

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY/DISTRICT COUNCILS

AT A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION LIAISON GROUP HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2008

PRESENT: Councillor B Jennings (Chair)

Councillors D Sheard	-	WYPTA
T Leadley	-	WYPTA
G Phelps	-	WYPTA
S Bentley	-	Leeds CC

Officers in Attendance:	N Parker	-	Education Bradford
	P Oldroyd	-	Calderdale MBC
	A Hudson	-	Education Leeds
	R Smith	-	Wakefield MDC
	M Patel	-	Wakefield MDC
	N Holt	-	Metro
	A Pilling	-	Metro
	S Wainwright	-	Metro
	R Chaplin	-	WYPTA

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Khan (WYPTA), T Swift (WYPTA), M Swift (Calderdale) A Denham (Kirklees) and P Garbutt (Wakefield)

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

12. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2007 be approved.

13. YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRATEGY

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on progress in developing Metro's Young People's Strategy.

It was noted that the strategy was designed to enable all young people to have full access to leisure, work and educational opportunities. The age range would include people in their early 20s but the strategy would be split into defined areas of education, leisure and access to work. Consideration would be given to three main issues – services, fares/ticketing and communications.

Members were advised that development of the strategy had involved consultation with young people and stakeholders including district Children's Services Departments, Local Strategic Partnerships and bus and rail operators. The discussions with representatives from Children's Services and meetings held with the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber had focussed on how to secure an integrated approach to transport and education issues.

It was noted that a revised strategy and action plan would be developed with the initial focus on better understanding the needs of children together with improvements in both service delivery and communications. Members' views were sought on the key themes being considered and comment was made that it would be difficult to promote bus travel to younger people when bus services continued to be withdrawn from estates and evening frequency reduced. It was considered important that the strategy catered for different age groups and it was suggested that emphasis should be made on making bus travel fun by playing music or having a dedicated music channel.

RESOLVED - That the views of the Group be noted.

14. TRANSPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - METROLOCAL AND INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the work undertaken by Metro in relation to the provision of transport and other support for children with special educational needs. The report also updated members on progress with the MetroLocal scheme.

With regard to MetroLocal, it was reported that five services had been introduced at schools in Kirklees and initial feedback had been very positive. Members noted that the pilot schemes, and the associated independent travel training, had enabled children with special educational needs to transfer to conventional school and/or local public transport thereby enhancing personal independence and developing future life skills.

It was reported that Metro was keen to work with Local Education Authorities to identify further opportunities where children might progress from using bespoke transport to conventional school bus services. To assist this, Metro was establishing a countywide working group to share ideas and develop proposals.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That further progress on the initiatives be reported to the next meeting of the Liaison Group.

15. EDUCATION TRANSPORT MONITORING – PROGRESS REPORT

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on progress made in relation to the monitoring of schools bus, Mybus and taxi services. Members were also briefed on the Remote Electronic Data Capture project for monitoring services.

Members noted the number of checks made between September 2007 and February 2008 and it was reported that these included 'ad hoc' requests which generally related to concerns regarding the safety and security of pupils. As a result of the checks, and associated partnership work with VOSA and the district licensing authorities, 12 Formal Warning Investigations were instigated, one operator was removed from Metro's approved list and one operator prosecuted.

Members noted and welcomed the progress that had been made with regard to the CRB checking process and data sharing protocol.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That progress of Metro's monitoring team be noted.
- (b) That members of the Group support Metro in working towards a data sharing protocol with the district licensing authorities.

16. THE SAFEMARK AWARDS SCHEME PROGRESS REPORT

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on progress on the SAFEMark Award scheme and the development of the newly formed Communication Team.

Members noted the progress of the schools currently participating in the scheme. It was reported that since the last meeting of the Group, 4 schools had achieved the award and 6 schools had developed action plans. A further 23 schools had been targeted to start working towards the award.

It was reported that a wider Communications Team had been formed as a result of a restructure in Education Transport following the end of the Mybus

project. The team consisted of four members who were responsible for the ongoing liaison with schools involved in the Mybus project, SAFEMark initiatives and their integration with school travel planning and the young peoples' website. They had set a target of revisiting every primary school served by the Mybus scheme in the 08/09 school year in order to raise awareness and deliver a Junior SAFEMark workshop.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

17. MYBUS – CLOSURE OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive which provided an update on completion of the project implementation, initial project results, end of project conference and future aspirations.

It was reported that the fleet of 150 buses carried over 9,000 registered pupils to 140 schools and the services would be managed on a day to day basis by Metro's Education Transport section.

Members were advised that an end of scheme monitoring report was being prepared and would be presented to the Department for Transport. The summary of the main outcomes, which were detailed in paragraph 2.5 of the submitted report, were noted.

It was reported that Metro was reviewing the whole fleet to establish if further efficiencies could be made. Consideration was also being given to how the benefits of Mybus could be brought to other schools tendered services. Whilst these services would not operate with the same new buses, key features such as seat belts, dedicated drivers and direct communication with the Mybus call centre were being sought in future schools tenders. A progress report would be prepared for a future meeting of the Liaison Group.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

18. SCHOOL BUS ISSUES

The Liaison Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the school bus tender timetable, requests for changes to the timings of the school day, revised Agency Agreements and implications of the Education and Inspections Act.

School Tender Timetable

It was reported that because of the significant Bradford programme, two Bradford bus batches had been issued in January 2008 which had assisted in the management of the workload. Members noted the School Tender Programme which was attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

Changes to the Timing of the School Day

It was noted that it had not been possible to accede to a request from Education Bradford to changes to the time of the school day at Nab Wood School. This was because the school was served by three Mybus services which were linked to Primary Schools. The school had opted to close earlier on a Friday and this had been secured at no additional cost to Metro or Education Bradford. A request had also been made after the Bradford tenders were issued for changes at Beckfoot School. This would be considered further following the award of tenders.

Education and Inspections Act

Members discussed the provision of school transport for pupils entitled to free school meals and for those whose parents were entitled to the maximum level of Working Tax Credit. It was reported that Metro was working closely with LEAs in respect of planning for these changes which were likely to result in additional pupils being entitled to free travel, increased pass allocation/ production and an increase in customer enquiries as a result of the changes.

Members were advised that a bid for pathfinder status submitted by the five West Yorkshire Education Authorities, with support from Metro, had been unsuccessful. Feedback on the evaluation was still awaited. Individual bids from Wakefield and Kirklees were still being considered.

Agency Agreements

It was reported that Metro had been in discussion with the four Agency LEAs to agree a revised Agreement which would be more comprehensive and cover child protection, confidentiality and data protection agreements. There would be an increase in the Agency fees due largely to enhanced monitoring and contract compliance work.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.