

MINUTES of MEETING of the MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL PETITIONS

COMMITTEE held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, on Tuesday, 4 November 2014 at 10.00 am.

Present :- Councillors, Coventry (Chair), Baxter, Muirhead, and Rosie.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Russell and de Vink.

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Procedure

The Committee noted the procedure to be followed in hearing petitions as approved by the Council on 25 September 2012 and amended by the Council on 5 November 2013.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of Meetings of 25 June 2013 and 24 June 2014 were submitted and approved.

3 Petition: No. 328 Bus Service

There was submitted report dated 27 October 2014, by the Director, Resources, incorporating:-

- (a) A petition from Mrs A Murray, 23 Edmonstone Road, Danderhall, on behalf of residents of Danderhall, Newton Village and Millerhill calling upon the Council to reinstate the No.328 Bus Service which had previously served these communities; and
- (b) Comments on the issues raised in the petition from the Head of Commercial Operations.

The Committee then heard from Mrs Murray in support of the petition. In particular she drew attention to:-

- The “Ring and Go” service, which had replaced the No.328 Bus Service, was considered not to be fit for purpose in that it did not serve the residents of Danderhall due to the bus services being available to them on the A7, resulting in a number of elderly or disabled residents who were unable to walk to the A7 and who had therefore relied on the No.328 bus service, becoming housebound and in some cases this had resulted in residents suffering from depression;
- Following a public meeting in Danderhall under the auspices of the Community Council, it had been agreed to further approach the Council with a view to trying to secure a re-routing of either the No.30 or No.33 or No.49 bus routes via Millerhill- Newton Village-Edmonstone Road,

Danderhall- and the Wisp on an hourly basis, which would , in effect, reinstate the No.328 bus service for these communities;

- The “Ring and Go” service was only of very limited benefit to those who qualified for its use, in that passengers were conveyed only to the nearest point to where public transport could be accessed. This often resulted in passengers being transported to the “Park and Ride” facility at Sheriffhall , which for some elderly passengers was a source of concern, particularly when travelling at night;
- It was understood that Lothian Region Transport (LRT) may be willing to look at a solution to the problems outlined but only in the context of the provision of bus services which would serve the new Railway Station to be provided at Shawfair;
- The restriction on eligibility to use the “Ring and Go” service had had an adverse effect on the economy of Dalkeith, with fewer residents of Danderhall, Newton Village and Millerhill able visit shopping outlets.

In response to the petition and the points raised in support thereof, the Head of Commercial Operations advised :-

- The No.328 bus service had been withdrawn, as a result of Edinburgh Coach Lines deciding to cease providing the service on commercial grounds;
- It had not proved possible to secure a replacement service provider nor to reach an agreement with East Lothian Council on the continued funding of the No.328 Route, which included Musselburgh;
- The cost of a wholly subsidised route by Midlothian Council was estimated at £150,000 whilst the budget provision was only £100,000;
- Discussions with LRT on providing a replacement service had not proved to fruitful although they had indicated that they would be willing to review the situation in the late Autumn of 2014; and
- To date, there had not been any negative feedback on the “Ring and Go” service from the communities which it served.

Arising from questions from Elected Members, the following points were particularly noted, viz:-

- (a) The decisions made to date by LRT on this issue were based solely on commercial factors; and
- (b) There was scope to resolve the issues highlighted by the petition when bus services to serve the Shawfair Rail Station fell to be debated but in any event, bus operators would approach any proposals on a purely commercial basis.

Decision

- (i) That the Head of Commercial Operations again approach Lothian Regional Transport with a view to providing a bus service to serve the communities of Danderhall, Newton Village and Millerhill formerly provided via the no.328 bus service;
- (ii) That a progress report be submitted to the Cabinet in due course; and
- (iii) That the petitioners be kept appraised of progress/developments.

(Action: Head of Commercial Operations).

The meeting terminated at 11.47 am.