

AGENDA ITEM NO: 10a

AT A MEETING OF THE TENDERED SERVICES WORKING GROUP HELD IN WELLINGTON HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2005

PRESENT: Councillor R Downes (Chair)

Councillors K Iqbal, P McBride, G Phelps and G Wainwright

111. CHAIR

RESOLVED - That Councillor R Downes be elected to the Chair.

112. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

113. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by members at the meeting.

114. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2005 be approved.

115. METROCONNECT - LEEDS CITY CENTRE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the proposed award of a contract to operate a free city centre distributor service on a trial basis from January to July 2006.

It was reported that at the PTA meeting held on 18 November 2005 Members supported the value of such a scheme and requested that the details of the scheme be further considered by the Working Group taking into consideration the following issues and that, subject to them being endorsed by the Group, a report be submitted to the Appointed Members for approval to the scheme.

Partnership Funding

It was reported that a meeting had been held, which had included Leeds City Council and local town centre businesses, all of whom were extremely enthusiastic at the concept of the new service. A formal request for funding had been sent to Leeds City Council, which they were now considering.

Many local businesses, whilst supporting the scheme, had indicated that they had already given monies through Section 106 Agreements to the Supertram scheme and that, in view of the cancellation of the tram, these monies should be used to meet the revenue costs of the city centre service. In this respect, Members were advised that the matter would be subject to further consideration as part of the close down of the tram project. Discussions would, therefore, continue with LCC and the local business sector to seek further contributions.

Alternative Spending Options

Members were informed that investigations into alternative proposals had failed to identify any other practical schemes of the same magnitude that would not involve recurring expenditure.

Other Issues

The Working Group endorsed the 'free' operation of the service during the initial 6 months and requested that the situation be reviewed after that period.

Members were given a breakdown of costs for the operation of the scheme, which would be met within the current revenue budget due to an underspend in the tendered services budget, as a result of the re-phasing of tender renewals.

Members were advised that the manufacturers had confirmed that delivery of the six Optare buses could be achieved by mid January 2006 enabling the service to start on the next service change date at the end of January 2006.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the award of a deminimis contract to First Quickstep to run the Leeds Free City Bus on an experimental basis from January to July 2006 be noted.
- (b) That a meeting of the Appointed Members be arranged to approve the purchase of vehicles to operate the new service.

116. TENDERED SERVICE 562 HALIFAX - OLDHAM

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the withdrawal of a deminimis contract for the operation of service 562 between Halifax and Oldham via Ripponden and Rishworth, which was jointly funded between Metro and GMPTE.

It was reported that First Manchester had indicated that the service did not generate sufficient passenger revenue to enable them to continue to provide the service under the current arrangements. An alternative commercial service had been registered, which would run between Halifax and Rishworth. Members noted with regret that the direct link to Oldham had been lost

although they accepted that the service could not be justified in view of the very low patronage.

RESOLVED - That the withdrawal of the deminimis contract for the operation of service 562 be noted.

117. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public now be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that if they were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information defined in Part 1 (Paragraphs 7 and 9) of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

***118. ARRIVA TENDERED SERVICE ISSUES**

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive advising Members of variations to Arriva tendered services and the impact of proposed service withdrawals on tendered services.

It was reported that a number of tendered services had been reviewed following Arriva's decision to make network changes in the Pontefract and Castleford areas.

Service 167 - Adjustments to tendered part of commercial service 167 to cover the route between Glasshoughton and Castleford bus station via Fryston village.

Service 133 - Withdrawal of tendered service now served by a competing commercial service.

Members also noted the extension of a number of contracts in the Morley and Rothwell areas until 29 April 2006, which were due to expire in November 2005.

The Working Group were also given details of service withdrawals and changes proposed by Arriva, which would impact on a number of tendered services. Discussions were ongoing with Arriva to mitigate the effect of the company's service change proposals. The Group endorsed the proposals to redirect existing tendered services revenue to secure additional services to meet passenger needs in the most effective way as required by the Authority's 6:20 policy.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the adjustment of contracts for services in the Castleford and Pontefract areas be noted.
- (b) That the extension of contracts for services operating within tender batch 305 until 29 April 2005 be noted.

***119. ARRIVA BUS SERVICE WITHDRAWALS**

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on Arriva's intention to withdraw the following services in the Wakefield, Leeds and Kirklees areas from the end of January 2006 and the implications for tendered bus services.

101/103	Lupset	-	Wrenthorpe
108	Wakefield	-	Bottom Boat
109	Wakefield	-	Moorhouse Estate
111	Wakefield	-	Outwood Circular out via Newton Hill
113	Wakefield	-	Outwood Circular in via Newton Hill
118	Wakefield	-	Ossett
121	Wakefield	-	Ossett - Leeds
122	Wakefield	-	Drighlington
128	Wakefield	-	Thornhill - Dewsbury
483	Wakefield	-	Middleton - Leeds
X16/X17	Netherton/Overton to Ossett		

In addition to the withdrawal of services, Arriva were also proposing reductions in frequencies on a number of services together with the loss of early morning and evening trips.

The Group expressed their grave concerns at the implications of these proposals for passengers, but were encouraged that Metro were continuing to discuss these issues with Arriva, which had identified some solutions to mitigate the impact of the proposals. They also recognised the business position faced by bus companies at present and particularly the effect of recent fuel price increases. However, they were very concerned that shrinkage of the bus network in the Wakefield area to gain short-term advantages could inflict long-term damage on the viability of bus services in the area.

The Group endorsed the following priorities in future negotiations with Arriva, but recognised that in so doing there would still be a significant reduction in bus services in the north Wakefield area.

- Maintenance of all school time journeys
- Maintenance of links to Batley from Ossett, Shaw Cross and Hanging Heaton
- Access to Junction 41 Industrial Park and the nearby health centre at Potovens Lane
- Maintenance of at least hourly evening frequencies on local Wakefield services
- Local links to Ossett from nearby estates and settlements

The reduction of services such as 118 and 483 to an hourly frequency was also a very serious concern to Members. They questioned the economic wisdom of such actions as any reductions in frequency carried the risk that many passengers would lose faith in bus services and use cars and taxis adding to traffic congestion, which was contrary to the targets/aspirations of the Bus Strategy and the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the Group notes with concern the service withdrawals proposed by Arriva and that the approach taken by Metro to mitigate against the worst effects of the changes be endorsed.
- (b) That Arriva be requested to defer the changes until later in the year to enable further discussions with Metro on the most effective way of meeting their business objectives without causing undue hardship to passengers or irreparable damage to bus services in the Wakefield and Kirklees areas.
- (c) That a further report be presented to the next meeting of the Working Group.