

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SELECT COMMITTEE 16 OCTOBER 2001

NOTE: A copy of the report mentioned below has been sent to all members of the Environment Select Committee and other members who have requested it. Further copies are available from Nikki Patient, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford.
(Telephone: 01992 555560)

WITHDRAWAL OF COMMERCIAL BUS SERVICES

The Select Committee considered a report on the withdrawal of commercial bus services in order to determine whether this issue would be appropriate for scrutiny. The report was in response to a request by B A York who submitted the following justifications to the committee in January 2001:

"It is not easy for members to keep abreast of the withdrawal of commercial bus services, nor with the extent to which they are 'replaced' by contracted services. What is clear, however, is public concern with what are perceived to be deteriorating levels of service for them - witness complaints and requests to/via members, letters to MPs and reports in, and letters to, Hertfordshire newspapers. Withdrawal of services has led to difficult consequences for not only many passengers but also the County Council in finding 75% of the cost of each contracted service and the district councils which fund 25%."

In January, the Select Committee agreed that the Director of Environment should hold a bus summit involving providers in order to explore the factors influencing the provision of commercial bus services in Hertfordshire. Summits were held on 21 March and 11 July 2001 involving county councillors and the three main bus operators in Hertfordshire. As a result of these summits a bus strategy for Hertfordshire is to be prepared by Transport Panel.

At the Select Committee meeting, Brian York requested that a further report be produced in order to enable scrutiny of the effects of the withdrawal of commercial bus services to address the following areas:

- a) withdrawal of or significant changes to commercial bus routes, and
- b) the effects of withdrawals, including the cost to the County Council of considering provision of a replacement contract service.

The County Council has no powers to regulate the operation of commercial bus services. When a commercial operator withdraws or significantly alters a route, the County Council has six weeks to consider whether to replace all, part or none of the route.

The Transport Panel is currently awaiting the Government's response to the Annual Progress Report of the Local Transport Plan and preparing a Bus Strategy for public consultation early in the new year. The latter document would not be in place if scrutiny was undertaken at the current time.

The Select Committee agreed by a majority decision not to undertake further scrutiny of this issue.

Nigel Brook
Chairman
County Hall
Hertford

16 October 2001