

**Extract from the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 29 June 2016 at 10:00 am in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, Ipswich.**

### **Call In on Cabinet Decision on Ipswich Park and Ride**

The Committee considered a report at Agenda Item 5, setting out: a decision made by the Cabinet on 14 June 2016 in relation to Ipswich Park and Ride; the reasons why the decision had been called in; and the response by the Director of Resource Management to the call-in. The Committee was asked to consider whether the grounds for calling-in the decision (when considered against the principles set out in the County Council's Constitution (Part 2, paragraph 13.7)) were sufficient for the matter to be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

The Chairman welcomed the following people, who were asked to provide evidence:-

Councillor Sandy Martin, proposer of the call-in

Councillor Leonard Jacklin, seconder of the call-in

Councillor James Finch, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Aidan Dunn, Assistant Director, Procurement and Passenger Transport, Resource Management

Belinda Godbold, Business Development Specialist

The Committee was also addressed by Councillor David Ellesmere in respect of this item under Agenda Item 1, Public Participation Session.

### Consideration of Call-In

On 14 June 2016, Agenda Item 7, to which this minute refers, was considered by the Cabinet. The Cabinet's decision was as follows:

- a. To approve the principles of the new operating model for the Ipswich Park and Ride bus service as set out in paragraph 25 of the Cabinet Report.
- b. To delegate authority to the Director of Resource Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to finalise the arrangements for the new bus service, and organise the smooth transition from the existing arrangements to the new model.
- c. To delegate authority to the Director of Resource Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to undertake an options appraisal to determine the best use of the sites to minimise their net running costs, and implement that option.

**Decision:** On a vote being taken, 10 members voted in favour of referring the decision back to the Cabinet and 1 member abstained.

The voting indicated that the majority view of the Committee was to refer the decision back to Cabinet with a request that Cabinet consider additional recommendations (as follows), in addition to those recommendations set out in the original report:-

- i) that a Memorandum of Understanding with bus operators be agreed before notice was served on the existing Park and Ride contract and;
- ii) to agree that, if the Park and Ride services had to close, consultation would take place and a further decision by Cabinet would be required.

**Reason for the Decision:**

Those members who were in favour of referring the matter back to Cabinet voted to do so in light of the evidence received:-

- i) The Committee was concerned that paragraph 39 of the original Cabinet report set out the next steps to progress the project, but it did not make it clear in which order these steps would be taken. In light of the proposal to bring the new service into effect in January 2017, and the contractual requirement to give six months' notice, the Committee considered it was unclear from the information presented to Cabinet whether notice would be served on the existing service before the viability of the replacement service had been established with the bus operators. The Committee received re-assurances from the Cabinet Member and officers present at the meeting that notice would not be served on the existing Park and Ride contract (step e)) until steps a) to d) had been completed. However, the Committee did not consider that this was made sufficiently clear in the original information presented to Cabinet at the time of making its decision.
- ii) The Committee noted the concerns raised by stakeholders that the principles set out in paragraph 25 of the original Cabinet report did not make it clear whether infrastructure improvements would be put in place before the new service commenced. Evidence presented to the Committee suggested these concerns had not been fully communicated to Cabinet, despite a request from at least one stakeholder to do so.

The original Cabinet report acknowledged that “[bus] operators are unlikely to be prepared to operate the new model if these [infrastructure] changes are not made, otherwise the likely loss of passengers will mean the commercial operation will not be viable”.

In the absence of any evaluation of the feasibility of the infrastructure improvements, or timescales associated with the works, the Committee considered it was not possible for Cabinet to know which improvements would be implemented or by when, and therefore come to an informed view about whether the proposal for the new service was viable. The Committee was therefore concerned that, in light of the delegated authority agreed within the report for future decisions about implementation of the proposals, it was possible that the service could close without any further consultation or transparent decision making process.

The Committee received assurances from the Cabinet Member and officers that the original Cabinet report did not give delegated power to the Directorate of Resource Management and Cabinet Member to close the service. However, the Committee considered this should have been made clear in the original Cabinet report.

**Alternative options:** The Committee could have rejected the call-in and endorsed the Cabinet decision process.

**Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interest received.

**Dispensations:** None reported.