

Report to the Environment and Community Panel

Members' Feedback from Outside Bodies/Partnerships 2017/2018

Name of Organisation/Outside Body	WEST NORFOLK COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
Name of appointed representative/s	CLLR MRS SUE FRASER
Number of meetings held	Six
Number of meetings attended	Five (one missed due to ill health)
Brief summary of key decisions discussed	<p>JULY 2017 Department for Transport decided without consultation to change the regulatory rules governing community transport and wrote to operators in July last year announcing the change and saying that we all had to change our operations to meet their new requirements. This was calculated to put up costs up by between 5% and 6%. There was an outcry, not only to the Department, but also via MPs to the Minister and Secretary of State, so much so that a planted question was put at PMQs in November, almost without precedent for the bus sector. The House of Commons Transport Committee held an urgent inquiry in November and reported in December using phrases such as "DfT using a sledgehammer to crack a nut" and "putting the community transport sector into paralysis".</p> <p>Move to a new location, caused as much by these new regulations as anything else. The new regulations, in essence, mean that vehicles have to be maintained to the same systems and standards as large vehicles doing many thousand more miles a year. The H of C Transport Committee found no evidence of lower safety standards in community transport, and on 14th February in its reply, DfT</p>

	<p>agreed that there is no such evidence. So, why the heavier handed regulation, then? Nonetheless, it has meant that we have bought, are now having fitted out, and will move hopefully in April, to a new location.</p> <p>Stagecoach abandonment of the West Norfolk network, thought to be the largest ever in the UK since a free market was introduced in 1986. That is a measure of how serious it is, and it has led to DfT officials asking WNCT whether government policy had led to it. In some respects it has. WNCT were part way through transferring to a new licence and regulatory system required by the new regulations when this came along, and the regulator cannot and will not get its head around the fact that the Stagecoach work transfer has a definite time limit and the clock is well and truly ticking.</p>
<p>Implications for the Borough Council (if any)</p>	<p>BCKLWN has acknowledged that WNCT provides an important service they to many residents in the Borough. So therefore the budget remains the same for 2018/19 as it was last year, supporting the Shopmobility and Dial a Bus.</p>
<p>Any other information you would like to report</p>	