

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 20th July, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr M.D. Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr K. Dibble (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr S. Trussler

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th June, 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

8. STAGECOACH

The Committee welcomed Aaron Hodgkiss, Operations Manager, Aldershot and Sudib Gurung, Assistant Operations Manager, Aldershot, at Stagecoach, who were in attendance to addresses matters raised regarding Stagecoach services, performance delivery and challenges, recent changes and potential impacts from changes to service funding.

In addition, Members had been apprised of a current residents survey, undertaken by the Labour Group, on changes to bus services. The survey deadline was yet to be reached, however preliminary findings had been shared with the Committee prior to the meeting.

County Councillor Bill Withers was also present at the meeting, and had been invited to join the discussions.

Members received the presentation from Mr Hodgkiss, which covered;

- Operations – It was noted that the Aldershot depot had been fully staffed with 196 employees, of which, 153 were drivers, this was despite there being a national shortage of drivers. It was also advised that Stagecoach's fleet of buses, which carried 480,000 passengers per month locally, was expected to be sustainably fuelled or fully electric by 2035.

- Data on revenue and passenger numbers – it was advised that following the pandemic, concessionary travel had been slowest to recover. Fare paying travel had recovered well on most routes.
- Current Challenges – Road works and traffic delays were key challenges for the bus services. Understanding post pandemic working pattern and hybrid working, to identify growth areas and effectively serve the community was also noted as a challenge for the operator.
- Bus Station closure – the closure of the Aldershot Bus Station in early May, 2023, had presented some challenges, including temporary traffic orders in Aldershot Town Centre and roadside parking. However, some positives had emerged from the closure, including timetable improvements and improved reliability, the creation of opportunity for change and the provision of more centrally located stops for shoppers. The team continued to manage customer feedback and concerns and were aware of a number of issues relating to accessibility to the Railway Station.
- Future Plans – It was noted that Stagecoach had met with and would continue to engage with the Leader of the Council on local issues and would also be meeting with Labour representatives to discuss the full findings of the survey once the deadline had passed. It was also noted that the Santa Bus would be returning in the run up to Christmas with the aim of raising funds for local charities.

The Committee raised a number of queries, as follows:

- No. 9/10 Service (Voyager House) – it was noted that the current No. 9 only ran till 3pm, causing issues for those attending medical appointments in the afternoon at Voyager House, the No. 10 served the area later in the day but the walk to Voyager House was longer. It was noted that these services would be looked at to see if any changes could be made to improve access to the medical facility.
- Railway Station – data was requested on the routes servicing Aldershot Railway Station. It was noted that the information came from Stagecoach's Commercial Office and some work would need to be carried out to understand the needs and patterns of passengers using the service. Consideration could then be given to improving accessibility to the Railway Station for all users, taking account of road networks, suitable stopping places, accessibility needs etc. County Cllr Withers, advised that he would raise the issues around accessibility links to the Railway Station by bus with Hampshire County Council.
- Stagecoach App/Realtime Information – cancelled services did not show on the App or Realtime Information boards. It was advised that removal of cancelled services had been reliant on the Control Team. Removal could be delayed if a Controller was engaged in conversation regarding a breakdown or incident causing the delay and subsequent cancellation.

- Engagement with Ward Members – Mr Hodgkiss encouraged communication and engagement with local ward Members to address issues, it was felt important to build relationships, understand bus service issues and provide solutions for the community.
- Aldershot Town Centre Stops – The Committee asked that consideration be given to the distance between stops in Aldershot town centre and encouraged better communications for users such as posters in local venues/publications (i.e. Libraries, The Grub Hub, Arena magazine) Realtime Information boards, ambassadors/volunteers etc. In addition, Mr Hodgkiss advised that the current use of Court Road, Aldershot, had been causing issue for both bus drivers and taxi drivers and consideration was being given to alternative options for this area.

ACTION:

What	Whom	When
Further data on services serving the Aldershot Railway Station	Aaron Hodgkiss, Operations Manager, Stagecoach	August, 2023
Data on commercial and subsidised routes across the area	Aaron Hodgkiss, Operations Manager, Stagecoach	August, 2023
Multi-Agency meeting involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagecoach • South Western Railways • Hampshire County Council • Hampshire Constabulary • Rushmoor Borough Council to address concerns, with all stakeholders, relating to access to the Railway Station by bus services in the Borough.	Ian Harrison, Executive Director	September, 2023
It was recommended that consideration be given to funding options for additional Realtime Information Boards and Ambassadors to be located in Aldershot Town Centre to assist users in navigating their journey.	Ian Harrison, Executive Director	September, 2023

The Chairman thanked Mr Hodgkiss and Mr Gurung for their presentation.

9. COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN - PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee welcomed Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive who was in attendance to report on progress made in delivering against the Council's performance management framework and Quarter 4 of the Council's Business Plan 2022-25.

The Council's Performance Management Framework, which had been refreshed in June 2023, was developed to act as a tool to strengthen performance management within the authority and to ensure delivery against priorities. The framework provided a consistent approach to the way performance and quality was managed, monitored, reviewed and reported across the organisation.

Performance management was in place to monitor outputs and performance indicators (PIs), alongside being a tool to drive improvement on performance across the organisation. It was advised that performance management should not be considered as separate from the day-to-day management of the Council and should be used as a tool to plan, review and revise cycles over different timescales and at different levels within the organisation. For example, there was:

- a long-term cycle that set and reviewed the Council's priorities;
- annual service planning and target setting; and
- quarterly collection and review of performance information

The quarterly performance monitoring cycle consisted of a number of stages, starting with data requests from services at the end of the quarter. This was followed by a review stage including, engagement with Portfolio Holders and the Corporate Management Team. Cabinet then reviewed and approved the quarterly monitoring documents before the Committee considered the document and identified areas for more in depth scrutiny.

The Committee were advised on progress in delivering the 2022/23 Performance Management Framework. It was advised that alongside the approval of the quarterly monitoring and the annual report (in quarter 4), an update on the Council's key strategies and plans had been presented to the Cabinet in quarters one and three. All services had produced service plans for 2023/24 and the Council Plan 2023-26 had been agreed. In addition, a Performance Management audit had been carried out with an outcome of Assurance Level – Substantial, with a number of recommendations to take forward.

Ms Barker, reported on the vision for the Office of Local Government (Oflog). The vision had been to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government, and to support improvement. To understand local government performance, Oflog would draw on the best available data and evidence, would improve access to data increasing transparency and fostering accountability – while also highlighting excellence and showcasing success and, would play a significant role in wider work to establish a stronger accountability framework, including identifying and supporting at-risk councils. A watching brief would be undertaken on the development of Oflog's work.

Moving forward for 2023/24, quarterly monitoring would continue with quarter one due to Cabinet in August, 2023. Services would be asked to refresh their service plans and the Performance Management Audit recommendations made in 2022/23, would be incorporated into the framework.

The Committee were asked to consider how their role in reviewing the Council Plan monitoring could be developed.

The Committee discussed the report and raised a number of queries and comments,

- Data – need to ensure meaningful and accurate, to allow the Committee to drill down into what isn't working effectively. It was suggested that areas for scrutiny could be considered at the next Progress Group meeting.
- Dashboard – information at a glance. It was noted that the Team were working on options for a dashboard with the Transformation Task and Finish Group.
- Task and Finish Group – use of smaller groups to look at areas identified in more detail and engage with relevant Service Managers
- Work Plan – consider the list identified on the Committee's Work Plan and link to Council Plan where appropriate

ACTION:

What	Whom	When
Invite Rachel Barker to attend the next meeting of the Progress Group to look in more detail at areas for consideration	Adele Taylor, Committee Administrator	September, 2023
To consider items identified on the Work Plan and how they fit within the Council Plan	Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive	September, 2023

The Chairman thanked Ms Barker for her report.

10. WORK PLAN

The Committee noted the current Work Plan and an additional meeting on 7th September, 2023 to discuss the recent Notice of Motion brought to the Council Meeting in July, 2023 regarding the Armed Forces community and veteran engagement, and Gurkha Welfare.

The meeting closed at 9.18 pm.

CLLR M.D. SMITH (CHAIRMAN)
