

Derry City and Strabane District Council

Business and Culture Committee (Open)

Minutes of Meeting of the Business and Culture Committee (Open) held in the Guildhall on Tuesday 13 March 2018 at 4.00 pm

Present:- Members of the Committee - Councillor Logue (Chair); Aldermen ; Councillors McKnight, Ald R Hamilton, Ramsey, Warke, Boyle, Cusack, Fleming, McMahon, O'Reilly and Reilly.

Non-Member of the Committee:-

In Attendance:- .

BC52/15 Notice and Summons of Meeting

The Director of Business and Culture read the Notice and Summons for the meeting.

BC53/15 Member Attendance and Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor McGuire.

BC54/15 Declarations of Members' Interests

Councillors Logue and Fleming declared an interest in Item 13 – Rural Development Programme Update.

Councillor Reilly declared an interest in Item 18 – Trade and Investment Services NE USA as a member of the North West Regional Development Group.

Alderman Ramsey, Councillors Boyle, McKnight and Reilly declared an interest in Item 19 – PEACE IV – Minority Inclusion – Tender.

BC55/15 Deputations: Hannon Coaches - Update on proposed express services

The Committee received Mr Owen McLaughlin, Group Marketing Manager and Mr Jonny Boyle, Group Head of Operations who gave a joint power-point presentation on Hannon Coach's proposed Express Service.

Mr Boyle stated that Hannon Coach had been considering the coach market in Northern Ireland as no company appeared to have addressed the apparent gap in the market. He advised that the Company's initial application for a licence to provide an Express Service on the Derry/Belfast route had been refused by the Department. However this had now been returned for further consideration. He stated that he wished to provide some background for Members as to why an Express Service would be good for Derry, Northern Ireland and Hannon Coach.

The presentation then highlighted the following areas:

Hannon Coach Strategic Express Services:

Good for the economy, good for the public and good for the environment

Who We Are.....

Hannon Transport - employs over 250 staff – expected turnover in 2017 £335M

4 Key Points.....

1. What we are proposing

- The current lack of an Express Service does not align with the key Regional Development Strategy aim.
- At present, Derry has NO Express Coach Service and NO direct, express rail service.

2. How this aligns with PfG, RDS and all policies and regulations

Trying to encourage modal shift without Express Services is like putting a round peg in a square hole.....

- When we initially looked at this we had primarily thought about modal shift with the addition of tourists and people visiting friends and relatives but there have been so many people contacting us to say how useful it would be to make it more comfortable for people making one-off or regular journeys to Belfast for hospital treatment.

3. Why Express Services are needed and the benefits they will bring

Key Benefits

- Provide the strategic Express Services which are necessary to encourage modal shift and relieve congestion.
- Contribute to a sustainable public transport network across Northern Ireland.
- Encourage significant modal shift.
- Free up investment into other bus and rail services and innovations.
- Ultimately, improve connectivity between main towns and benefit the people and businesses within those communities.
- Encourage passengers to utilise Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) for onward (last-mile) journeys.
- Promote Northern Ireland as a modern, accessible tourist destination with viable public transport alternatives.

What if potential demand.....?

- The area is known as Elasticities of Demand
- Similar to the effect of reducing prices to stimulate demand, transport economic holds that similar stimulus of demand can be affected through a number of service improvements

4. Why we believe this is good for Derry City and Strabane District Council

- For many inward investments one of the first criteria to look at will be infrastructure and connectivity.....

Member thanked Mr McLaughlin and Mr Boyle for their presentation and then raised the following issues:

- Queried the proposed extent of wheelchair access and availability on the new coaches and if it would be necessary for wheelchair users to make advance bookings.
- Enquired as to the possibility of concessionary passes being made available.
- In terms of employment and the potential for job creation, enquired if consideration had been given to the inclusion of social clauses to ensure that any posts which were created were occupied by people from the City and district.

- Acknowledged that this matter had been considered previously by Council when concern had been expressed regarding the impact of the Express Service on other transport services currently operating in the rural area.
- Enquired as to the potential impact of the Express Service on numbers using Translink's 212 service and if this could affect its ability to provide a service on its less popular routes and rural routes.
- Queried why the Company were proposing to provide the Express Service on Translink's 212 route as opposed to other routes.
- Requested that figures be made available reflecting the varying journey times between the existing 212 service and an Express Service.
- Referred to the significance of the A6 upgrade in regards to the proposal.
- Referred to the challenge facing Council in terms of protecting non-profitable routes in the rural network and queried the potential of the scheme on this basis.
- Expressed concern that the Express Service which would be a profitable route would have a detrimental impact on Translink who offer a non-profitable route.
- Referred to concerns facing public representatives in terms of concerns in relation to any reduction in Translink's profits and the potential impact on its rural network service.
- Referred to the importance of creating a balance in terms of service provision.
- Raised a possible equality issue in relation to people with disabilities who held a concessionary pass not being able to use the Express Service.
- Stated that this was an extremely positive route and queried what percentage would be targeted at both ends of the journey.
- Queried the Company's pricing policy.
- Enquired if efforts to reduce costs would impact on Drivers' salaries.

Mr McLaughlin and Mr Boyle responded as follows:

- Advised that accessibility was a major issue for Hannon Coach and they sought to provide the best wheelchair accessibility in Europe.
- Advised that vehicles had been secured in the past and that the Company's Managing Director was currently in Holland discussing the possibility of further securing vehicles.
- Stated that it was intended to provide two wheelchair slots in each coach together with low entry levels however they would have to be awarded the route by the Department prior to securing the vehicles.
- Referred to the development process between the route being awarded by the Department and fully facilitated coaches being made

available. However these would be in use as soon as they became available.

- Advised that it was a matter for the Department to determine if concessionary passes could be accepted. From a business perspective this would prove positive and the Company had queried the Department on the likelihood of this being approved.

- Referred to suggestions that the Express Service would attract passengers who regularly used the 212 which would ultimately reduce Translink's revenue and explained that the numbers being targeted would be very small and the network would have to be grown in order for numbers to increase. Explained that if people were inclined to use public transport it was more likely this would be for the initial or final part of the journey and were therefore more likely to use the Translink service.

- Advised that the Express Service would add to the public transport network and grow the market. Most other European Cities had an Express Service which fed into and complimented the overall transport system.

- Stated that Translink currently operated a very good rural service. However many people were discouraged from using public transport for extended journeys particularly given that there were nine stops on its 212 route.

- Reiterated that an Express Service would feed into and compliment the overall public transport network.

- Referred to evidence which would suggest that competition and increased activity would have a positive impact on Translink.

- The introduction of an Express Service could in fact lead to an increased numbers for Translink. If the Express Service was full the overflow could transfer to the Translink service.

- Advised that Hannon Coach would anticipate paying Translink for the use of their bus station from which to operate its service which would ultimately lead to an increase in their revenue.

- Advised that the Company were considering a network of routes across Northern Ireland some of which would prove more profitable than others. The Company were offering an holistic express Northern Ireland service which would prove ultimately beneficial.

- It was anticipated that the introduction of the service would create seventy five jobs in total, 15 of which would be located within the Derry City and Strabane District Council area. It was expected that these jobs which would include Drivers, Cleaners and Sales personnel would be full-time posts.

- Advised that insurance requirements would dictate the types of persons appointed. However in relation to the driver posts it would be a requirement that the proposed candidates held a Bus Driver's Licence

for at least two years which might limit the number of applications received.

- It was being proposed to have three modes of transport train and bus provided by Translink and an Express Coach market, if approved.
- Outlined the potential savings which could be made in terms of journey times and cost from a logistics point of view. It was difficult however to express this on a percentage basis.
- By the introduction of the Express Service it was hoped to improve the transport network in Northern Ireland without having a detrimental impact on Translink.
 - Explained that pricing was determined by the Department. When submitting the application suggested fares had been included. It was anticipated that there would be a £3.50-£5.00 reduction in the Express Service compared to Translink Fares for one-way and day return journeys. However, for certain journeys it would not be possible to compete with Translink. Particularly the multi-trip ticket that was offered by Translink.
- Advised that the Company would not be targeting the commuter market. They were attempting to grow the business on the discretionary and tourist market.
- Whilst not in a position to discuss Translink salaries explained that there was a shortage of experienced bus/coach drivers and in order to attract desirable candidates it would be necessary to offer the best terms and conditions and an overall attractive package in order to be competitive. Assumptions had been made regarding rates of pay however these may have to be reviewed.

Members thanked Mr. McLaughlin and Mr Boyle for their presentation and subsequent debate and they withdrew from the Meeting.

BC56/15 Chairperson's Business

BC56/18 Condolences

The Chairperson extended her condolences to the family of Emmett McClelland who died tragically in a road traffic accident on the Buncrana Road the previous weekend.

BC57/15 Confirmation of the Open Minutes of the Business and Culture Committee held on Tuesday 6 February 2018

The Open Minutes of the Business and Culture Committee Meeting held on February 2018 (BC25/18-BC44/18) were confirmed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

BC58/15 Matters Arising**BC58/18 International Relation Activities (Ref BC33/18)**

In response to a query from Alderman Hussey, the Head of Business explained that the proposed visit to China would involve a delegation from both Council and its education partners including the University of Ulster who had relations with the City of Dalian and the North West Regional College which would concentrate on international student exchanges. He stated that the initial visit would be education and civic based.

Alderman Hussey expressed concern that the Chamber of Commerce and the Foyle Part were not included in the delegation.

The Head of Business advised that these organisations would be welcome to attend in their own capacity. However, this was Council's initial visit to China and it was hoped to ensure it proved worthwhile for all those involved. He stated that there would be follow-up visits when it would be possible to extend the numbers taking part in the visit.

Alderman Hussey referred to a previous Meeting which had taken place when he had assumed it was agreed that these organisations would be considered for inclusion in the visit.

BC59/15 Access Improvement Programme for Cultural Venues - External Support (LOO)

The Director of Business and Culture presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to seek Member approval to formally accept the detailed letters of offer providing additional financial support from the Department for Communities and Public Health Agency (PHA) for the delivery of the Access Improvement Programme targeting cultural venues within DCSDC area.

Councillor McKnight welcomed the proposed development which would prove most beneficial for the City. She referred to the

importance of achieving disability charter status and acknowledged the work to be carried out in this regard.

Councillor O'Reilly also welcomed the coming to fruition of this project.

The Committee

Recommended **that the respective letters of offer from the Department for Communities and Public Health Agency be accepted.**

BC60/15 **Museum & Heritage Service Learning and Engagement Policy Approval**

The Director of Business and Culture presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to update Members and seek approval for the new Learning and Engagement Policy for the Museum and Heritage Services (MHS).

The Committee

Recommended **that Members approve and adopt the MHS Learning and Engagement Policy to be reviewed in five years.**

BC61/15 **Maritime Conference 2019**

The Director of Business and Culture presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to seek approval for Members' support for the development of a major Maritime Conference in association with the University of Ulster and its partners in 2019.

Councillor Boyle said his Party would support the recommendation contained in the report and whilst acknowledging that Members were not in possession of all of the details, appreciated the logic of exploring this possibility particularly given the passion to develop a Maritime Museum and the associated history of the City and district. He said he would welcome information regarding the anticipated number of delegates.

Alderman Hussey, whilst supporting the recommendation contained in the report, expressed concern however, at the suggested “series of bilingual documentaries on the history and heritage of the river” referred to in 3.1, which he assumed to be Irish and English and the key outputs. He referred to the fact that Council currently had a tri-lingual policy and queried if it would not prove more beneficial to provide commentary in all major European languages.

The Director of Business and Culture explained that as the inception of the major Maritime Conference was in its infancy there were no additional details available at this stage.

The Director of Business explained that in terms of the bi-lingual documentaries, this proposal was put forward by the University of Ulster. However, Members’ comments would be fed to the organisers of the event.

The Committee

Recommended that Members’ approval be granted for the development of a major Maritime in association with the University of Ulster and its partners in 2019.

BC62/15 Museum and Visitor Services 5 Year Strategy

The Director of Business and Culture presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was (i) to present to Members the Five Year Strategy for the Museum and Visitor Services (MVS) 2018-2023; and (ii) to review the name of the service in light of internal and external developments to more fully represent the vision and priorities of the service.

Alderman Hussey welcomed the proposed name change to include the word “Heritage” to more fully represent the vision and priorities of the service. He referred to 3.6 of the report which concentrated on the Walled City and said he would like to see the strategy strengthened. Whilst acknowledging that the region had been referred to he expressed concern that there was no specific reference to how the strategy would be regionalised. In conclusion he welcomed the strategy but wish it to be extended.

The Director of Business and Culture pointed out that this related back to a previous presentation made to the Committee. He stated that

Council's Education Programme was outreach based. He stated that the promotion of the Walled City within the Tourism Strategy had been agreed however, it was a matter for Council to extend this outwards in terms of the historic City and its heritage to ensure that it was not just a matter of attracting tourists to the City and region but of ensuring that they were signposted to areas of interest throughout the entire North West.

The Committee

Recommended that (i) Members approve the proposed name changes for the service and (ii) Members approve the content of the Strategy and recommend it is adopted as the way forward for the service up to 2023.

BC63/15 150th Anniversary Celebration of Annie Russell Maunder

The Director of Business and Culture presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to inform Members of the plans to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of local astronomer Annie Russell Maunder in April 2018. This is by way of an update in relation to a Motion tabled at the February Council Meeting.

In response to a query from Councillor McMahon, the Director of Business and Culture advised that the Team were currently working on the Programme. However, he undertook to email Members when more information became available to ensure that they were kept informed of developments.

The Committee

Recommended that Members note the plans to mark this significant anniversary and recognise the achievements of Annie Russell Maunder and promote the forthcoming plans to erect a blue plaque in her honour.

BC64/15 Rural Development Programme Update

The Head of Business presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report

was to update Members on the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 which includes current calls under the Rural Business Investment Scheme and the Rural Basic Services Scheme as well as an update on the other schemes.

Members noted the content of the report.

BC65/15 Business Boost

The Head of Business presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with a progress update on Business Boost.

The Chairperson congratulated the Rural Development Team on the work carried out in relation to Business Boost.

BC66/15 Request for Pre-Meeting

Alderman Hussey referred to a meeting which had taken place the previous day between himself and Councillor Boyle and representatives from the Arts Council and local Arts representatives to discuss the issue of venues and funding when there was a suggestion that a pre-meeting could be arranged with Officers from the Committee prior to its April Meeting. He subsequently requested that an informal pre-meeting be arranged prior to the next Meeting of Committee with the representatives from the local Arts community and the Arts Council to allow an open exchange of views between all concerned.

The Chairperson said she had no difficulty with the suggestion of a pre-meeting and suggested a possible presentation thereon to the following Meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Boyle suggested that the pre-meeting be arranged for 2.30 prior to the April Meeting of Committee and urged all Members of Committee to attend.

The Meeting terminated at 5.45 pm

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

The Committee Recommended that the meeting move into confidential business.

Delete as appropriate