

## APPENDIX 2 TO BUS SUBSIDY REPORT

### Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee

#### Feedback on the draft Bus Subsidy Policy and Response from the Council in bold font.

The Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee met on 30 June 2015 to consider the new Bus Subsidy Policy ahead of the re-tender of contracts for the operation of subsidised bus routes later in the year. The existing Policy was no longer fit for purpose for prioritising existing routes for subsidy or considering new requests for subsidy.

The meeting was attended by Cllr. A. McClements, Cabinet Member Communities, Regeneration & Transport, the Assistant Director, Neighbourhood & Customer Services and the Group Manager Transport, Strategy and Road Safety.

The draft Policy was reviewed in the context of Arriva's Independent Network Review and uncertainty about the budget pending an announcement from the Chancellor later in the month. Members considered the proposed criteria and score weightings which would be applied to evaluating routes for subsidy.

The Committee provided the following feedback on the draft Policy:

- Members welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft Policy prior to it being considered and agreed by Cabinet. **Noted.**
- Members recognised the good work that had been done by officers and were convinced that the Council was doing its very best on the matter. **Noted. The input from the committee is welcomed and provides confidence that the policy has cross party support.**
- With regard to the scoring process, it was felt that the percentage weighting of the different criteria was about as fair as it could be and no changes were recommended. **Noted.**
- However, it was noted that data underpinning the scoring (the Index of Multiple Deprivation and Census data which records car ownership) are not collected very regularly and Members emphasised that any relevant new or updated information must be fed into the model as soon as published to ensure the accuracy of scoring. **This is noted. It is our understanding that updated data on the Index of Multiple Deprivation is due to be released shortly. As soon as the latest information is released this will be used in any future assessments.**
- The Committee acknowledged the difficulty of attracting new bidders into the Borough but urged the Council to continue to make all efforts to encourage competition for contracts. Members were encouraged by the fact that a route running into the Borough was being run by an alternative provider and it was hoped that it would be possible to attract at least one alternative provider to run at least one of the routes. **Prior to re-tendering the existing contracts the**

**Council held a market engagement event at which no operators expressed an interest. The Council will continue to ensure that any potential operators are engaged and encouraged to bid.**

- Members noted that known savings targets need to be made and that the up and coming budget may also have a bearing on future subsidies and it was agreed that there needed to be a greater emphasis on utilizing the integrated fleet transport. **The Council's current fleet does not have the correct licence or ticket machines in order to operate commercially. As such the Council could not operate subsidised routes using the current fleet set up however this could be considered as part of any review of the integrated fleet however it would require additional investment into this area. Cllr McClements will be meeting with internal fleet providers to share potential options for service delivery**
- It was acknowledged that Arriva is a private operator entirely independent of the Council but that decisions about commercial routes may have a bearing on Council decisions about subsidised routes and that the Council should continue to develop a co-operative working relationship with Arriva. However, Members were concerned by the lack of local accountability of private operators and that there is no legal requirement for them to consult on route changes. Members expressed concerns about the potential impact of route changes and the speed of implementation proposed by Arriva's Independent Review of the Network and strongly recommended that the Council and elected Members do everything possible to make the public aware of the information sessions being held by Arriva so that residents could express their views directly to Arriva. The Committee was pleased to hear that information about Arriva's review had been given prominence on the Council's website. **The Council has undertaken robust lobbying of Arriva, local MP's, the Traffic Commissioner, the Secretary of state and the Shadow Secretary of State for Transport regarding Arriva's proposed changes. The Council has ensured that the latest information is provided on the Council's website including a summary of changes, a link to Arriva's website which includes route maps and timetables as well as frequently asked questions. The dates of the information sessions have also been circulated to members and Parish and Town Council's. The Council will continue to lobby Arriva and Central Government on this matter.**