

APPENDIX 1

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Communities Scrutiny Committee (Informal)
DATE OF MEETING	04 April 2019
TITLE	Strategic Review of the Public Transport Service (Engagement and Consultation Phase)
AUTHOR	Dafydd Wyn Williams, Head of Environment Department
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Dafydd Meurig
PURPOSE	To update the Committee on the progress to date

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The field of public transport has always been challenging. However, it is fair to say that the past few years, in particular, have been especially challenging in Gwynedd. This was mainly due to:

- Companies losing their operating licences and going out of business
- Companies facing criminal charges
- Companies getting into financial difficulties
- A lack of quality bus companies to offer competition
- An increase in prices for services
- A reduction in the frequency of services
- Concerns about safety and the quality of services
- Dissatisfaction of users and communities

1.2 To put it into context, the Council has faced at least four major crises over the past four years, namely:

- The Padarn Bus incident in 2014 when it was found that the company had defrauded the Council out of over £800,000.
- The GHA incident in 2016 when the company went into financial difficulties.
- The Express Motors incident in 2017 when the Traffic Commissioner revoked the companies' operating licences. More recently, four of the company's directors were found guilty of fraud and for claiming cash for over 88,000 journeys that never happened.
- The Taxis Gwynedd incident in 2018 when the Traffic Commissioner revoked the company's operating licenses.

1.3 The Service has managed the financial effects of the various crises over the past few years through rationalisation and re-tendering services. However, as a result of the uncertain future of some of the bus companies, the reduction in the number of competent bus companies, the increased threat to local government budgets, and the fact that many of our bus routes are long established because 'they have always been there' and no longer meet the need; it was decided, mid-2018, to hold a strategic review of the public transport service in Gwynedd.

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2. THE AIM OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT REVIEW AND METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.1 The review will consider the existing public transport network and will assess whether it is fit for purpose with the intention of establishing a network that is safe, reliable and cost effective.
- 2.2 This will be achieved by undertaking the seven following steps:
1. Identify the public's need; not only the demands of those who currently use public transport but also what would encourage other members of the public to use public transport. This will be done by means of engagement and consultation.
 2. After establishing the need, the current network will be audited to ensure that it can meet the needs of the travelling public. This would include making any changes required to the network.
 3. Having established the network, there will be a need to consider what type of provision will be the safest, most reliable and most cost effective. This is where we will need to draw on the experiences of other authorities and experts in order to evaluate the options.
 4. Consult communities to share the results of the review and the timetable for establishing the new network before commencing the tendering process.
 5. Commence the tendering process
 6. If the funding is insufficient to meet the need, the priorities of the bus routes will be based on the Social Return on Investment.
 7. Commence the new service.
- 2.3 The review will also give the Council an opportunity to trial alternative ways of meeting transport needs by means of, e.g. using community transport methods, on-call services, mini-buses, taxis, etc.
- 2.4 It is likely that it will take until April 2020 to complete the review and deliver the findings. By then, it is expected that the review will have enabled the Environment Department to rationalise the existing service and consequently provide a bus service that meets the needs of our residents and bring savings that will align the operational costs with the current budget.

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3. TIMETABLE

3.1 A timetable for undertaking the review has been prepared as follows:

<i>Step</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Who should act</i>
1	Consult with Community Councils	February to April 2019	Members of the Team
	Consult with the travellers - questionnaire	January to April 2019	Members of the Team
	Consult with Operators	February to March 2019	Head of Department, Senior Manager and Manager
	Open days	April 2019	Members of the Team
	Gather the information	May to June 2019	Bangor University
	Assess/submit findings/decisions to the Cabinet	July 2019	Head of Department
2, 3 & 4	Prepare a new network	August 2019	Members of the Team
5	Tendering Process	October 2019	Members of the Team
6	Social Return on Investment analysis exercise to prioritise the bus routes	November / December 2019	Bangor University
	Inform the Traffic Commissioner	56 days	Operators
7	Commence the new service	April 2020	

3.2 The Department commenced the first step, namely engagement and consultation, at the end of January this year.

4. ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1 In order to facilitate the process of understanding our residents' needs, the Department has been working with the Centre for Health Economics and Medicines Evaluation at Bangor University to prepare a questionnaire for travellers. The Centre will also undertake the Social Return on Investment analysis to prioritise the bus routes.

4.2 The questionnaire asks travellers how frequent they use the bus service for travelling to: the shops; work; school; social activities; and health appointments. It also asks how the bus service improves their lives in terms of going out to meet others; having more independence and freedom, and doing those things that help them feel positive and happy. It also asks travellers how they would take that journey if the bus service did not run and how much it would cost them. Welsh and English copies of the questionnaire can be seen in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

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- 4.3 The questionnaires are available on-line through the Council's website, as follows:
- Welsh: <https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/cy/Cyngor/Dweud-eich-dweud/Ymgynghoriadau-byw/Arolwg-Bysiau-Lleol-Gwynedd-2019.aspx>
- English: <https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Have-your-say/Live-consultations/Gwynedd-Local-Bus-Survey-2019.aspx>
- 4.4 The questionnaires have been distributed to the county's libraries, shops, doctor's surgeries, community centres etc. Members of the team have also been travelling on the buses to obtain observations and suggestions directly from the travellers.
- 4.5 In addition, a series of open days have been arranged at some of the Council's centres across the county in order to understand the needs of our residents and assist them to fill in the questionnaires. The programme for the open days is included in **Appendix 3**.
- 4.6 Posters have been produced to raise awareness about the open days and these will be displayed in the centres, shops, community centres, as well as bus exchanges, stations and shelters. A copy of the poster is included in **Appendix 4**.
- 4.7 As well as displaying hard copies of posters in various locations, electronic copies of these and the programmes are included on the Council's social media sites, e.g. Facebook and Twitter in order to promote the events to a broader and more diverse audience.
- 4.8 The team has already held four of the open days on the programme at the Pavilion Leisure Centre, Barmouth; Darllenfa Rhydd, Dolgellau; Bro Dysynni Leisure Centre, Tywyn and Llanberis Community Centre.
- 4.9 Fifteen residents attended the session in Barmouth; 38 in Dolgellau; 11 in Tywyn, and 28 in Llanberis. It became apparent that the various communities have their unique concerns about public transport, e.g. connectivity between trains and buses in Barmouth; connectivity and the time it takes to travel between other major towns and centres in Dolgellau and Tywyn, and connectivity and specific problems with a bus company in Llanberis. The responses received after holding these open days bodes well for the remaining sessions.
- 4.10 Public transport gives people of all ages and ability the freedom to travel to the places that matter most to them. However, although major improvements have been made to public transport in recent years, many problems still exist which makes travelling inaccessible, particularly for disabled people. These problems cause many people to feel as though they are socially isolated. Consequently, the Team has also visited Antur Waunfawr, at Bryn Pistyll, Waunfawr; Caerylchu and Warws Werdd in Caernarfon and Menter Fachwen in Cwm-y-Glo in an attempt to understand what obstacles prevent disabled people from using public transport. The message was clear; they rely on the bus service to enable them to travel to work, to socialise and generally to live an independent life so that they are not excluded from society.
- 4.11 To date, over 1300 residents have completed the on-line questionnaire, and over 400 have started, but are yet to complete it. The Department is aiming to have over 2000 completed questionnaires (on-line, during the open days or through the post), by the closing date at the end of April so that we can have a meaningful, relevant and accurate insight into the needs of our residents.

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5. THE NEXT STEP

- 5.1 Once all of the questionnaires have been received back, the Department, in conjunction with Bangor University, will analyse the results and, together with a range of stakeholders, develop a strategy for achieving the review's aims and added social value.

- 5.2 The Head of Department will report on the findings of the engagement and consultation stage to the Scrutiny Committee and the Council's Cabinet before commencing preparing a new network within the county.