

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF MELLOR PARISH COUNCIL
HELD AT MELLOR METHODIST CHURCH ON THE 14th JANUARY 2016 AT 7.00PM**

Present: Cllrs. B. Murtagh (**BM**- Chairman), Mrs. D. Crooks (**DC**), Alan Upton (**AU**), Noel Walsh (**NW**), Ian Moss (**IM**), Mrs. P. Young (**PY**), Mrs. M. Young (**MY**), Mrs. M. Johnson (**MJ**) Mr. N. Marsden (**NM**), clerk (T. Taylor **TT**)
Also in attendance: Nigel Evans M.P. for Ribble Valley, (**NE**) LCC Cllr Alan Schofield(**AS**) Ms. Donna Atkinson from The Little Green Bus Company (**DA**) 38 members of the public, of whom 28 indicated themselves to be Mellor residents.

Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Stella Brunskill due to her husband's sudden illness

BM opened the meeting by stating that, as this was a Special Meeting, the usual rules of public speaking, then meeting closed to the public would not apply.

BM then explained the background, confirming the notice which was on buses stating that Holmeswood would terminate their service (routes 15 & 25) from 21st February 2016. Parish Council had received notice that public consultation was to take place between 4th January and 27th March 2016, however Holmeswood had, under Delegated Powers, received notice of termination of their bus subsidy from LCC from 2nd April 2016, and had made a commercial decision. Holmeswood notice suggested bus users contact LCC, MPC and their MP, hence this special meeting. LCC Budget Committee will meet on 11th February when approval will be sought to confirm the decision.

AS corroborated **BM** understanding explaining that central government cuts did mean budget decisions, however LCC seemed to be cutting rural services and **AS's** party are striving to change this. He has tried to find out who and how decision to give bus company notice came about, without success, and the legality of this is questionable. **AS** will have further discussions with Transport Officers at LCC.

NE expressed concerns about the handling of the notice, bus services are not statutory, but are vital. This seemingly is a politically motivated decision, and **NE** will support efforts to alter decision.

AS explained that there is no legal obligation to provide bus subsidies and LCC figures show that all reserves currently held will be used up in the next few years. LCC Cllr. John Fillis (Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport) has sent a reply to **AS's** query blaming central government for overall austerity cuts and for de-regulation of bus services. An offer has been made from LCC to parishes for a Parish Based Bus Scheme, where buses would be provided, but must be run by parishes, using mainly volunteer drivers. Running costs would need to be met by parishes. It seems no parish has taken up this offer as yet.

Lengthy discussion took place, informing residents however that information is useless if no buses for medical necessities, work, school, as well as the elderly and vulnerable. Residents felt that resources were wasted when buses were travelling more circuitous routes, with few passengers, especially late at night. Overall profitability was questioned, as Holmeswood were felt to be financially prudent.

Suggestions were made regarding joining a service through Mellor to more main road services, and a resident pointed out that if less than 10% of Enterprise Zone staff caught a bus, as this expands with a further 1500 jobs, it may be a further consideration. Resident from Clayton-le-Dale pointed out that Route 25 is needed for them, as no shops in their area, currently this service was 2 hourly between mid morning and 4.40pm, so no good for work or school.

NE suggested MPC puts pressure on LCC, with support from **AS**. **NE** will make ministers aware of the situation. He also suggested that current bus contracts may be overpriced, if they have not moved forward linked to the dropping fuel price. School transport was a further consideration. Perhaps RVBC could subsidise school transport.

BM explained to residents that MPC only have dates for action. Residents may send in their views via LCC "Have Your Say"

AS -Residents were informed that they can attend LCC Budget meeting on 11th February, but may not speak. **AS** is trying to find a solution before the meeting, his party are trying to help the county overall, as bus service cuts are planned in other areas.

NE - The public profile needs to be raised so all involved are aware of the planned cuts as soon as possible, showing the different ways people will be affected : jobs, school, isolation, necessary services. **DA** then addressed the meeting, explaining that Little Green Bus Community Transport membership costs £20 per year, trips cost £4 each, door to door service. Drivers are volunteers. This could therefore only meet 6% of the need. The service must be booked 48 hours in advance & Thursday is Mellor Area day . LGB also runs popular day trips, door to door, at £11.00 per trip.

Salesbury resident and PC councillor pointed out that Mellor should not consider a bus service in isolation, as other nearby villages are served more. He suggested contact be made with other PC's covering Langho, Clayton-le-Dale, Salesbury, Ramsgreave, Wilpshire and Samlesbury to put forward concerted objection to the cuts

NE suggested a Press Release with photo of the meeting to show the strength of feeling

BM then closed the meeting, thanked all for attending and explaining that no decision could be made at this Special Meeting, but considerations would go forward to Parish Council meeting on 4th February.