

AGENDA ITEM NO: 12

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE BUS AND TENDERED SERVICES WORKING GROUPS HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON MONDAY 8 JANUARY 2007

PRESENT: Councillor D Congreve (Chair)

Councillors B Hyde, P McBride, D Schofield, M Slater, C Townsley and
G Wainwright

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G Phelps.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

7. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2006 be approved.

8. GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT ON BUS SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the recent publication of a consultation document 'Putting Passengers First' by the Secretary of State. This contained an analysis of current issues affecting the provision of local bus services and concluded that in too many places the framework was not delivering and that a number of fundamental problems needed to be addressed.

Members supported proposals which would give PTAs/PTEs a platform to address many key issues affecting the delivery of a quality bus service.

With regard to Quality Contracts, Members were reminded that the Authority had endorsed work to develop an internal business case. A consultancy commission was under discussion with South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear PTEs with a view to starting work early in 2007, which would form the core business plan proposed in the White Paper. It was also noted that the announcement made reference to the Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities), which proposed a package of reforms for

PTAs/PTEs aimed at strengthening leadership enabling a more coherent approach to transport in the metropolitan area. Members re-iterated the view that it was vital that the PTAs/PTEs should have overall co-ordination for local public transport.

Comment was made that responses would be made through PTEG/SIG on behalf of all the PTAs/PTEs. In this respect it was reported that a seminar had been arranged on the White Paper to enable Members' initial views to be fed into the consultation process.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

9. ACCESSBUS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Passenger Transport Executive giving an update on Phase 2 of the AccessBus vehicle procurement exercise and potential enhancements to the service.

It was reported that following a thorough evaluation of the 5 bids for the new AccessBus vehicles, 4 had been rejected as they did not fully meet Metro's tender specification. It was therefore proposed to award the contract to Optare, subject to PTA approval, for the supply of 7 Solo vehicles, each of which would be able to provide seating for 15 passengers, 2 wheelchair restraints/seats plus additional spaces for a third wheelchair or storage capacity.

Capital approval for the purchase of the new buses would be sought at the next meeting of the Authority.

MyLittleBus/MetroLocal

Members received a presentation on the potential scope for expanding the AccessBus service in a cost effective manner by reducing costs through BSOG and generating income from concessions.

Members were informed that since the last meeting, further detailed work had been carried out to investigate the use of additional buses to enhance the AccessBus service and provide quality home to school transport for Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils.

It was reported that the MyLittlebus/MetroLocal initiative aimed to improve accessibility and address the issues of social inclusion amongst the elderly. Comment was made that there was also a desire amongst the LEAs to expand the MyBus concept to special needs children, in order to give them the opportunity to travel with mainstream children and give them valuable experience of travelling on public transport.

The Department for Transport had now advised that underspend on the MyBus project could be used for the purchase of small buses to pilot the

MyLittlebus/MetroLocal project, although it was stressed that it was conditional upon the money being spent in the current financial year.

It was reported that a service design pilot, centred around the Dalton and Almondbury areas of Huddersfield, had been developed. The exercise was tailored to local needs and services, including health centres/local doctors, post offices, local supermarkets, town centres and communities, as well as taking into account areas of high social deprivation and areas with a high proportion of old people. A timetable had been prepared using the above criteria which demonstrated that the concept was deliverable.

Members were advised of the short and long term financial implications on both the capital and revenue budgets of opting to proceed with the initial pilot and the subsequent roll out of the scheme on a countywide basis. In this respect, Members welcomed the proposals supporting the roll out of pilot scheme which would allow the evaluation of the SEN MyBus service and the benefits from additional AccessBus capacity.

Members were advised of the capital and revenue cost implications of the scheme. They were reminded that the decision on the First Appeal was still awaited and that if the decision went in favour of the bus operator this would have a major impact on the budget.

Members were also very mindful that if the pilot scheme was successful, expectations for the introduction of the scheme on a countywide basis could be hard to meet.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the award of the contract to Optare for the supply of seven replacement AccessBuses be noted as being consistent with the policies for accessible transport.
- (b) That agreement be given in principle to the concept of the pilot MyLittleBus/MetroLocal project, but consideration by the Authority could only be in the context of the outcome of the First Appeal and the Authority's overall budget position.

10. ACCESS TO HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the current position with regard to hospital services and Local Transport Plan Accessibility targets.

It was reported that there was a requirement in LTP2 to set at least one accessibility target. Consultation, mapping and analysis of accessibility issues identified the proposed reconfiguration of health services across West Yorkshire as a key priority.

Members were advised that the accessibility target had been set to maintain access to health services. A baseline figure of 89.5% of West Yorkshire householders without access to a car were within 30 minutes of a hospital. Despite the introduction of the Leeds Free City Bus, which had significantly improved access for health facilities, a review of the target had demonstrated a slight overall reduction in accessibility.

Comment was made that at the first meeting of the Accessibility Partnership, a separate Health Sub-Group had been established. This would disseminate best practice and ensure closer working between the health and transport sections to address transport accessibility issues.

The Working Group were informed of a number of challenges which Metro was encountering in order to meet the targets. In particular, changes to the commercial public transport network and the ongoing reconfiguration of health services across West Yorkshire were adversely affecting people's access to health services.

Members noted that progress against the accessibility target would be monitored on a 6 monthly basis and that the results of the review would be reported to future meetings of the Working Group.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.