

PARISH CLERK REPORT: BUS ROUTES 564, 106 SEDBERGH PEOPLES HALL THURS 25TH SEPT

The purpose of the meeting was for Cumbria Council to update the communities around Sedbergh as to the future of these bus routes.

Nick cotton was Chair and Cheryl Cowperthwaite was representing CC as Transport Officer, Annette and Phil were representing Garsdale PC.

The meeting can be summed up in a few words, "there is no money and you're on your own".

The longer version is: CC is no longer prepared to subsidize bus companies to keep fares low. A particular draw on funds was the free bus passes provided for pensioners which CC have a legal requirement to uphold.

The 564 does not pay and although there were 31,000 passenger trips, the route was subsidized by £38,000.

The Brough to Kendal service via Sedbergh will continue but in term time only and Kendal College will fund it.

CC will not provide any 16+ subsidies from the next school year. Woofs will still provide its commercial service during the day. CC presently spends £1.6m on transport but the services are not being used sufficiently but are looking to work with both colleges to find a solution.

NC stated that "we" ie. local parishes, need to look at innovative schemes for solutions.

Cheryl said that the 564 and 106 routes and timetables were not yet available but will be emailed out. Annette asked if the bus would connect to the 2 college buses at Sedbergh but could not say. The school buses will continue for this academic year but there was no guarantee after that, even though CC had a legal duty to get students to school, especially low income students. Annette asked what provisions were being made for these students from Sept 2015 but was fobbed off with "we simply don't know, this meeting is about scheduled public services, not dedicated school buses".

Cheryl was asked about the number of students involved and to which destinations and, in general, were numbers rising or falling and also about future applications so that the PC's had some idea about organising transport and routes. Bizarrely, Cheryl had no such information except that there had been a slight increase in numbers recently but that the information would be of no use to us!! Maybe if we conducted a survey we would get some idea!!

Some suggestions were made of copying Western Dales "hub" system, The Little White Bus or putting pressure on local bus companies to provide services. NC wondered if the new 106 could be used by students. Possibly smaller, unregistered services could be set up.

Annette commented that CC were the only County to completely withdraw funding which CC refuted. Annette also said that Sed/Gars students ie. 16+ would not be able to fulfil their legal requirements to attend schools or colleges and suggested that a grant system might help. NC said we should put more pressure on the colleges to provide transport and work

collectively together. Cheryl asked for a “shopping list” from PCs that she could put to Stagecoach. Sedbergh School ran their own buses and had been approached but no take up yet.

CC was asked about the £1m transitional fund and how could that help but CC said that these funds had already been spent on keeping the buses running.

CC was further urged to provide some facts and figures that the PCs could work on and she agreed to look into it.

Generally, the mood of the meeting was of a general “fudge” by CC and that they were not going to be of any help and that any services would have to come from the local communities, despite there being a legal requirement for CC to provide transport for students to schools and colleges.