

Home to School Transport - Policy Panel

Date: **21 July 2020**

Time: **1.15pm**

Venue **Skype**

Note: in response to current Government Regulations this meeting is being held as a virtual meeting for councillors and accessible via Skype. Public speaking and engagement opportunities will be made available.

The meeting will also be webcast live to the internet.

Members: **Councillors:** Clare (Chair), Grimshaw, Hills, Mears, O'Quinn and Wares

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AGENDA

PART ONE

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14 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

15 ACTION NOTES

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Action notes of the last meeting held on the 2 July 2020.

16 13:20-14:20 FOCUSED DISCUSSION 1

This September and future service considerations.

17 14:20-14:25 BREAK

18 14:25-15:30 FOCUSED DISCUSSION 2

Last September.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact , (01273 291006, email mark.wall@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Date of Publication - Date Not Specified

**DRAFT Action notes and panel recommendations from the HTST Member
Policy Panel
02 July 2020**

Present:

Members: Cllrs Clare, Wares, O’Quinn, Mears, Hills, Grimshaw.

Officers: Georgina Clarke-Green, Jo Lyons, Regan Delf, Carolyn Bristow, Natasha Watson, Giles Rossington, Chris Pugh.

Guests:

Diana Boyd from PaCC

Operators:

Southern Taxis

Brighton Taxi 4U

Community Transport

Ace Travel

Streamline

Item	Discussion and agreed actions
Welcome and introductions	Cllr Clare opened the meeting and welcomed Cllr Grimshaw who has newly joined the panel.
Procedural business	The Members agreed to hold a Part 2 section of the meeting towards the end of the session.
Minutes of the last meeting	<p>The minutes of the last meeting were agreed with the exception of Cllr Wares requesting an addition was made to clarify what the secured funding was for PaCC referred to in the notes and confirm for how long. Agreed. Also, a year to be corrected from 2015 to 2020.</p> <p>Action: Carolyn to update minutes. Updated version provided here:</p> <p></p> <p>DRAFT Minutes of HTST Member Policy</p> <p>Cllr Clare summarised the matters arising from the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Papers were shared in good time for this meeting - Members will be invited to view the online training once it is ready. - Regan had progressed discussions around VPAs - Now the guidance is out, Regan can arrange the planning session with operators, schools and PaCC reps. - Cllr Clare and others raised the agreed concerns at CYPS committee last week – aided by the letter submitted by Cllr Wares and Mears.

	<p>Andy Cheeseman commented that the arrangements for recruiting VPAs has been improved with access to the council’s recruitment pages. The timescales are getting tight now for having everything in place for September.</p> <p>Cllr Wares referred to the recommendations sections of the minutes and commented that there were a number of matters still be discussed by the Panel and where there were outstanding requests for information e.g. breakdown of budget overspend.</p> <p>Action: Cllr Clare agreed to review and collate outstanding actions from previous minutes.</p>
<p>Focussed discussion 1: Arrangements for September and the wider action plan.</p> <p>Relevant papers published with the agenda: the action plan (plus update issued as addendum), the LGA independent review report and the draft coproduction document. .</p>	<p>Regan provided an overview of the current plans for September. The guidance to help finalise the plans has now been issued by the government. The ask is that school transport commissioners and providers follow the guidance as far as is possible – in that it is advisable to allow for consistent groups of children, use protective measures and manage boarding and disembarking in safe ways. The service is always operating with physical distancing and protective measures in place. Allowing for children to travel and school within bubbles is much harder to achieve. Action: Regan to discuss with the special school headteachers the potential for schools to align to transport groupings, although the panel recognised that it would be difficult for schools.</p> <p>Cllr Mears asked for reassurance that there would be senior officer presence in the last few weeks in August, to allow for final plans to be put in place. Jo Lyons explained that a rota was in place to ensure that would be covered.</p> <p>The Members discussed whether there would be enough capacity in the system to manage the demand in September. Operators commented that on the whole they felt vehicles and drivers were available, the plan necessitates VPAs being recruited, trained and DPS cleared in time to start in early September.</p> <p>Regan was asked whether final numbers were known yet for September, she explained that no, not all decisions have been made yet about which children may be eligible.</p> <p>Cllr Wares thanked the Green Group for their support at the recent CYPS committee regarding the need to continue the work of this Panel. He also highlighted an officer comment in an upcoming P&R paper around the overspend occurring due to operators returning routes at short notice. He felt that discussion had been had previously and that parties had agreed it was more complex. He said that operators have previously said that they can deliver what the council needs them to, but they do need the right amount of</p>

lead in time to prepare. This was an area of concern that Cllr Wares wanted to keep highlighted.

Cllr Wares asked if there was assurance that all vehicles operating were fully compliant with the blue book. Regan replied that things were being monitored very closely. The licensing team are coordinating spot checks and a round of contract review meetings are starting next week so there is assurance.

Regan went on to present some of the detail from the action plan. She explained that several members of the PaCC steering group had been working with her on the review and progress tracking on the plan. This plan takes the recommendations from the LGA independent review report. There are some areas of development Regan would like to share with Members as soon – the training offer and the development of a pupil passport.

The panel discussed the removal of an interim satisfaction rate target. Regan said she was happy to review this and put one back in. Cllr Wares and PaCC would like to see something ambitious that was in addition to 85%.

Action: Regan to look to put interim customer satisfaction level back in to the plan.

Cllr Wares asked the panel though to also consider measuring success by what happens in September – around whether children are able to be transported to and from school with no complaints, and that the service is affordable and provides value for money.,

Diana added that PaCC were feeling that the coproduction was going well but also expressed concern about surveying parents/carers too frequently on their satisfaction levels (although agreed that was good information to have) and the potential to conflate their feelings about the service with what happened last September and some of the Covid concerns.

Action: Diana to take a suggestion back to PaCC about doing a survey that explicitly tries to split the historical views to what the service delivery is like now.

Cllr Grimshaw asked whether there were some other avenues that could be explored to ensure enough VPAs are in place for September. Regan explained that she had explored recruiting via a team such as care crew in the past and that could be looked at again. She agreed with comments made by the Members about the value of VPAs, they are an essential part of the service. She had been hearing some feedback from young people at HillPark recently about how much they value the relationship and support they have with their VPAs.

Cllr Clare asked whether the list of policies given in the action plan

	<p>were already in existence and all together form the HTST policy, or whether they were separate. Regan explained that some were in place, some being reviewed / created but as a whole they create the HTST policy.</p> <p>Cllr Wares asked PaCC how they felt about the plan? Diane explained that the approach is with their agreement as the coproduction plan was in place.</p>
<p>Agreed recommendations from the panel from this discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assurance needed around readiness for September including recruitment of VPAs - Satisfaction level to be put back in action plan for the Autumn term 2020.
<p>Focussed Discussion 2 (45 mins)</p> <p>What might an ideal HTST service look like?</p>	<p>The Members discussed procurement models and whether there might be a recommendations around this the panel may wish to make back to CYPS committee.</p> <p>All agreed that the enhanced coproduction approach is an improvement which must be kept for the future.</p> <p>Andy Cheeseman added that he'd experienced greatly improved communications with officers and administration over the last 6 months. The team have recognised the difficulties experienced by all in the past and he wanted Regan and the team to be credited for much of this improvement. The Covid situation has been very challenging with some staff needing to be self-isolate, but Regan and the team have been very helpful.</p> <p>Cllr Wares said he wanted to hear from the experts here today on what they think would make for an ideal service.</p> <p>Cllr Clare asked for an officer report to come to following meeting on potential new procurement arrangement. Action: Regan to bring a report to next meeting.</p> <p>PaCC were invited to put forward their suggestions. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timings of decisions need to be made that allow for a fit for purpose service being ready for September - Appropriate safeguards need to be in place - It needs to be a child centered service, one that takes a human approach. The guidance says it should be a stress-free service and PaCC would like to see that achieved. - Smooth decision making for families – this will be helped by the agreed introduction of a parent rep on the decision-making panel. - The budget must be for for purpose. The recently agreed uplift from P&R only covers a shortfall, it doesn't provide

additionality.

- Supporting young people with independent travel training where appropriate
- Good communications with families.

Cllr O'Quinn said that she supported what Diana had presented and she was pleased to see more opportunity in those ambitions to have greater scrutiny in a number of places within the system. She was particularly keen to support the independent travel training suggestion.

Cllr Hills also highlight ITT as an important point to consider. She asked Regan how the voice of the child had been captured in this action plan? Regan explained that exploring the voice of the child is part of the training her team were developing. Also, HillPark had recently facilitated capturing the views of a range of their students. As said above, they reported that the relationship with their transport providers was really important to them. **Agreed: Regan to share children's feedback with the panel.**

Diana added a further comment from some of her steering group members that in order for families to feel confident in the service, it needs to be stable and the operators need to feel that they can invest well in their vehicles etc. Andy Cheeseman added to this that some of the equipment needed is very expensive and operators need to have more certainty than a 3-month contract.

Cllr Wares added that whilst there is a potential for the service to be bought in house this remains a risk and consideration for operators. Cllr Mears asked if the administration could be clear on their position on this. Cllr Wares raised a question about whether there were issues before that really needed correcting?

Action: Clarity of administration's position to be sought – Cllr Clare.

Diana added that she felt there were improvements that were needed to how things worked previously, PaCC had been raising a number of concerns for years. This is one of the reasons they are pleased with the coproduction agreement that is now in place. One of the concerns that PaCC raised about the DPS system was that it didn't seem to allow for human and relationship considerations – the needs of the child were not able to be factored in to the decision making.

The panel and guests talked about a system that allows the lowest bidder to succeed doesn't always work if there is only one bid and that does not allow value for money.

Diana added that one of the concerns about the implementation last

	<p>September was that families were told that if things went wrong they would be rectified, rather than an approach that tried to avoid things going wrong in the first place.</p> <p>Andy Cheeseman raised a question about whether the additional costs around matters such as traffic management in schools has been factored in.</p> <p>Cllr Clare asked whether this should be added as one of the council's demand led budgets.</p>
Agreed recommendations from the panel from this discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish outstanding recommendations from previous meeting - Form a set of 'ideal service' principles that may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people being at the heart of all considerations Explore a better procurement model, potentially a hybrid Establishing a budget that is fit for purpose All decision making is timely and allows for operator readiness and good information sharing to be done Service should be stress free for families Increased scrutiny points Appropriate safeguards and training in place
AOB	None. The public session ended at this point and the Members continued in a Part 2 discussion.
Date of next public meeting	Tuesday 21 st July 13:15 – 15:30