

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**FORMARTINE AREA COMMITTEE****THE KIRK CENTRE, STATION ROAD, ELLON, 28 JULY 2015**

Present: Councillors R Merson, I Davidson, A Duncan, A Hendry, G Owen, E A Robertson, C Shand and R Thomson.

Apologies: Councillors J Gifford, P Johnston and A Norrie.

Officers: E Brown (Area Manager, Formartine), C Young (Committee Officer, Formartine), M Ingram (Senior Solicitor, Legal and Governance), E Wallace (Head of Service, Transportation), R McKenzie (Principal Planning Officer) and D Armitage (Roads Policy and Asset Manager).

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No public questions had been received.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Members confirmed that they had no interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. RESOLUTION**a) Equalities**

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching its decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 30 JUNE, 2015

The Committee had before them, and **approved** as a correct record, the minute of the meeting of 30 June, 2015.

4. SCHOOL TRANSPORT – ELLON AND AUCHTERELLON PRIMARIES

There was circulated a report dated 16 July, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which advised of the withdrawal of the school day only journeys on service 254 in Ellon, as approved by the Passenger Transport Strategy and Policies Steering Group, and detailed the walking routes that had been identified.

It was reiterated that the Formartine Area Committee had no powers to reinstate the bus service and, should there be any recommendations to do so, these would need to be referred to the relevant policy committee.

Officers advised that the available routes to and from Ellon and Auchterellon primaries were deemed to be safe under the auditing procedures undertaken. The routes were within the limits for safe distances as stipulated within Aberdeenshire Council policies and national legislation.

The service had recently carried out a rigorous tendering process across Aberdeenshire for all school bus transportation services which had identified a significant increase in the costings for the services for Ellon and Auchterellon primaries.

Work was being carried out within Ellon towards promoting an integrated travel town which offered walking and cycling opportunities. The service had suggested the introduction of a traffic crossing on Golf Road, to the north of the existing pelican crossing. This recommendation would come back to the Formartine Area Committee in due course for endorsement.

Further, in relation to the timeline of events relating to this decision, while the service would strive for ongoing improvements with consultation, on this occasion the service had notified affected parents and groups as soon as was possible during the process.

During discussion, members asked about the Passenger Transport Strategy and Policies Steering Group; whether there was a geographical breakdown available for the number of children who used other methods of transportation to get to the schools; whether it was acceptable, in relation to the Equalities Impact Assessment, that there was no mitigation for the women who were more likely to be negatively impacted by the withdrawal of the bus service; if maps were available which highlighted the school catchment areas; which Scottish Government guidance had been considered; whether all the safety improvements as suggested in Appendix 5 of the report were to be implemented; how early the suggested pedestrian crossing at Golf Road could be in situ and operational, and if a school crossing patroller could be employed as a temporary measure meantime; if it would be possible to have a school crossing patroller on Hospital Road; whether any concerns had been raised in relation to the bus services which had been withdrawn in Turriff and Fraserburgh; if the service had applied for the necessary Traffic Orders that were necessary to implement the proposed safety measures and how long this process would take; whether it was commercially viable for the 254 service to continue operating and if consideration had been given to future services being packaged together; whether it would be feasible to utilise council owned service vehicles; for clarification on the number of pupils considered within the scenarios in relation to the assessment of the Golf Road crossing point; if the railings at the old Ellon Academy would be removed when the school relocated; and whether separate arrangements would remain for persons with mobility problems.

Members commented that working groups should notify and consult local members on issues that affected their areas; that there were safety concerns regarding pelican crossings due to drivers not stopping; that perhaps it would have been beneficial to have had another school to the north of the town and it now appeared that the previous mitigation put in place for the Castle Park area was being removed; that it was disappointing that the notification of the termination of the service had been given at the end of the school term, following a lack of consultation and engagement with parents and local members; that the assessment had been carried out during the school holidays and during trades fortnight, so there were less heavy goods vehicles on the road; and that the money required for the proposed mitigation measures would go some way towards meeting the cost of the reinstatement of the bus service. However it was noted that within policy there was no obligation for the service to be provided and there was currently no funding within the budget to reinstate the service. The service was

very costly and unsustainable and the Council had to work within the constraints of their policies. The new proposals were in line with Council policies and it was considered that Ellon was no more dangerous than any other town within Aberdeenshire and the routes provided to both primaries were safe.

It was questioned whether there had been any further discussion around the local parents and Community Council funding their own bus. Officers advised that they would be pleased to offer guidance and assistance as necessary, as they did for other community groups, but there had been no approaches from the parties involved to date.

Following debate, Councillor Davidson, seconded by Councillor Owen, **moved** that officers investigate the possibility of reinstating the school day only journeys on service 254 in Ellon for one more year, and recommend this to the relevant policy committee, on the grounds that the extension of time would allow the necessary engagement with affected users, possibly by means of a local working group, and would give the families time to adjust to the service being removed.

As an **amendment**, Councillor Merson, seconded by Councillor Thomson, **moved** that the Committee approve the recommendation within the report to note and endorse the withdrawal of the school day only journeys on service 254 in Ellon, as approved by the Passenger Transport Strategy and Policies Steering Group.

The members voted as follows:

For the Motion	3	Councillors Davidson, Owen and Robertson
For the Amendment	5	Councillors Merson, Duncan, Hendry, Shand and Thomson

Therefore the **amendment** was carried to **note** and **endorse** the withdrawal of the school day only journeys on service 254 in Ellon, as approved by the Passenger Transport Strategy and Policies Steering Group.

Further, the members **requested**:-

- (1) that the proposed traffic crossing on Golf Road be installed as soon as possible,
- (2) that officers investigate the possibility of employing a school crossing patroller on Golf Road until the traffic crossing was operational,
- (3) that officers investigate whether the speed limit on Knockothie Crescent could be reduced to 20mph, and
- (4) that there be early implementation of all mitigation strategies, as detailed within appendix 5 of the report, and that a report come back to the Formartine Area Committee to update on progress.