
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE DWYFOR AREA COMMITTEE 01-03-13

Present: Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Chairman)
Councillor John Brynmor Hughes (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Anwen Davies, Aled Evans, Gweno Glyn, Simon Glyn, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Peter Read, Liz Saville Roberts, W. Gareth Roberts, Angela Ann Russell, Eirwyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams, R.H. Wyn Williams and Robert J. Wright.

Also present: Aled Davies (Head of Regulatory Department), Dafydd P. Lewis (Corporate Director), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Chief Engineer – Transportation and Street Care), Iwan Evans (Legal Service Manager), Eluned Williams (Senior Ancillary Services Officer, Education Department), Ceri Hughes (Contracts Officer), Llinos Roberts (Public and Community Transport Officer), Bethan Rowlands (Transport Co-ordinator) and Ioan Hughes (Members and Scrutiny Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Stephen W. Churchman, Michael Sol Owen, Owain Williams and Jason Humphreys

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

2. DWYFOR AREA PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND EDUCATION TRANSPORT SERVICES

a) The Corporate Director, Dafydd P. Lewis, set out the context and explained that the work being undertaken was not limited to the Dwyfor Area. By following the procedure of re-tendering for transport services in each area in turn, it was intended to have an overview of transport arrangements in the whole of Gwynedd.

b) It was noted that changes were happening regionally and nationally. Consequently, it was considered that the work, in terms of looking at the transport arrangements in Gwynedd, was of value so that the Council had control over what was happening in the County prior to discussions being held with a regional body which would have influence in the future.

c) The Head of Regulatory Department reported that the work of looking at transport elements had started as long as five years ago. This had led to the current situation where the process of re-tendering across the County was being followed. It was added that great emphasis was being placed on integrating various elements of transport, with the best use being made of the available resources.

ch) It was added that the changes made in relation to integrating the Council's transport provision had been independently assessed and, although there was room for improvement, it was seen that much of the work which had not

been done in some authorities had been done, or was at least in the pipeline in Gwynedd.

d) The Head of Regulatory Department added that he had already reported to the Audit Committee regarding his concerns about historical contract arrangements in Gwynedd. He emphasised that he was referring to the County as a whole and he believed that there were many ad-hoc contracts in place and that there had not been a re-tendering process for over twenty years in relation to some services.

dd) Members emphasised that the purpose of the meeting was to consider transport to schools and that priority should be given to the safety of children.

e) In response to further comments, officers noted that the information regarding some services which had not been re-tendered for over twenty years were mainly linked with public transport and that transport to schools was being adapted as and when needed. In addition, it was noted that public transport and transport to schools were being integrated where appropriate in order to ensure best value for money.

Furthermore, it was emphasised that reviews were being undertaken in order to ensure that every pupil entitled to education transport did receive it.

f) The Chief Engineer – Transportation and Street Care explained that tenders were currently being submitted for packages of work which could include public transport and education transport. This could offer better value for money.

It was further noted that a more effective service could be provided and savings secured without interrupting services.

g) In terms of consultation, it was noted that officers had met with councillors and representatives of bus companies and a promise had been made that the tendering results would be presented to the Area Committee prior to the contracts being set.

ng) It was confirmed that the closing date for submitting tenders had passed and that it was intended to commence the services after Easter. A further report would be submitted to the Area Committee on 18 March.

h) Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed by a member who noted that a step taken to do away with the bus service through Garn Fadryn had proven that no consideration had been given to the location of the home of every learner in relation to the location of the school.

i) Furthermore, he referred to comments made by the Chief Engineer – Transportation and Street Care noting that he had travelled along roads leading to Ysgol Botwnnog and that it appeared that the roads were not suitable for pupils to walk to school. The member added that the officer had stated that he would go as far as saying that every pupils within the Ysgol Botwnnog catchment area was entitled to education transport, with the exception of those living in Botwnnog itself. The member emphasised that he had not received a clear interpretation of these comments.

In response, the officer noted that the conversation between him and the member had been held in relation to the journey between Garn Fadryn and Ysgol Botwnnog and that his initial opinion had been that parts of the road

were dangerous. He emphasised that he had made the comments in relation to this road only and not all the roads to Ysgol Botwnnog.

l) The same member drew specific attention to the policies which existed and he made the following main points:-

- that the school transport methods could not be changed during an educational year unless there was an emergency, such as road works which would make it necessary;
- that the education transport procedure needed to be reviewed an educational year in advance;
- that consultation needed to be held with the schools, parents and even the pupils so that they could contribute to the review;
- that consultation of this type had not happened until he had asked the Head of Regulatory Department to contact the schools;
- that any intention to change arrangements after Easter meant that the Council should complete a risk assessment on the road in question.

m) Several members made further comments noting:-

- i) that some pupils were expected to walk quite a distance along roads considered dangerous, in order reach collection points;
- ii) that a risk assessment had shown that some rural roads in Llŷn were dangerous and that it was impossible to differentiate between such rural roads;
- iii) some parents could move their children to receive their education at a different school in order to avoid transport problems and that rural schools could suffer because of this;
- iv) that the situation of families in relation to paying for transport should be considered;
- v) that it was not always possible for pupils to take advantage of the empty seats scheme which would give them an opportunity to pay for the journey to school;
- vi) having fewer buses carrying children to the schools could lead to dangers with more cars near school entrances.

n) The Cabinet Member for the Environment noted that it was the councillors who were responsible for the policies and that they should be changed if they were not acceptable.

He believed that the Council acted in accordance with the policies and that the companies had flexibility to respond to them.

o) In response, a member noted that the national policy and guidelines stated that the Council had a responsibility to provide transport to schools free of charge if the road was dangerous, and he did not wish to see this being changed.

r) The officers responded appropriately to the comments made, and it was confirmed that a further report would be submitted for consideration at the Dwyfor Area Committee meeting on 18 March.

The meeting commenced at 2pm and concluded at 4.05pm.