

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Community Transport

Minutes of meeting – 9 July 2019

Held at Palace of Westminster, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA

Present:

Robert Courts MP (Con)
Bill Grant MP (Con)
Scott Mann MP (Con)
Alex Chalk MP (Con)
Nick Thomas-Symonds MP (Lab)
James Cartlidge MP (Con)
Representative of Sarah Wollaston MP (Ind)

In attendance:

Bill Freeman, Chief Executive (CTA)
Tim Cairns, Director for Northern Ireland (CTA)
Suzanne Lau, Policy Executive (CTA)

1. Opening welcome

Robert Courts MP welcomed all members to the Annual General Meeting for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Community Transport, noting that the meeting was quorate and that the group met all the qualifying requirements.

2. AGM

Robert Courts was elected Chair
Lilian Greenwood was elected Officer
Maggie Throup was elected Secretary
Bill Grant was elected Treasurer

It was NOTED that the Community Transport Association (CTA) as a registered charity in England and Wales would continue providing secretariat support to the group.

3. Objectives

It was agreed that the purpose and objectives from the inaugural meeting would remain the same:

Purpose:

- A forum for Parliamentarians to demonstrate and celebrate the value of community transport in Parliament and to learn about the experiences of community transport charities and their service-users in shaping public policy where improved accessibility and mobility would be of benefit.

Objectives:

- Running inquiries that enable members of the APPG to hear and discover evidence on relevant topics, such as isolation, in order to publish ideas and recommendations for policy attention
- CTA run awareness campaigns throughout the year, which will enable parliamentarians to show their support across social media platforms
- A key role for the APPG will be to work on collaborative projects with other APPGs. It is vital that members recognise that community transport does not work in silos and that there are many aspects of public policy where accessible and inclusive transport may be required, such as health transport.
- The group is also committed to continuing to push for a Westminster Hall debate on CT.

It was noted that the last objective was achieved on 10 May 2018, when there was a Westminster Hall debate on the Department for Transport's consultation on changes to the use of section 19 and section 22 permits.

4. Briefing on live issues in the community transport sector

Tim Cairns was invited to update MPs on the current status of the Department's consultation on section 19 and section 22 permits. This involved:

- Explaining the regulatory background behind the use of s19 and s22 permits
- Outlining the process for the judicial review on the non-commercial exemption
- Breaking down the Department's short distance exemption and the implications the exemption will have on the operation of community transport. The exemption is currently unclear and uncertain on how permits will be issued and we are awaiting confirmation from the Department on how the exemption will be practicable
- Outlined that a current fundamental issue is that permit issuing bodies are enforcing their own rules to the detriment of the sector

Bill Grant MP and Robert Courts MP both volunteered to put forward written questions to the Secretary requesting further clarity on the exemption. Robert expressed that he wanted to put pressure on the Department to move on the issue.

5. Introduction and evidence gathering on local commissioning project

Bill Freeman was invited to outline a new project that CTA hope that the APPG can provide take a lead on and provide the project with political input and support. This is a project setting out how local commissioning practices can improve services and outcomes by placing social value and the needs of passengers at the heart of commissioning practice. The project will look at how commissioning can be done on a local level in other arenas that have a read across to transport.

6. Discussion

The introduction to the new project prompted discussion between CTA and MPs on how regulating vehicles and commissioning in silos undermines the efficiency of transport provision. It was agreed that there is a lot of room for improvement in terms of effectively sharing resources.

There was also some discussion on when concessionary passes can be used, and on home-to-school transport.

7. Future actions

The APPG agreed that:

- CTA will support MPs with some wording to submit for transport questions
- CTA will help the committee put together a handbook of different types of community transport organisations and case studies to illustrate the different forms of community transport that organisations can form in a range of circumstances. This resource would enable MPs to provide communities in their constituency with the guidance necessary for setting up or improving services should the community require it
- CTA will assist the committee to hold an evidence gathering session for the local commissioning project after the parliamentary recess

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