

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 2nd December, 2014.

Present:- Councillors Plenty (Chair), N Holledge and Wright (Vice-Chair)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Brooker, M Holledge and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Coad, Malik, Mansoor, Shah, Sidhu, Sohal and Royal (Slough Customer Senate)

PART 1

NOTE: The meeting proceeded as inquorate due to a procedural misunderstanding. The resolutions were made on the basis of discussions at the meeting on 7th January, where the notes of this meeting were approved and discussed by the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

29. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were given.

30. Minutes of the last meeting held on 29th October 2014

On a point of clarification arising from the minutes for 29th October 2014, the Chair informed the Panel that Committee Chairs were responsible for inviting Commissioners to meetings. The two Commissioners relevant for this meeting had been invited, and had to give their apologies due to a clash with another meeting.

31. Member Questions

No questions were submitted prior to the meeting.

32. Real time passenger information - bus service

The issues concerning real time passenger information (RTPI) had been identified in relation to certain routes. For example, the area around Langley Leisure Centre had seen the number of buses providing RTPI standing at around 30%. This had been improved by resolving technical issues; however, the costs of installing RTPI machinery precluded against their installation on all buses. The focus had been placed on local services with high numbers of users.

However, other developments had caused delays in the implementation of RTPI. Software upgrades on ticket machines, the replacement of other machines and the replacement of some of First Bus' fleet had all been further complications for RTPI. These factors would be anticipated in the future, and work would be undertaken with the bus companies and manufacturers to lessen the impact of such changes in 2015. Information sharing with

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Buckinghamshire County Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead could also be used on Slough Borough Council (SBC)'s system to bolster the existing information, with Transport for London and Arriva also to be approached.

Routes which were not yet covered by RTPI would be integrated into the system. Whilst other developments such as the Mass Rapid Transit Scheme would also have an impact, it was intended that mobile phone technology and a native app would help boost the impact of RTPI. The final decisions on Mass Rapid Transit would be made by the summer of 2015.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- At present, the rate of bus journeys covered by RTPI was rarely above 30% in the period April – September 2014. In the rest of the cases, the electronic display boards at stops displayed bus timetable information which may, or may not, reflect the reality of bus travel on that day. Equally, local residents were not aware of the difference between RTPI and timetable information displayed at bus stops, and were thus confused when buses were not present at the times displayed and were losing confidence in the system. Members present also wished to note their dissatisfaction with the absence of a representative from First Buses.
- Since September 2014 there had been some improvement in RTPI rates, which had risen to around 50%. However, the fact that the fitting of RTPI equipment had often been taking place at the smaller Bracknell depot had proved a further impediment to progress.
- The fact that other councils and bus companies used other equipment could prove problematic. The fact that not all buses in the fleet would be running at any given time and substitute buses would be used when repair work was being undertaken could make a rate of 90% hard to achieve.
- The SBC web page dedicated to bus information needed to be used to advise residents on the RTPI system. Examples where timetable information on display was obsolete, rather than the most recent version of the timetable, also needed to be avoided.
- The electronic board system was also being modified so that specific messages could be entered for times of disrupted travel patterns (e.g. severe weather).
- The information gathered by the system could also be used to identify travel patterns, issues regarding punctuality and also if any drivers were repeatedly avoiding detection by disabling RTPI equipment. The information could also be filtered so that competitors did not have access to each others' information. This historic data lasted for 12 months, although the current low rates of journeys collecting RTPI information limited the usefulness of this data.
- However, at present the RTPI information was not working on the SBC website. This had been a problem for some time, and would be taken back to the web host.

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- SBC was adopting a gradual approach to applying RTPI on its various bus routes, given the expenses involved and the issues faced by those areas who were first to adopt the technology.
- By the spring of 2015, it was anticipated that 50% should be the minimum rate for bus journeys providing RTPI. The Service Level Agreement between SBC and First Buses included the fixing of RTPI machinery; however, members questioned whether a rate of 50% would significantly bolster confidence in the system amongst local residents.
- The Panel noted the current poor accuracy level of RTPI displayed, and the uncertainty of significant improvement in the future.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel recommend Cabinet reviews the current level of accuracy of RTPI in order to set a target for RTPI accuracy and a suitable timeframe.
- 2) That, subsequent to this, the responsible Cabinet member is recommended to report back to the NCS Scrutiny Panel in six months.
- 3) That the Panel recommends that no further capital expenditure on RTPI be made until the Cabinet is satisfied that worthwhile levels of RTPI will be achieved.

33. Street cleansing

The contract was now in its thirteenth year, and had always been run on an output basis. This meant, in essence, that Amey would identify the streets in need of cleaning and then complete the required work (rather than implementing a predetermined cleaning plan). The basis of Amey's decision was the Environmental Protection Act 1990; should the street have fallen below 'grade B' as defined in the Act, it would be cleaned to 'grade A' standard.

Initially the contract had specified that all streets would be visited once per week. However, street cleaning had been integrated with other services (e.g. park cleaning) to make efficiency savings, resulting in the termination of the weekly visit policy. Existing information had been used to target key areas, with some areas visited weekly and some once every four weeks. SBC officers, ward Councillors and members of the public could all supply intelligence which would assist in the selection process.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Leaves falling from trees in autumn was the main period identified as requiring a raised level of clearance work. Other times were also identified; however, these were not set as annual events but rather decided on an *ad hoc* basis. SBC was at liberty to make observations regarding the workload of Amey and request the reprioritisation of work should this be required. Further to this, members were welcome to contact SBC with any observations they had regarding this.

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- In relation to the responsibilities of shops, the litter they generate when goods are purchased by customers was classified as household waste. The capacity of bins had been increased. Currently, bins are being mapped across the Borough and bins could also be redeployed in the future.
- The Environment Team was not responsible for the enforcement of litter policy; its role was to oversee the infrastructure. The integrated contract did allow for some flexibility to meet local requirements.
- Housing land had not been included in the original contract. Amey covered part and SBC's neighbourhoods team another part; this had led to some confusion amongst residents. The contract would be retendered in 2017 and would need to review whether this should be integrated to simplify the situation; however, this might potentially raise the cost.
- To monitor Amey's work, SBC undertook weekly tours of random locations. However, the ability of this to challenge Amey's work could be limited as it did not necessarily take place on the day of cleaning. The town centre was of particular interest in this process. However, the arrangement was not explicit in the current contract and was a point under consideration for the 2017 retender. Amey have absorbed additional cleaning request despite the fact that additional monies made available for High Street cleaning from 2009 – 2012 have now been removed from the budget.
- The street cleaning scorecard (appendix 3) was a proposal, but could be amended to reflect the views of local residents. The reference to NI195 related to a former regime where the Government gathered statistics on cleanliness based on random 50 metre samples of road to form an overall judgement. This could be continued using software and the labour needed to undertake the sampling.
- Members also requested that the reference to 'responding to' flytipping be amended to 'clearing'.
- SBC did not have many powers to intervene in areas under private ownership. This was an enforcement matter, although there were very few examples of successful prosecution. Private roads could also present similar enforcement problems.
- Members requested that the Environment Team should work to support the Neighbourhoods Team and vice versa on issues of enforcement for littering and flytipping.
- Flats presented particular problems for recycling and could also often have overflowing bins. Where this was a recurrent issue, bin capacity would be investigated. Any black sacks would be taken as contaminated waste; Amey would note this and the Council would send letters to flats in the area.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel notes the report.
- 2) That the Panel recommends that, if financially viable, housing land be included in the next contract.

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- 3) That the Panel recommends that, to ensure improved monitoring of contractors' work, SBC monitor street cleanliness on
- a) The day of the contractor inspection; and
 - b) The day of cleaning.

This is in preference to the present system of random locations which has lacked sufficient focus.

34. Forward Work Programme

The Panel were informed that the meeting on the 7th January 2015 would also include an agenda item relating to Florries' Law.

35. Attendance Record

The attendance record was noted.

36. Date of Next Meeting - 7th January 2015

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.32 pm and closed at 8.39 pm)