

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF RESOURCES DSP – 17TH MAY 2006**8. COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

The Chairman introduced Anthony Delaine-Smith from Delaine Buses, a bus operator based in Bourne, who he had invited to the meeting to provide a bus operator's view of concessionary travel – a category a priority.

Mr Delaine-Smith spoke to the panel on the following:

- Delaine buses was a predominant operator in the south of the district covering the Deepings, Stamford, Bourne, cross-border travel to Peterborough, Rutland and South Holland. The company therefore operated within four concessionary travel schemes.
- It was important that the company had a good working relationship the administrators of each scheme.
- When the concessionary travel schemes were launched, South Kesteven District Council had been controversial in its decision to provide the internal border scheme but this has subsequently become a normal arrangement and was an advantage to the council because the transition to the new system on 31st March 2006 had been seamless.
- Other authorities, which had provided superior, comprehensive travel concession services were now experiencing problems, budget constraints and a confused mixture of services.
- Fare reimbursement can be an issue because providers should be no better or no worse off.
- South Kesteven District Council had recognised the traffic generator factor and that urban and rural factors were different by allocating 20% for urban routes and 0% for rural routes. Other authorities had not done this. In urban areas, traffic generation can be absorbed. Operators can feel in rural areas that they have to complete too much paperwork.
- Looking at the changes to concessionary travel in 2008, he was not confident that administering the free fare scheme would work well. No operator had any fixed idea of how they were going to do this but the current Welsh scheme was the most likely: all remuneration comes from a national level then collected locally. He was pushing for a more national collection system to reduce paperwork and administration costs.

Members of the panel then questioned Mr Delaine-Smith, who as follows:

- Service use had increased by 8% in April. Nationally, some companies had seen 40% increases. He explained that there was some novelty factor causing the increases but they were not necessarily sustainable as people needed a reason to visit places, especially in rural locations.

- National Express services were not included in the travel concessions scheme because it was a long distance coach service.
- Most large operators have electronic systems for issuing tickets to help prevent fraud. Mr Delaine-Smith explained the system for issuing concessionary fares used by his company. The amounts submitted to the council for reimbursement were checked and monitored.
- Bar-coding bus passes would not be beneficial to Delaine Buses because this system was only being trialed in major cities at the moment.

Mr Delaine-Smith was thanked for coming to the meeting. The information he had provided would help in the following discussion on priorities.

The Chairman then invited the panel to consider the report on council priorities circulated with the agenda. The Strategic Director provided further information and circulated a diagram of the proposed changes to the priorities following a gateway review meeting: Street Scene would become a priority B because no further step-changes were required to improve the service and Financial Services would become a category A in light of feedback from the Use of Resources assessment by the Audit Commission in 2005/06.

The category B priority Vulnerable Persons had now become incorporated into Affordable Housing. For Planning and Development Control, it considered that targets had been achieved and sufficient funding invested in this area.

These proposals were supported by the panel, especially in relation to the priority rating of financial services, which would require investment to assist in the achievement of Level 3 of the Use of Resources assessment. It was considered though that "Effective Use of Resources" was a more appropriate heading, given the wider implications of this service.

It was suggested by some members that public toilets remain a category B priority until the new toilets are open. This would help ensure that the decision made would be implemented. However, there was no consensus on this matter.

The Portfolio Holder asked the panel for its views on the diagram as a summary of the report. Members responded positively but asked that some financial information be included in future. This was duly noted.

Conclusions:

- (1) To support the proposed changes to the council's priorities, subject to "Financial Services" being changed to "Effective Use of Resources".**
- (2) To request the Healthy Environment DSP reviews the provision of public conveniences within the district, especially in major villages.**