

## Action notes from the HTST Member Policy Panel 03 March 2020

Present:

Members: Cllrs Mears, Wares, Hills, Clare, O’Quinn and Wilkinson

Officers: Georgina Clarke-Green, Alice Rowland, Giles Rossington, Edd Yeo and Regan Delf and Jo Lyons, Carolyn Bristow

Invited guests:

Pacc Chairs - Fiona England and Diana Boyd

Transport Reps: Taxi4U. Southern Taxi. Radio Cabs. Community Transport.

There were several members of the press and public also in attendance.

Item	Discussion and agreed actions
Welcome and introductions	<p>Attendees introduced themselves.</p> <p>The panel discussed how best to manage a potential ‘Part 2’ element of the meeting, to deal with a confidential matter. A process was agreed and implemented during the meeting. A member of the press raised an objection which was heard. Legal advised that as this was not a committee there was no set process to follow.</p> <p>Members, following an adjournment, agreed they would hold a confidential discussion at the end of the meeting to cover one point.</p> <p>Cllr Ware’s added that he had two pieces of information, that due to be requested via an FOI, were able to be in the public realm. One relating to Hayward’s Heath Taxis and one relating to the very recent publication in the press that Edge were no longer working with the contract. He wanted to flag that he’ll raise these at the appropriate point in the meeting.</p>
Action notes	<p>Discussion of the notes from 23<sup>rd</sup> January meeting.</p> <p>Tom Druitt (at the meeting representing Community Transport) raised a couple of comments for the notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- John from the CT was there but not noted as such in the minutes</li> <li>- He also asked that his submission to the panel was listed in full.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed to amend the minutes accordingly.</p> <p>A member of the public said that they’d wanted two matters recorded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That Southern Taxi’s had offered the LA use of their IT system and it had been declined</li> <li>- That the council had committed to making the ‘complaints and enquiries’ section clearer on the transport page online. <b>Action:</b></li> </ul>

	Officers will take that forward.
Update on the Ind Review	<p>Georgina Clarke-Green gave an update on the Independent Review which took place 28th – 30th Jan.</p> <p>The review commenced with a kick-off meeting with senior FCL officers, Cllr Allcock and PaCC/Amaze reps. This same group will be presented with the draft final report on the 12th March. A meeting will be arranged for after then to share the report with Members of this panel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In total the team amassed 41.5 hours of contact time with stakeholders and engaged with 58 individuals either through a 1:1 meeting, in a very small group or in the case of taxi providers 1:1 by phone</li> <li>• There were also 3 parent focus groups facilitated by the team PaCC and Contact, with 33 parents attending in total, and 2 Councillor Focus groups, so approximately 100 people had direct contact with the team.</li> <li>• After their departure they also received a further 33 completed questionnaires from parents/carers from a survey that had been organised by PaCC and Contact as an additional feedback opportunity.</li> <li>• The team started with over 200 pieces of information being uploaded to the hub and requested a range of further information throughout the three days which were also uploaded for them to read and digest to inform any further questions. Information has also since been uploaded to the hub at their request.</li> <li>• Because the team were provided with additional information on their visit, requested further documentation as a follow up to the many interviews, discussions and focus groups they attended as well as the completed questionnaires from parents, the presentation of the draft final report has had to be moved to a slightly later date than originally planned.</li> </ul> <p>Georgina wanted to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders for taking the time to participate in the independent review, and in particular, PaCC and Amaze who organised and co-facilitated the parent focus groups.</p> <p>Cllr Wares asked for clarification that the information collated as part of his FOIs had now been shared with the LGA team, Georgina confirmed they had been.</p>
Officer report on HTST	<p>Jo made an opening presentation. She explained that in order to respond to the challenge we faced in delivering home to school transport, we've increased the management capacity in the team. We are also introducing a SEN casework officer role to make better links between the two teams. We are also receiving a wide range of support from other council services on this. We are committed to</p>

continuing to improve the service so it's the best for the families in the city. We are not there yet but we are seeing progress in a number of areas.

Regan then presented her report, highlighting a few main points before opening it up for discussion.



Members Panel -  
Home to School Trai

- She reiterated the LA's apologies about what went wrong and the stress and upset to families and for the difficulties caused to our operators and schools.
- Regan has spent time with some of the operators and she has been for herself the care and dedication there with the children and how well they can work together with schools. She has seen the ongoing issues at Downs View and acknowledges there is further action needed there.
- Regan sits regularly with the council team and hears their sorting out the types of daily issues that arise with care, empathy and at pace. She hopes all stakeholders agree that positive sensible arrangements and decisions go on everyday in the service.
- On co-production, Regan reflected on where she's seen real positives of this approach and she hopes the good practice already existing in the city will apply across to school transport and she commits to making this work. Parents / Carers are at the forefront of this but it's essential to do this work with operators and schools too.
- The team have been looking into the reported issues around timeliness. Operators have been asked to report in any instances where children are on journeys for more than the statutory guidance times, and no responses on that as yet. Also, she confirmed that no journeys are planned to be over those stat times either. However, Regan has seen the situation at Downs View and can see that it is taking a long time to take children in and out. She can see that some children will be arriving in the class late and that needs resolving.
- She explained that the team were looking at the groupings of children and will work with families on ensuring the most appropriate arrangements are in place going forward. It is hoped this work will be done by Easter.
- Regarding potential complaints / comments into the service, Regan wanted to provide reassurance that raising issues with us would in no way compromise any existing or future arrangements for their child(ren). **Action:** Regan will liaise with PaCC on how the service can best get that communicated with families.
- Spot checks will continue of vehicles and actions taken were

	<p>necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DBS checks – Regan is conscious that this was a significant area of concern at the last meeting. We, of course, have always been assured about the licensing checks around DBS there for drivers but we needed to be assured on the VPA checks. Regan confirmed that these were completely up to date.</li> <li>- She acknowledged that the current system around the Pupil Information Sheets needed a complete overhaul. It’s an old system which isn’t fit for purpose. It’s not currently a family friendly system so this needs looking at.</li> <li>- Regan has been out and witnessed the operators managing the transitions in and out of schools and has been really impressed with their approach. Her starting position had been that of others in the LA, thinking that this would be best done by schools. However she has been assured by what she has seen and feels this needs further discussion with families, operators and schools before a final decision is made on this. We are aware there is still clarification needed over the insurance matter. <b>Action:</b> Alice from the Legal Service explained that this would follow.</li> <li>- Regarding the budget, Regan provided reassurance that no spending around transport was being hidden and that any budget recovery plan (which will be needed) will be coproduced with families, operators and schools.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr O’Quinn asked when the building works at Downs View might be complete. She also asked for officers to consider children’s individual needs when reviewing groupings. She was pleased to read in the report about more training being offered – she is keen to see that further developed and made more bespoke as needed. She also asked whether there were plans to change the DPS system now.</p> <p>Regan replied that the car park will be complete in the early summer so will be fully operational from September 2020. Whilst operators, school staff and families are managing Regan knows it’s not ideal so she is seeing what could be done to make temporary amends. In terms of the training, operators were being asked to contribute towards the costs, but we were subsidising it. Currently some operators do their own training and others need to seek it out so it’s not an even picture currently. Regan acknowledged that the DPS system wasn’t perfect however the main issue that had gone wrong was attempting to get it done in too short a timescale. We have to contend with the fact that some SEN information will come through late in the year but we are working better together to predict the need. We already know who will cease having transport and we are getting information already on new children for September.. There is already a lot of work underway for the September arrangements.</p> <p>Cllr Hills asked what elements of the Pupil Information Sheet</p>
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arrangements needed overhaling in Regan's opinion. Regan replied that we had been made aware of some families feeling pestered during this process and we apologise for that. The current system means that we need to ask families for repeat information even if nothing has changed. Within the LA we actually hold a lot of this information, so we are looking at how we can better collate that ourselves first. Clearly families will still have a role in terms of signing this off and providing us with urgent updates, but we are trying to take some of that work on ourselves by collating information for our files. One thing that is being explored is looking at each child having a bespoke travel plan.

Cllr Mears thanked Regan. She raised concerns about the impact when the bidding process happens too late in the year, which she has raised previously – she welcomes work done to ensure this is completed earlier. She also called for more work around ensuring that the budget figure is realistic. She lent support for the transport team staff. She is concerned that the insurance matter isn't yet fully resolved and worries about the potential pressure on the schools. Regan agreed that a realistic budget was needed. We know that need is rising nationally and we've had the extension of the age range in the reforms, however we do need to ensure that the budget is efficient and that is part of the work that we are looking at here.

Cllr Clare asked for the insurance matter to be resolved in a paper to a future meeting.

Cllr Wares expressed gratitude for the officer report as it highlights some of the longer term issues there have been and he is happy these have been acknowledged and are being addressed. He asked all parties to be mindful though that it was early days and there is a lot more work to do. However he has been encouraged by what has been heard so far, particularly the shift away from blaming families and operators. Cllr Wares felt that the budget section had been written to lay blame for the overspend on increased pressure and he wanted it acknowledged more clearly that it's partly due to errors made. He also clarified that the allegation isn't that spend is being hidden, it's that given it appears in several budget lines (justifiably) its hard to see the full figure of overspend. He therefore asked Officers to continue to work on that and ensure clear reporting on the overspend occurs. He would like to see a full break down of costs so far and what the projections are.

Cllr Wares also raised the question about whether differing information had been shared about the number of outstanding Pupil Information Sheets back in the autumn. Jo offered apologies if there were any instances of information being shared that later was found to be incorrect. This is an area of priority we are working on to

	<p>ensure it is correct going forward and this has been highlighted in our acknowledgement of the system not being fit for purpose.  <b>Action:</b> it was agreed that an officer report on the budget would be bought back to a future meeting.</p> <p>Fiona supported the discussion around setting a realistic budget.</p> <p>Regan was thanked for her detailed report.</p>
<p>Discussion on any current issues – including submissions</p>	<p>Diana Boyd presented the PaCC submission given here:</p>  <p>PaCC Submission for March HTST Polic</p> <p>Cllr Mears asked officers to calm family anxiety and confirm there were no proposed changes around charging. Jo replied that there are no proposed changes that would introduce charging and if there were to be changes these would be coproduced with PaCC. We are waiting for the outcome of the Independent Review and of any recommendations that come out of this process, but again, any future changes will be coproduced. It's important that Cllrs are included in that process too.</p> <p>Cllr O'Quinn was very encouraged by the PaCC submission and pleased to hear that things are moving forward, especially compared with the last meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Wares asked PaCC to comment on whether relations with the Council were in the right place to move forward with coproduction. Diana replied that PaCC continued to provide challenge to the Council, especially around the upcoming new academic year and the planning timescales needed. However they have seen a clear commitment from the LA to work with families on this.</p> <p>There was then discussion about the respective roles going forward of PaCC and Cllrs to both play a part in oversight and scrutiny in the future in this area. PaCC and Amaze were clear that their role shouldn't blur into contract management, they are to feedback and participate in coproduction. It is also important that PaCC are resourced to be able to do this work. All agreed that PaCC and Amaze are able to take a 'temperature check' with families and feed that back to the LA. PaCC have also demonstrated their effectiveness in this area, by releasing an immediate statement and then providing a crisis action plan. Cllr O'Quinn added that she had witnessed the good relationship between PaCC and the LA and could commend how robust PaCC's challenge can be.</p> <p>Coproduction and challenge can work very well together. Amaze also confirmed that there is no need for parents to be a member of PaCC in order to respond to Amaze surveys / call the helpline etc.</p>

**Action:** it was agreed that the notes of the ongoing Transport Governance Board would be made available to Members of the panel.

Regan then provided further clarification on the question about charging. She confirmed that we would shortly (likely over April) be conducting our standard annual consultation on post 16 transport arrangements and there are no proposed changes in that. We do have to inform parents about a change in some rail charges, not bought by us, but they should be assured on no or minimal financial impact for on families. We have no plans to start charging for transport to respite.

A second submission had been received, which raised further parking / vehicle concerns at the HillPark site. This has been referred to relevant council services to investigate.



Resident  
submission for Marc

Cllr Clare then opened the discussion up to consider any wider current issues.

Radio Cabs wanted clarification over the offer of training that had been shared recently. Were there limited numbers that could attend? Also, what was the thinking around whether operators should get drivers trained up who may or may not be allocated routes in the future? Regan clarified that there had been a lot of interest in the 40 training places she currently had available and that she was trying to get more days set up.

Tom from Community Transport wanted to note that the traffic assistant at Downs View is doing a great job. He's directing everyone well and the children are able to get in and out quickly, given the circumstances up there. He also shared that the main learning from what has happened this year is that everything for the contract allocations must happen earlier, at least 8 weeks earlier in the year. It's too late to leave it until the summer break, also people are on leave then. He reflected that things were currently working very well, he just had a negative experience in how a complaint was managed recently. There was a delay in investigation at the LA end and he had a concern about confidentiality, about whether the details of the complaint had leaked across the school community. He also highlighted that he felt it was difficult that there isn't CCTV in the reception at HillPark, given it's such a busy area. Regan said they would be producing guidance on the investigation of complaints for operators in the future. She invited Tom to discuss the individual case with her, as she was not aware of any breach of

confidentiality.

Pippa, from the public gallery, expressed concern about the historical decision made by the DCS to allow a number of VPAs to work before their DBS came through. Families permission was not sought and the assurance of the cars having CCTV turned out to not be 100% reliable. She also continued to have concerns about the suggestion that parents had been blamed for not completion/ return of pupil information sheets. She also wanted to share with the panel the clarification that whilst some families might on paper 'be happy with taking the mileage payment and transporting themselves', the reality is that some are doing it not willingly. Pippa feels that a more personalised approach to routing / groupings on vehicles could resolve the scheduling issues there have been too. Regan agreed that the groupings needed looking at and this was underway and aims to be done by easter break. She also sought to reassure everyone that parents were not being blamed about faults in the system and she will speak with the team again to find out if they are aware of families that feel otherwise.

Andy from Southern wanted to note how positive the recent changes have been with the council team, he has seen a lot of empathy and child focussed considerations back in the service which has been good to see. He raised concerns about some of the arrangements being interim and wanted clarification over what the plans were going forward.

Cllr Wares wanted to add a comment that he remained concerned that the LA took a number of days to act on concerns raised about the Haywards Heath taxis situation. He would like to see swifter action taken when there is a potential risk. The LA confirmed that operator was still undertaking a small number of routes.

Cllr Wares also raise Edge and what the nature of the agreement was with the LA to part ways. Alice confirmed that Cllr Wares' FOI on this matter was still being processed and a response should be with him soon. Cllr Mears expressed concerned about the perceived need to go through FOI processes to gain access to key information. Alice explained that this was part of an agreed approach as it would enable Cllrs to then put information in the public domain. However we acknowledge that the processing of some FOIs is taking longer than we would like.

Jo made a response to confirm that arrangements were being looked at to consider what the management of the team needed to look like going forward and we'll be able to clarify that soon. We are also waiting the outcome of the Ind Review and of this process, which may impact on what that service needs to look like. We'll have to come back later with the detail on this.

<p>Agenda and date of next meeting</p>	<p>Members felt that the 2 hours allocated for this meeting isn't always enough so future meetings should try and be longer.</p> <p>10am is the ideal start time, given the pressure on families at the start and end of the school day.</p> <p>Officers will be in touch regarding future meeting arrangements.</p>
<p>Any other business</p>	<p>Mr Scott, from the public gallery, raised the question about whether the contract with Edge would be placed in the public domain. It will be on the council website once that FOI request has been fully dealt with.</p> <p>The public element of the meeting then stopped and Cllrs and Officers remained for a part 2 discussion.</p>

