a “clear vision” for the future, this vision is not in place at the moment, services get altered or cut with little reference to the communities affected. Many communities run their own local schemes in isolation, with little join up were schemes overlap etc. all this needs to be addressed by this strategy.

Apologies for taking the whole of my report with one issue, but this issue is vital for the sustainable future of our rural public transport provision.

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