

AGENDA ITEM NO: 11

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

AT A MEETING OF THE SUPERTRAM WORKING GROUP HELD IN WELLINGTON HOUSE ON THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER 2005

PRESENT: Councillor R Downes (Chair)

Councillors J Akhtar, D Blackburn, J Lewis, M Lyons, D Schofield and
P Wadsworth

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Jarosz.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2005 be approved.

7. LEEDS SUPERTRAM – CLOSING DOWN ARRANGEMENTS

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the arrangements for closing down the Supertram scheme and the final anticipated costs.

The Director General clarified a number of fundamental issues which had been raised by members in the light of recent press statements. Mr Preston confirmed that the project had been cancelled by the Government on the grounds of costs, risks to the public sector and value for money. He made reference to the Government's statement and indicated that Metro's presentation of costs were not seriously misleading, as quoted and was consistent with the Department for Transport's Guidance which they had previously accepted.

The Director General advised that although the Government's figures were technically correct they had switched the basis of funding from mainly Grants to Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits. This had resulted in the increase in

costs and they had then calculated the full cost of the borrowing over a forty year period causing the actual cost over the full term of the borrowing to be much higher than the amount originally borrowed approval.

The Chair indicated that it was very important that the Authority's position was clarified in order to retain the credibility of the PTA, particularly when making applications for future funding opportunities. He made reference to schemes such as Yellow Bus and Castleford Interchange where the Authority had been successful in achieving significant funding.

Members noted the plan proposing how to close down the Supertram project. The aim was to substantially complete the 'close down' by the end of January 2006, and that the major issues that were continuing to be reviewed were as follows:

- Land and Property
- Documentation
- Resources – staff, officers etc
- Powers to build Supertram

Legal advice was being sought in respect of some of the major issues particularly with regard to how the existing situation could be incorporated into the future proposals for the alternatives to Supertram.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

8. ALTERNATIVE SCHEMES TO ADDRESS TRANSPORT PROBLEMS AFFECTING LEEDS

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the development and implementation of alternatives to Leeds Supertram.

It was reported that discussions had taken place between Metro and Leeds City Council and that a meeting was being held with the Department for Transport officers to discuss their proposals and seek a commitment from the Government for Leeds to be made a 'showcase' for Rapid Bus and to provide the necessary funding in order that Metro could deliver the schemes.

Members noted a number of short term solutions which were being considered for implementation once funding had been secured. These included additional units to alleviate overcrowding on the Harrogate, Caldervale and Leeds-Sheffield line, new Ftr buses and additional priority for buses on routes on services such as Service 4 (Pudsey to Whinmoor), additional park and ride schemes using existing Supertram sites and increased parking at rail stations. A review of medium and long term transport aspirations would also be undertaken which would bring together the outcome of recent research including studies of the Harrogate line, bus congestion hotspots and reviews of technological developments.

Whilst accepting the Government's proposals, the Working Group was of the opinion that a Rapid Bus solution could not deliver the same benefits as light rail which had been well documented. They were also not prepared to accept that Leeds would not be considered for light rail in the future which was crucial for the economic growth of Leeds.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.