

Minute of Meeting



Petitions Committee

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday 20 December 2016	10.00 am	Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN

Present:

Councillor Coventry (Chair)	Councillor Baxter
Councillor Muirhead	Councillor Rosie

Also Present:

Mrs Steadman	Petitioner
Mrs Brooks	Accompanying Petitioner
Councillor Bryant	
Councillor Imrie	
Councillor Pottinger	

In attendance:

Ricky Moffat	Head of Commercial Operations
Verona MacDonald	Democratic Services Team Leader

1. Apologies

- 1.1 An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Russell.

2. Order of Business

The order of business was as per the Agenda circulated.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of 27 September 2017 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

5. Reports

Prior to consideration of the foregoing, the Chair, for the benefit of the Petitioner, outlined the role of the Committee and what action it could take.

Report No.	Report Title	Presented by:
5.1	Bus Service - Auchendinny.	Ricky Moffat
Outline of report and summary of discussion		
<p>There was submitted report dated 9 December 2016, by the Director, Resources incorporating a petition from Mrs A. Steadman calling upon the Council to ensure the Number 40 bus service which is used by persons residing at Auchendinny is not withdrawn; advising that a recent survey undertaken by the Council relating to the usage of the service is understood to be inaccurate and; requesting that the Nos. 37 or 15 buses be re-routed through Auchendinny</p> <p>The Committee then heard from Mrs Steadman who advised that the community of Auchendinny now had only one bus service, namely the No. 40. She advised she lived adjacent to the bus stop and therefore was able to verify the usage which was higher than the survey she understood had been carried out recently. She provided information on behalf of another senior citizen living in the community who is unable to walk up to the main road and now feels she is a prisoner in her house due to the lack of public transport. She stated that the lack of public transport had affected the operation of the very successful Glencorse Community Centre which was the hub of the community given that there was no shop or public house. She referred to the loss to the Centre of 2 persons with learning disabilities who had worked there up until the loss of the previous service and now were excluded from doing so because it was not safe for them to walk down from the main road by themselves. Further she mentioned the difficulties experienced by senior citizens from Penicuik who attend the Centre for the pensioner's lunch on a Tuesday. She stated that the Centre helps to prevent loneliness and the feeling of social exclusion which affect senior citizens.</p>		

Further, she advised that for the majority of persons in the community who need to use the bus service it is not suitable to walk in the dark for half a mile. She advised that a bus service which connected to Edinburgh was needed. She also mentioned the young families who have moved into the 150 new houses built at Dalmore Mill and who rely heavily on the goodwill of others for lifts and that the lack of a bus service has in effect cut off a rural community. Mrs Steadman also narrated issues some of the senior citizens were currently experiencing with the ring and go service and delays in issuing the new bus passes.

The Committee then heard from Mrs Brooks who advised that she was attending in support of the Petition. She advised she used public transport to go to Loanhead where she had family. She advised that the Nos. 37 and 40 did not need to go to Roslin because they were primarily used by tourists who had no wish to stop in the village and in fact the buses did not stop there. Further she advised that the community of Auchendinny had a greater need for public transport given its size and location.

Ricky Moffat then addressed the Committee. He provided further information relating to the "Ring and Go" service operated by the Council and undertook to look into issues raised by Mrs Steadman during her presentation. He advised that the bus service through Auchendinny was operated by Lothian Buses and outwith the control of the Council; that the survey referred to in the Petition would have been a survey undertaken by the bus company, the results of which are not shared with the Council and; that the service had always operated on a commercial basis. He advised that having been notified of the Petition he had approached the bus company and asked them what could be done. They had provided him with 2 options and advised that neither could be provided by using the No. 40 and therefore would require another bus to be put into the service. Option 1 would provide a peak hours service Monday to Saturday, with 3 journeys in each direction morning and evening at a cost of approximately £104k per annum and Option 2 would provide an hourly service Monday to Saturday 7 am to 7 pm and Sunday 9 am to 7 pm at a cost of approximately £151k per annum. He further advised that using Option 1 would require 90 return journeys per day to cover the cost.

There followed a general discussion on the detail of the Petition and the subsequent issues raised during which Members expressed concern about the effect to the community as described by Mrs Steadman and Mrs Brooks. Reference was also made to the recent Briefing Session for Members by Lothian Buses where the bus company had advised that they sometimes operate services which are not profitable but are required as a social service. Members requested that the bus company be asked to name the services in Midlothian which fell into that category.

In summing-up Mrs Steadman also advised that First Bus run services which go through Auchendinny but do not stop and wondered whether contact could be made with First Bus to investigate whether they could provide a service to the community.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- (a) to pass the Petition to Lothian Buses with a recommendation that they look again at the service taking into account the need to prevent social exclusion;
- (b) request Lothian Buses to provide information as to which routes in Midlothian they operate without profit as a social service and;
- (c) contact is made with First Bus in relation to the services they operate which go through Auchendinny with a view to ascertaining whether they would amend the service to stop in the village.

Action – Director, Resources/Head of Commercial Operations

The Chair thanked Mrs Steadman and Mrs Brooks for attending.

The meeting terminated at 10.55 am.