

**Getting a “Fare” Deal  
How can we ensure that public transport  
improves social inclusion?**

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**An Inquiry by the Public Transport Scrutiny Panel**  
August 2013

## Why This Matters

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**Councillor John Newbury (Convenor)**



**Councillor Ann Cook (Vice-Convenor)**

Public transport affects the Council's ability to achieve many of its policy ambitions to make Swansea a better place to live, work and visit. Good public transport links are vital to move people around Swansea to enable them to work, engage in education and training, feel part of their communities, enjoy leisure and cultural activities, visit family and friends, do their shopping and spend money in the local economy.

During our evidence gathering we found that changes to Welsh Government's public transport funding regime had started to have a negative effect on bus provision in Swansea. We realised that gaps in the public transport network would persist due to these changes and in all likelihood, would get worse. We concluded that all public transport providers, including community transport providers, the Council and public transport users would need to work together in a much smarter and innovative way to make sure that our public transport network does not inhibit our ability to deliver Council policy priorities.

Specifically, we need to get people into jobs, especially our young people, which will support our economy, and for this they need good public transport links including evening and weekend services. The Council can help achieve this by looking at how it uses funding to subsidise the local bus network. This needs to be a priority.

We felt that community transport needed to be prioritised and integrated into the local transport network because its role will increase as more innovative ways are found for people to access the changing public transport system in Swansea.

We also concluded that the way public transport is currently delivered and provided in Swansea needed to change and we felt that serious consideration should be given to something called a Quality Bus Contract. This enables the local authority to determine what services should be provided in the area and incentivises bus operators to provide services.

We recognised that when decisions are taken on things like planning for future housing and economic developments that public transport needed to be at the heart of these decisions and applications to make sure that communities are less car dependent.

This was an interesting and wide ranging inquiry. We spent several months gathering evidence from public transport providers, passengers, customer groups and the voluntary sector. We are grateful to all those who gave us their time and the benefit of their knowledge and experiences, in particular the scrutiny councillors on the panel, Delyth Davies, Scrutiny Officer and other officers, who put in such an unstinting effort.

## Summary

### 1. Aims of the Review

- The inquiry considered the question: how can public transport improve social inclusion in Swansea.

### 2. Evidence

Date	Meeting	Evidence considered
6 Sept 2012	Overview and briefing	Public Transportation Overview Briefing – Head of Transportation
16 Oct 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Engaging public transport providers</b> First Cymru - Gareth Stevens, Regional Development Manager and Simon Cursio, General Manager, Wales
23 Oct 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Understanding the legal context</b> Transportation legislation and Quality Bus Contracts – Transportation Unit and Legal
23 Oct 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Engaging public transport providers</b> Arriva Trains Wales - Michael Vaughan, Operations Manager and Ben Davies, Stakeholder Liaison Manager
24 Oct 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Engaging with public transport users</b> First Cymru Customer Panel
11 Dec 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Seeking the views of the academic community</b> Professor Stuart Cole, Transport Economist, University of Glamorgan.
11 Dec 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Understanding the Cabinet Member’s vision for public transport in Swansea</b> Councillor June Burtonshaw, Cabinet Member for Place.
12 Dec 2012	Evidence gathering	<b>Seeking the views of the not for profit transport providers</b> Engagement with Betsan Caldwell, Director (Wales), Community Transport Association.
11 Jan 2013	Evidence gathering	<b>Innovation in public transport</b> Engagement (teleconference) with West Yorkshire Metro – Quality Bus Contracts and Partnerships

11 Mar 2013	Evidence gathering	<b>Understanding the public transport needs of different user groups</b>  Engagement with young parents via Action For Children
25 Mar 2013	Evidence gathering	<b>Understanding the public transport needs of different user groups</b>  Engagement with disabled public transport users
15 Apr 2013	Evidence gathering	<b>Engaging public transport providers</b>  First Cymru - Simon Cursio, General Manager, Wales and Justin Davies, Regional Managing Director.

### 3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Poor public transport provision will have a negative impact on Council policy outcomes
- 3.2 There is a growing gap between the level of Council subsidy for public transport provision and the transport grants from the Welsh Government which will affect public transport services
- 3.3 The cut to the Bus Services Operators Grant has negatively affected bus services in Swansea
- 3.4 There is little or no competition in bus service provision in Swansea
- 3.5 A Quality Bus Contract could provide the means to reconcile private interests with the interests of the travelling public
- 3.6 The community transport sector is a vital element of the local transport network and its future needs to be secure and sustainable
- 3.7 Innovative transport solutions should work alongside conventionally provided public transport to plug identified gaps in the network
- 3.8 Better joint working amongst public transport sector stakeholders will provide better public transport
- 3.9 Current land use planning makes communities car dependent
- 3.10 Some groups of public transport users often found bus services inaccessible for a variety of reasons which had a negative effect on their wellbeing

- 3.11 The availability of good quality up to date travel and passenger information improves the accessibility of public transport
- 3.12 The level of complaints from passengers using public transport in Swansea was felt to be substantial
- 3.13 Increased capacity on the public transport network will be required for disabled athletes and spectators when Swansea hosts the 2014 European Paralympics and Athletics Championships

#### **4. Recommendations**

##### **The Panel recommends to Cabinet that it:**

- 4.1 Reviews how the Council allocates the transport subsidy to ensure positive policy outcomes, obtain better value for money and make the public transport network more effective
- 4.2 Actively investigates the feasibility of a Quality Contract Scheme in the region
- 4.3 Integrates the community transport sector into the public transport network and strengthens its financial position by following the Welsh Government's code of funding
- 4.4 Encourages greater joint working between the Council, public transport providers and the Community Transport Association to fill gaps in the network and when timetable reviews take place
- 4.5 Includes in the Local Development Plan procedures for all new housing and economic development to provide for accessible transport through infrastructure and travel plans that enable and encourage public transport usage
- 4.6 Takes up the offer from First Cymru for Council traffic enforcement officers to travel on buses to target infringement hot spots
- 4.7 Ensures that all bus stops, across all areas of Swansea including Gower, are accessible and meet legislative requirements
- 4.8 Works with public transport providers to review and improve driver training procedures paying particular attention to equalities training
- 4.9 Requests that transport operators, including taxi companies, review their complaints process to ensure they are accessible to all passengers

- 4.10 Ensures that relevant and comprehensive information for onward travel is available at the bus and the train station, taking advantage of new technology where appropriate
- 4.11 Has councillor representation on public transport provider customer panels
- 4.12 Meets with Senior Council officers, transport providers and event organisers to identify and create additional capacity where required on the public transport network for the 2014 athletics event
- 4.13 Lobbies Welsh Government to develop an integrated ticketing system with public transport providers so that benefits such as concessionary passes can be used across all forms of public transport including community transport.

## Full Report

### 1. Aim of the Inquiry

- 1.1 The aim of the Inquiry was to consider how public transport can help to improve levels of social inclusion in Swansea.

### 2. Evidence Considered

- 2.2 The following evidence was considered by the Inquiry Panel between September 2012 and April 2013.

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6 Sept 2012	Overview and briefing	Public Transportation Overview Briefing – Head of Transportation
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		Place.
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11 Jan 2013	Evidence gathering	<p><b>Innovation in public transport</b></p> <p>Engagement with West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (Metro) – Quality Bus Contracts and Partnerships Teleconference</p>
11 Mar 2013	Evidence gathering	<p><b>Understanding the public transport needs of different user groups</b></p> <p>Engagement with young parents via Action For Children</p>
25 Mar 2013	Evidence gathering	<p><b>Understanding the public transport needs of different user groups</b></p> <p>Engagement with disabled public transport users</p>
15 Apr 2013	Evidence gathering	<p><b>Engaging public transport providers</b></p> <p>First Cymru - Simon Cursio, General Manager, Wales and Justin Davies, Regional Managing Director.</p>

## 3. Conclusions

### 3.1 **Poor public transport will have a negative impact on Council policy outcomes**

3.1.1 The panel was of the view that poor public transport could inhibit the successful implementation and outcomes of Council policies. The Council had a huge range of policies to make Swansea a better place to live, work and visit from environmental, economic, employment, social inclusion, well being, regeneration and tourism. All of which depended on, amongst other things, good public transport and transport links.

3.1.2 The panel took evidence from public transport users who depended on public transport for most aspects of their lives. It found that certain groups such as young parents and disabled people often experienced social exclusion and missed out on employment and training opportunities and leisure activities. The panel found that disabled people were often unable to board buses and plan their journeys with any degree of certainty.

3.1.3 In addition, Social Services submitted evidence to the panel which supported this view. Swansea Social Services key strategic documents and programmes highlighted the development of independence, choice and control, well-being, personal health and social inclusion as primary objectives.

All the services commissioned by Social Services must contribute to helping people:

- Stay healthy
- Have their well being, safety, security and quality of life promoted and cared for
- Benefit from opportunities for social inclusion, participation, meaningful activity and the development of relationships
- Maintain their independence and have a voice and choice.

The Transformation of Adult Social Services programme, which aimed to ensure that social care services were able to meet future challenges set out three priorities for development and change. One of these was to refocus on communities to enable people to re-connect with and play their part as citizens, thereby maximising independence and building individual and community resilience.

3.1.4 Poor accessible public transport in Swansea was one of the issues cited by Social Services staff which led to problems for people who wished to increase their independence. It prevented them from taking part in mainstream activities enjoyed by the wider community, considering employment or volunteering opportunities, meeting with others to gain social support and engaging in other activities of daily living.

3.1.5 The panel agreed with the evidence presented to it and concluded that Council policy efforts ran the risk of being stymied by a poor public transport system and

it felt that the current situation was not sustainable.

**3.2 There is a growing gap between the level of Council subsidy for public transport provision and the transport grants from the Welsh Government which will affect public transport services**

3.2.1 The Council spends a significant amount of money on subsidies for public transport provision. Currently the total funding for community transport in Swansea is £88,100 of which £63,870 comes from the Local Transport Services Grant. The Council's current budgeted anticipated spend on bus subsidies would be approximately £1.2million. The budget anticipated grant income of nearly £640,000 from the Welsh Government Local Transport Services Grant. This was reduced to £570,000. This concerned the panel because if the gap continued to grow, and the panel felt it was safe to assume so, then subsidised bus routes would be unable to continue to be operated.

3.2.2 The panel concluded that the Cabinet Member for Place must review the earliest date possible how the Council allocates the transport subsidy in the light of the bus service reductions and grant income reductions from Welsh Government.

**3.3 The cut to the Bus Services Operators Grant has negatively affected bus services in Swansea**

3.3.1 The panel heard that the Welsh Government had proposed changes to its public transport funding regime and grants awards and that these changes were likely to have a negative effect on bus service provision.

Welsh Government wanted to reduce the amount of funding available for bus services. Initially it proposed to reduce the level of the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), currently paid directly to bus operators as a rebate on fuel purchased, by 25%. Following concerns expressed by local authorities and bus operators the reduction in funding was not implemented pending a review.

3.3.2 The panel was informed that following the announcement of the cut in the Bus Service Operators Grant, bus companies had reappraised their commercially operated services and considered that some would no longer be profitable. As a result fares were increased and service reductions were implemented by First Cymru across many areas of Swansea. The first tranche of changes happened in April when First Cymru withdrew almost all services on Sunday evenings after 7pm. This also impacted on Bank Holidays when a Sunday level of service is generally provided.

3.3.3 A further series of services were reduced from 3 June. These changes were mainly to early morning services on Saturdays with some early evening adjustments, but also included the withdrawal of some daytime bus services.

3.3.4 The panel found that stakeholders across the public transport sector all agreed that subsidised public transport services, community transport and privately

provided public transport provision would all be under threat when the transport grants from Welsh Government were reduced.

3.3.5 The panel was concerned that service reductions had been made to bus services in Swansea based on a proposed 25% reduction in the Bus Service Operators Grant which, at the time of evidence gathering, was yet to happen and the decision was pending a review. The panel concluded that the proposed reduction to the Local Transport Services Grant and the regular rises in fuel duty painted a very worrying picture of the future of bus service provision in Swansea. The panel was also concerned that the service reductions at evenings and weekends could have a negative impact on the local economy as less people would be able to access leisure, employment and shopping opportunities in and around Swansea.

### **3.4 There is little or no competition in bus service provision in Swansea**

3.4.1 The panel found no real competition in bus service provision and in bus service tendering in Swansea. Of the 31 bus service contracts in Swansea, 28 were provided by First Cymru.

3.4.2 The panel found some opinion during its evidence gathering that overall bus service provision in an area was likely to be at its best when there was competition. The Competition Commission's investigation into the bus service market found that competition provided an incentive for operators to keep fares competitive and provide good services.

3.4.3 When it consulted with the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, also known as Metro, the panel found that there had been 45 bus service operators in the West Yorkshire area, 41 of which were small scale; First occupied a 65% share of the market, Arriva had a 20% share and Transdev 6%, with the remainder shared amongst 42 operators. The panel learned that operators were mostly concentrated in single areas rather than spread out across West Yorkshire and so competition, whilst it had existed across the region had not existed in single areas and had still led to a sustained decline in bus patronage.

3.4.4 The panel found some evidence of competition on certain bus routes in Swansea. At the time of evidence gathering there was competition on the 31, 32 & 33 routes. Consultees reported benefiting from a £3 all day ticket which could be used across all three of these bus routes. However, there was a danger that the competition could drive out other providers completely leaving just one provider again.

3.4.5 The panel was unable to agree whether competition was positive for bus service provision. Evidence had been presented to the panel which indicated that competition could provide better services. However, in Swansea competition seemed to exist on profitable routes only. The panel agreed that competition as a solution may be short term in nature.

### **3.5 A Quality Bus Contract could provide the means to reconcile private interests with the interests of the travelling public**

- 3.5.1 Through its engagement with public transport providers the panel learned that bus routes had to be commercially viable and could not be run at a loss, and under competition law loss making routes could not be subsidised with income from profitable routes. Bus operators told the panel that in order to provide sustainable services they had to run profitable services which had led to the withdrawal of several services in Swansea because they were loss making. The withdrawal of services often happened in the areas that needed public transport links the most but because they were not commercially viable they had been withdrawn.
- 3.5.2 Professor Cole, an academic and transport economist, and the panel agreed that social responsibility only exists in the public sector and that it was always difficult to reconcile the public and private sectors. After all, private public transport providers are retailers of travel. Professor Cole's view was that if the Council wanted to increased bus services on routes that were deemed commercially unviable by private bus companies, but improved social inclusion, connectivity and contributed to other policy objectives, the Council would have to bear the financial risk of this.
- 3.5.3 During the inquiry the panel learned about Quality Contract Schemes and Quality Partnership Schemes. Under a Quality Contract Scheme the local authority determined what services should be provided in the area and awarded contracts to bus operators which granted them exclusive rights to provide services. Under the legislation the Quality Contract Scheme must result in increased use of bus services, improved quality of services and contribute to local transport policies. Expected benefits under the scheme would be network and service stability, local authority control over fares and ability to specify quality and quantity of services and connections with other buses/modes of transport. The Quality Contract Scheme also enabled the local authority to take a whole-network view and offer subsidies on routes to encourage service and route enhancements. Potential disadvantages of a Quality Contract Scheme Decision were detailed as decision making would be largely removed from the bus operators, with a risk that there would be less responsiveness to customer needs, reduced flexibility, and less incentive to innovate, significant set up, running and monitoring costs for local authorities together with the costs of network planning and design and smaller operators could find themselves squeezed out by the larger groups.
- 3.5.4 Under **Quality Partnership Schemes** a local authority provided particular facilities at specific locations along the routes used by local bus services and operators of local services, agreed to provide services of a particular standard. Buses that do not meet the standards can be excluded. An example of a Quality Partnership would be whereby bus operators were required to invest in high quality services, including new vehicles and staff

training. Local authorities invested in traffic management schemes that gave buses priority, bus shelters and other facilities for passengers, such as real time passenger information.

The success of a Quality Partnership can be judged on the basis of four criteria:

- a. Higher bus ridership.
- b. A good rate of return on bus operator investment.
- c. A modal shift from car to bus.
- d. A consequent reduction in vehicle emissions and accidents.

- 3.5.5 The panel was interested to explore further the idea of **Quality Contract Schemes** and consulted with Metro in West Yorkshire to understand how a quality contract scheme was being used to improve public transport provision in the area. The panel learned that the decision to set up a Quality Contract Scheme was taken because of a sustained decline in bus patronage which had a negative knock-on effect on the economy, bus companies were too focused on margins with no long term strategies to increase passenger numbers, network fragmentation and no mechanism to influence operator behaviour. The panel recognised these characteristics and drew parallels with Swansea.
- 3.5.6 The panel had a number of concerns about Quality Contract Schemes that it addressed with Metro, namely how private companies would be persuaded to engage with such a scheme and the risk of withdrawal of services from the area by bus operators.
- 3.5.7 To persuade private providers to engage with a Quality Contract Scheme the Metro said that a strong business case which detailed the benefits to operators of a franchised integrated system was important. These included a stable system, holistic marketing, incentives for performance, improved customer focus, shared rewards and some aspects of revenue risk transferred away from operators. Contracts would be let for 5 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years; this was well received by operators. Furthermore, one seventh of all the contracts would be renewed each year to maintain value for money and competition with the market. Metro acknowledged that it needed to bear some financial and infrastructure risks in order to attract private providers to bid for contracts and run services.
- 3.5.8 The panel was concerned that a Quality Contract Scheme could result in public transport providers withdrawing from the area because of the amount of control the scheme allowed a local authority over things like routes, fares and ticketing. Metro told the panel that it did not see this as a realistic threat and said that if operators withdrew services they risked not securing any contracts under the scheme. It had been identified as a risk by Metro but not the likeliest risk.
- 3.5.9 The panel concluded that a Quality Contract Scheme was a strategic approach to public transport provision which had the potential to reconcile private and commercial interests with the interests of the travelling public and the policy objectives of the Council. A Quality Contract Scheme gave control and accountability to the local authority and at the same time offered stability and

incentives to private companies to run contracts. The panel was persuaded by the merits of a Quality Contract Scheme and concluded that it warranted further investigation by the Cabinet Member.

In addition, the panel concluded that the issue of cross-subsidy from profitable routes to unprofitable routes needed to be challenged to see if this could be overcome.

### **3.6 The community transport sector is a vital element of the local transport network and its future needs to be secure and sustainable**

3.6.1 The panel found that community transport is a non-statutory service and therefore vulnerable to reductions in grants from the Council and the Welsh Government. The majority of Council funding for community transport in Swansea was found to be derived from the Local Transport Services Grant. The panel learned that changes to Welsh Government's funding regime and reductions in grants had been proposed which affected the amount of funding available to the community transport sector.

3.6.2 Community transport schemes were found to supplement the public transport network and provided door to door transport for people who were unable to access conventional public transport because of disability, frailty or because there were no public transport services in their area. The panel felt that the sustainability of the sector was crucial to improving levels of social inclusion in Swansea.

3.6.3 The community transport sector itself reported that it was concerned about its future because of the short term nature of public sector funding; the reduction in funding this year; the 25% reduction in Welsh Government funding in 2013/14; fewer funding pots available and those that were available had constrained criteria; and finally procurement and tendering difficulties.

3.6.4 Community Transport providers were found to have very little in the way of a financial cushion which protected them against cuts and grants reductions; they were limited by the size of the vehicles they were able to use which limited capacity to generate more income. There was no doubt in the mind of the Wales Director of the Community Transport Association that the forthcoming grant reductions would result in cuts to services, job losses and increased fares.

3.6.5 The panel learned from the Community Transport Association that the sector would benefit if public bodies, like the Council, followed the code of funding guidelines produced by the Welsh Government, which contained amongst other things, a 3-year funding pledge. This would greatly benefit community transport organisations that usually spent very limited resources chasing funding for a large part of each financial year. Furthermore, many funding bodies required a 3-year scheme/proposal in order to provide funding.

3.6.6 Innovative examples of community transport were provided to the panel by the community transport sector and Professor Stuart Cole (Transport Economist) that demonstrated the value of community transport to the panel. The Cabinet Member for Place was also in favour of using community transport to fill the gaps in the conventional public transport network. The panel also found support from local bus operators that stated that they welcomed joint working with community transport providers on parts of the network where private operators were unable to generate a profit. Local bus operators also stated that they would welcome a dialogue with the Council and the Community Transport Association which considered how to link together community transport, Council subsidised services and commercially provided services.

3.6.7 Given all this evidence and agreement amongst stakeholders that community transport was a valuable and important element of the local transport economy the future of the sector should be positive. The panel felt that where possible the community transport sector should have the support of the Council and public transport providers to ensure its sustainability. However, the community transport sector itself should be encouraged where possible to work together more, to improve communications between themselves and share vehicles and backroom functions where practical and appropriate.

### **3.7 Innovative transport solutions should work alongside conventionally provided public transport provision to plug identified gaps in the network**

3.7.1 Local bus operators reported to the panel that they had a long term future to provide bus services in Swansea but that the current economic situation and the proposed reductions in grants from Welsh Government meant that they had to review their entire South Wales operation. Consequently it was reported to the panel that a future service in Swansea would look different to the services currently operated in Swansea. The panel concluded that gaps would persist in the public transport network in the City and County of Swansea where routes were not deemed to be commercially viable to private providers.

3.7.2 The panel heard about innovative transport solutions in other parts of Wales that worked alongside conventional public transport to plug gaps in the network. One such example was the Bwcabus initiative which was a demand responsive and accessible bus service. The Gower services were also highlighted as a clever set of services which were well used and interconnected well with other services.

3.7.3 The Cabinet Member was also in favour of innovative ways to provide additional public transport alongside conventional public transport, such as feeder buses to connect small communities with larger communities where bus routes, mini buses and community buses could then be accessed.

3.7.4 The panel was pleased to find agreement from the Cabinet Member that innovative public transport solutions needed to be seriously considered if existing and future gaps in the transport network were to be filled. The panel concluded

that all types of innovative transport solutions should be considered by the Cabinet Member, particularly an increase in the use of feeder buses to transport passengers to smaller communities.

### **3.8 Better joint working amongst public transport sector stakeholders will provide better public transport.**

3.8.1 First Cymru provided evidence to the panel on two occasions during the review and each time stated how important its relationship was with the Council. It valued the positive and productive relationship it had with the Council and it had a strong desire to continue to build on this. It believed that better partnership working would help deliver improvements to the bus network in Swansea and welcomed greater engagement with the Council and councillors to discuss innovative ideas for service delivery. First Cymru also stated that it welcomed joint working with community transport providers on parts of the network where private operators were unable to operate routes and services at a profit. First Cymru were happy to have discussions with the Council and the Community Transport Association and community transport providers on how to link together community transport, Council funded services and commercially provided bus services.

3.8.2 The Community Transport Association agreed that better integration and partnership working between the Council, public transport providers and community transport providers would bring benefits to public transport users, especially those users who relied on public transport and/or community transport for their wellbeing and to access health and social care services and employment, education, training and leisure opportunities.

3.8.3 The Community Transport Association provided the panel with several factors that limited integration between conventional public transport and community transport and said that if these factors were overcome more community transport users would be able to access conventional public transport:

- The inability to use concessionary bus passes on community transport
- Through ticketing – being able to use one ticket across all providers
- Capacity constraints of smaller vehicles used by community transport providers
- Short term funding and the inconsistency of funding make planning hard
- Bespoke journeys may cause difficulty with onward journeys
- Information provision is important and there is not enough out there. There isn't a single journey planner type web page, for example Transport for London's Journey Planner) that is available to plan journeys across all providers
- Information wasn't always correct
- Needed to be more of a focus on transport from the beginning when new developments were planned and not at the end.

3.8.5 The panel found evidence of where working together had produced good decisions about transport when it consulted with disabled public transport users. A good example of working together was provided by Swansea Access For Everyone (SAFE). SAFE had recently worked with the Council to prioritise bus stops around the city for raised kerbs. However, SAFE pointed out that local bus service providers were not invited to attend these meetings. Swansea Action for Independent Living (SAIL) was involved in the social services transport commissioning group. The panel was also provided with some examples where partnership working could be improved. Disabled people felt that recent changes to bus services were random and undertaken without proper consultation with disabled people.

3.8.6 The panel was pleased to find agreement amongst public transport providers, public transport users and the community transport sector that better partnership working, smarter thinking could bring benefits to public transport provision in Swansea. The panel agreed and concluded that the Council, public transport providers and the community transport sector needed to work closer together and with each other to bring about change to the transport network which would enable more people to use public transport for their daily lives and to improve levels of social inclusion amongst groups that experienced difficulties in using conventional public transport.

### **3.9 Current land use planning makes communities car dependent**

3.9.1 There was agreement amongst some who gave evidence to the panel that current land use planning had made communities car dependent. The Community Transport Association stated that when planning applications were submitted for new developments such as housing, business, leisure, retail, there needed to be a strong focus on transport from the beginning and not at the end.

3.9.2 Professor Cole said that while out of town shopping and leisure developments were popular with the public, multiple out of town developments were difficult to service with public transport. In the longer term if the Council wanted to increase the number of public transport users in the area then consideration needed to be given to land use policy and how it could be used to encourage greater public transport use.

3.9.3 Local public transport providers told the panel that land use planning was an area of concern for public transport providers when planning routes and services. Providers informed the panel it was important that planning for housing and economic developments was not carried out in isolation to public transport planning.

3.9.4 The panel agreed with the evidence it was provided with that land use planning had the potential to make communities dependent on cars. This meant that those citizens who did not have access to cars and who relied on public transport could be excluded from participating in new housing and/or economic

developments. The panel agreed that housing and economic development must be carried out in conjunction with transport planning. The panel concluded that it would be beneficial if all planning applications included consideration of bus routes in and around new housing and economic developments.

**3.10 Some groups of public transport users often found bus services inaccessible for a variety of reasons which had a negative effect on their wellbeing**

3.10.1 The panel learned that groups such as young parents and disabled people relied heavily on public transport for large parts of their lives such as support services, access to health care services, education and employment opportunities, leisure and cultural activities and shopping.

The young parents and disabled people both reported to the panel that there was often inconsistency across routes in how parents and pushchairs and wheelchairs and wheelchair users were accommodated on buses. Some buses lowered the bus at the kerbside, some did not. Disabled people also reported that sometimes they had been refused travel on the bus because their wheelchairs had been mistaken for mobility scooters.

3.10.2 Young parents reported a lack of congruence between shift patterns of large employers such as Amazon and bus timetables. It was also reported to the panel that access to education and training opportunities and health services was often hampered by the number of buses that young parents needed to catch to reach their destination. It often meant a journey into the city centre to change for a second bus out to the final destination.

3.10.3 Recent service reductions at evenings and weekends meant that young parents often had to take taxis at these times for family visits or social activities, which was considered an expensive form of transport. Frequency was also highlighted as an issue, with one participant who reported that she often spent weekends with family in Blaenymaes because of the infrequent bus services from Three Crosses over the weekends.

3.10.4 When the panel consulted with representatives from a number of disabled organisations it was concerned by what it learned.

- Cars were often parked in bus lanes which meant passengers had to alight in the road
- Customer liaison (buses and taxis) for people with disabilities was not effective
- Audio announcements on the Metro were often switched off
- Complaints procedures were often only available in written format
- Information on planning routes to ensure that buses were accessible was often unavailable both from public transport providers and at the bus station.
- Booking taxis via text phone was often problematic, poorly advertised and complex

- Real time information was often incorrect

These barriers to using public transport had negative effects on disabled people's access to, and participation in their communities. They reported that part of wellbeing depended on their ability to access their local communities services and amenities and this meant using public transport. When they were unable to use public transport they felt excluded.

3.10.5 The representatives from the disabled community helpfully offered solutions to some of the barriers they had encountered:

- Driver and customer liaison training on disability awareness so that disabled people can be guided and assisted
- Complaints procedures needed to be available in different formats
- Maintain and improve Council and public transport provider representation at meetings of organisations such as the Swansea Disability Forum
- The Council's Licensing Committee could address the inadequacy of taxi driver disability awareness training

3.10.6 The panel put many of the concerns it heard from young parents and disabled people to First Cymru when the company gave evidence for the second time. First Cymru reported that it was looking into why the audio announcements on the Metro had been switched off. First Cymru also acknowledged that there had been a change in working patterns and culture and that bus routes and timetables needed to reflect this, whilst at the same time remaining commercially viable. First Cymru also suggested that traffic enforcement officers could travel on buses around Swansea to target areas where cars were parked in bus stops.

3.10.7 From the evidence provided to it, the panel concluded:

- Inconsistency across bus routes in the approach to disabled passengers and passengers with pushchairs needed to be addressed
- Disability awareness amongst taxi drivers, bus drivers and Metro hosts could be improved
- Traffic enforcement at bus stops needed to be improved as a matter of urgency
- Improvements to the availability of information on which bus routes were accessible to disabled people needed to be made

The panel felt that these improvements could be achieved through better driver training; a commitment to a family-friendly approach from public transport providers for consistency of approach and customer service; better traffic enforcement at bus stops; the Council owns and manages the bus station and should make immediate changes to ensure that accurate information on accessible routes is available.

**3.11 The availability of good quality up to date information improves the accessibility of public transport for all passengers**

- 3.11.1 There was agreement amongst all organisations that provided evidence to the panel that the availability of good quality, up to date information improved the accessibility of public transport to all passengers. The panel was informed that sometimes the information available at bus trains stations was limited and scattered which made planning onward journeys difficult, for example, while there was a map of bus routes in Swansea, there was no all Wales information or map. It was also highlighted that it was important that information was available about buses at the train station and vice-versa.
- 3.11.2 When the panel consulted with a group of young parents they told councillors that some bus stops in their areas were in a state of disrepair which meant that the bus stop lacked information and advertising on tickets, fares and routes.
- 3.11.3 Disabled public transport users who gave evidence to the panel reported that the ability to plan a journey was very important because they needed to know which buses were accessible. However, it was reported that this type of information was often unavailable. The lack of information provided by bus companies on which buses and routes had accessible buses was a barrier to disabled people who wanted to plan a journey on public transport. The disabled public transport users felt there was a lack of understanding by public transport providers on the importance of things that made public transport accessible to people with disabilities. It was also reported that at the bus station, disabled people were unable to tell from the available information which buses were accessible and which were not accessible. All of which made planning journeys difficult.
- 3.11.4 The panel agreed with the evidence it heard about the importance of accurate information to help public transport users make informed choices and decisions and plans for their journeys. The panel concluded that this was particularly important for disabled public transport users who needed to know whether the buses and routes were accessible; better information would also help public transport users connect at transport hubs and make onward journey; of particular importance for aspects of the local economy such as tourism, employment and education.

**3.12 The level of complaints from passengers using buses in Swansea was felt to be substantial**

- 3.12.1 The panel was provided with complaints data from local bus operators for a number of different periods throughout 2012 and 2013. The panel was also provided with complaints data from Bus Users UK which held a “surgery” in the bus station in 2012.
- 3.12.2 The panel was informed by bus operators that overall the level and type of complaints received was typical, it was not considered high and it had stabilised and improved recently and bus operators had confidence in its complaints procedure. The panel however felt that complaints levels were quite high and noted that not all passengers whose travelling experience was negative would

make a complaint.

3.12.3 The panel considered the complaints data and concluded that the majority of complaints were about driver behaviour, for example, failure to stop to pick up or drop off passengers, driving standard, driver attitude, refusing travel. The panel suggested that the level of complaints that involved bus drivers could be an indication of an underlying problem with their general working environment or morale. The panel understood from the evidence it gathered that the local bus service operator had recently undertaken a review of its operations in Swansea and questioned whether this had affected drivers in a negative way.

3.12.4 The panel concluded that enforcement of bus and traffic priority measures and a lack of driver training could be contributing to the level of complaints made by passengers about bus drivers. The panel felt that as councillors they were in a good position to provide a community voice to local bus operators and concluded that customer panels would benefit from councillor representation.

**3.13 Swansea is hosting the 2014 European Paralympics Athletics Championships, this requires increased capacity for disabled athletes and spectators on the public transport network**

3.13.1 The panel learned that in 2014 Swansea will host the European Paralympics Athletics Championships. The local bus operator informed the panel that it had experience of moving and transporting large groups of competitors and athletes in other large scale games. However, the panel found little evidence to suggest at the time that local public transport providers, the local authority and event organisers had started to communicate and plan for the event. The panel was concerned that there would not be enough wheelchair capacity on buses for the event. Councillors said that pavement heights, driver training, audio announcements needed to be in place. local bus operator said that in order to understand the potential need for transport during the games a detailed piece of work needed to be carried out and it would learn lessons from other places that had held similar events. At the time of the evidence gathering session there was uncertainty over who the lead was within the Council for the games.

3.13.2 The panel was concerned that there would not be enough wheelchair capacity on buses during the games. The panel agreed that pavements heights, driver training and audio announcements needed to be in place for the games. The panel concluded that transport planning for this event was crucial and needed to be carried effectively. This meant that communication between the Council, public transport operators and the event organisers needed to happen as soon as possible to ensure there was capacity on the network, drivers were fully trained and that public transport network infrastructure was in place.

## 4. Recommendations

*The Panel commends Cabinet to consider all issues and ideas raised by this inquiry and, in particular, the recommendations set out below.*

The Panel recognises that the Authority

- (a) will need to ensure that any subsequent actions are legal and meet the requirements of any relevant legislation;
- (b) has a responsibility to make the best use of limited resources and that any additional costs will need to be considered carefully as part of the annual budget setting process.

The Panel has kept these principles in mind in the course of its investigations.

**The panel recommends to Cabinet that it:**

- 4.1 Reviews how the Council allocates the transport subsidy to ensure positive policy outcomes, obtain better value for money and make the public transport network more effective
- 4.2 Actively investigates the feasibility of a Quality Contract Scheme in the region
- 4.3 Integrates the community transport sector into the public transport network and strengthens its financial position by following the Welsh Government's code of funding
- 4.4 Encourages greater joint working between the Council, public transport providers and the Community Transport Association to fill gaps in the network and when timetable reviews take place
- 4.5 Includes in the Local Development Plan procedures for all new housing and economic development to provide for accessible transport through infrastructure and travel plans that enable and encourage public transport usage
- 4.6 Takes up the offer from First Cymru for Council traffic enforcement officers to travel on buses to target infringement hot spots
- 4.7 Ensures that all bus stops, across all areas of Swansea including Gower, are accessible and meet legislative requirements
- 4.8 Works with public transport providers to review and improve driver training procedures paying particular attention to equalities training

- 4.9 Requests that transport operators, including taxi companies, review their complaints process to ensure they are accessible to all passengers
- 4.10 Ensures that relevant and comprehensive information for onward travel is available at the bus and the train station, taking advantage of new technology where appropriate
- 4.11 Has councillor representation on public transport provider customer panels
- 4.12 Meets with Senior Council officers, transport providers and event organisers to identify and create additional capacity where required on the public transport network for the 2014 athletics event
- 4.13 Lobbies Welsh Government to develop an integrated ticketing system with public transport providers so that benefits such as concessionary passes can be used across all forms of public transport including community transport.

**Sources:**

<http://www.pteg.net/>

<http://www.wymetro.com/news/releases/qualitycontracts/>

Swansea Voices

City Centre User Survey

The Campaign for Better Transport, "Transport, Accessibility & Social Exclusion"

Social Services Commissioning Framework

## Acknowledgements

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Debbie Smith, Environment Directorate Lawyer, Legal Services, City & County of Swansea

Cath Swain, Group Leader, Passenger Transport, City & County of Swansea

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First Cymru Customer Panel

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Pablo Rees, Swansea Access for Everyone

Andrew Hubbard, Swansea Association for Independent Living

Michelle Fowler-Powe, British Deaf Association

Janet Stanton, Swansea Bay Family Support Lead Practitioner, Action for Children

Young Parents – names to be supplied by Janet Stanton

## **About the Public Transport Scrutiny Inquiry Panel**

The public transport scrutiny inquiry panel was made up of Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. Their role is to look at policy and service areas in depth and to make recommendations about how things can be improved. Inquiry panels are time limited task and finish groups.

### **Councillors on the Panel 2012/13**

John Newbury  
Ann Cook  
Nick Davies  
Jan Curtice  
Terry Hennegan  
Beverley Hopkins  
Lynda James  
Mary Jones  
David Lewis  
Keith Marsh  
John Newbury  
Gloria Tanner  
Graham Thomas

### **Panel Support**

**The panel received support to conduct this inquiry from the Council's Scrutiny Unit including for:**

- **Project management**
- **Research**
- **Communications**
- **Report drafting**

**The lead officer for this panel was:**

- **Delyth Davies, Scrutiny Officer**

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