

WEST YORKSHIRE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AUTHORITY
AT A MEETING OF THE TENDERED SERVICES WORKING GROUP
HELD IN WELLINGTON HOUSE ON
WEDNESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2009

PRESENT: Councillor T Brice (Chair)

Councillors E Firth, C Greaves, G Phelps and A Pinnock

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by members.

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2009 be approved.

61. KIRKLEES RURAL BUS SERVICES

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive reviewing the performance of three rural bus services in the Holme Valley, Colne Valley and Denby Dale areas which were introduced on a 6 month 'use it or lose it' trial basis.

Holme Valley

It was reported that Service H8 was operated by Stotts Coaches and was developed to provide a daytime service on Sheffield Road between Jackson Bridge and New Mill to address the loss of direct links between Scholes/Hepworth and New Mill. The service also provided a link between those areas and the Holme Valley Memorial Hospital to improve access to the local health facilities and newly built residential and sheltered accommodation.

The Working Group was informed that the service was only carrying between 3 and 4 passengers per trip. However following considerable pressure from residents and local ward members, Kirklees Council had agreed to extend the funding arrangements until 25 April 2009 and further promote the service in an attempt to encourage passenger growth.

Colne Valley

It was reported that Taxibus Service 907 was introduced following the end of the MetroConnect Taxibus to maintain a service on Mondays to Fridays for people living in the remote parts of north Slaithwaite.

The Working Group were advised that the service had been very poorly used carrying an average of less than one passenger per journey and therefore it was proposed to withdraw the facility. Usage by pupils attending Wilberlee school had been very limited and although there was no statutory obligation for Metro or Kirklees Council to provide school transport an offer had been made to help parents arrange replacement facilities at their own expense.

Bus Service 305

It was reported that in April 2008, First had withdrawn commercial Service 305 linking Blackmoorfoot, Linthwaite and Cowlersley with Milnsbridge and Huddersfield. Since that time there had been considerable concern from residents and local ward members that there was no longer a link to local shops and other facilities in Milnsbridge.

It was therefore proposed to trial a new MetroLocal service to maintain essential links around the Colne Valley. The operator, Mount Taxis, had indicated that they were prepared to continue Taxibus Service 907 at the current cost until the new MetroLocal service could be introduced after February half term. Kirklees Council had agreed to fund the cost of the service from January until the commencement of the new MetroLocal services.

Denby Dale

The Working Group were advised that Service 95 operated by Stagecoach was introduced as an extension of a Barnsley area commercial service to provide hourly links from Skelmanthorpe, Denby Dale and surrounding areas to Barnsley Hospital and town centre.

It was reported that whilst the new service had been well received with some market day trips carrying over 40 passengers, on average all journeys carried less than 3 passengers per trip which fell short of the Authority's criteria for financial support.

Kirklees Council were keen to extend the trial and had agreed to fully fund the cost of the service between January and the end of April service change date. The operator had indicated that they would continue to run the service at the current cost and had agreed to assist with further marketing to seek to widen the customer base and retain the current good value fare offers.

RESOLVED -

- (a)** That the extension of existing contracts for services jointly funded with Kirklees Council as detailed in the submitted report be noted.

- (b) That the contribution towards the cost of a trial MetroLocal service in the Colne Valley as detailed in this report be noted.

62. ARRIVA BUS SERVICE CHANGES – NORTH KIRKLEES

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on proposed changes planned by Arriva to alter their network of services in the North Kirklees area at the end of April 2009.

It was reported that the proposals involved concentrating on their most profitable routes, consolidating some services together and reducing frequencies particularly at off peak times of the day.

The Working Group were advised that whilst Arriva were continuing to discuss the changes with Metro and local ward members, a number of issues had been identified which would have an impact on the following communities:

Hunsworth Village

It was reported that as a result of the proposed changes residents in Hunsworth village would no longer retain a direct service to Leeds. Comment was made that discussions would continue, with a view to providing a peak time service for the community.

Firthcliffe Estate – loss of service

It was reported that passengers would now have a walk of over 400m to catch their nearest service leaving many less mobile people disadvantaged. The Working Group was informed that a solution was being explored by diverting the Leeds – Drighlington – Birstall – Heckmondwike services into the estate.

Loss of links between Birstall and Heckmondwike at peak hours

It was reported that as a result of the proposed change passengers would now have to change in Cleckheaton. It was hoped that a solution could be achieved by diverting the Leeds – Drighlington – Birstall – Heckmondwike service which would provide direct services at peak times.

Windy Bank – loss of direct service to Huddersfield and Scholes Lane, Whitechapel Road – loss of link to Heckmondwike

It was reported that as a result of the proposed changes passengers in Windy Bank would now have to change at Cleckheaton. Residents of Scholes Lane/Whitechapel Road would no longer be served. The Working Group expressed their disappointment that there was limited scope to address these issues without funding 2 standalone services. They requested that further discussions be held with Arriva in an attempt to find alternative solutions to mitigate the impact for passengers.

Comment was also made on the proposed continuation and extension of the replacement service 63 between Leeds and Drighlington. Options to better integrate the service with other Arriva services were being considered as part of the review.

Discussions were continuing with Arriva and a report would be brought to the next meeting of the Working Group.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the Working Group notes with concern the current consultation by Arriva regarding bus service changes due to be implemented in the North Kirklees area in April 2009.
- (b) That a further report be prepared detailing the implications for tendered bus services arising from the review.

63. MYBUS TENDERING AND CONTRACT COMPLIANCE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on Metro's new approach to the MyBus tendering process in the future and steps which were being taken to reinforce MyBus procedures to ensure contract compliance.

Tendering

It was reported that it was proposed to re-tender all services at the same time in order to exploit opportunities to review the network, to facilitate joint tendering with other agencies for inter-peak work and to encourage wider competition.

The Working Group were advised that the proposed tender programme envisaged that phase 1 services would be advertised in early 2009 and contracts awarded for a 2 to 3 year period. All 150 MyBus services would then be re-tendered in late 2009 and contracts awarded in early 2010 with a phased implementation programme thereafter.

Contract Compliance and Service Monitoring

It was reported that since the last MyBus service was introduced the emphasis had been on contract compliance and service monitoring. As a consequence of this initiative one of the main issues had been the failure of drivers to conform to procedures, despite initial driver training. In response to a question raised members were advised that many of the issues had arisen as drivers were trying to meet customer needs by letting parents change their travel arrangements directly or making slight diversions from the agreed route to drop children off nearer to their homes. To address these issues, risk assessments had been reviewed on each service and procedures relating to the respective responsibilities of driver, operator, Metro MyBus call

centre, parents and schools had been reinforced. It was hoped that these actions would prevent similar instances happening in the future.

Escorts

Members were reminded that at the Authority's pre-budget meeting on 12 December 2008, the role of escorts on MyBus services was considered and viewed as highly desirable by members. It had therefore been decided to fund escorts on 16 primary school services. The escorts would be employed by the operator to ensure that the bus driver retained the overall authority and responsibility for the service. All escorts would be CRB checked and would receive similar training to drivers on customer care, use of registers and behaviour management. The contracts would be amended to meet the additional costs incurred by the operators.

In welcoming these proposals members asked if the drivers/escorts were trained in First Aid. In response it was reported that whilst not necessarily being trained, they would have received a basic knowledge of First Aid.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the approach to re-tendering the MyBus services now being taken be noted.
- (b) That the steps taken to ensure contract compliance and service monitoring be noted.
- (c) That the use of escorts on primary school MyBus services be noted.
- (d) That the wider implications of drivers/escorts being given First Aid training be investigated and brought back to a future meeting of the Working Group.

64. DALESBUS SERVICES

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on proposals to support bus services linking West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales.

It was reported that Dalesbus services were jointly commissioned from the Yorkshire Dales Society and North Yorkshire County Council to provide access from key bus and rail interchange points. In 2008 Metro had provided funding support for the 784/884 services with the intention of trying to establish a service which could operate in the future without any financial assistance from Metro.

Members were advised that whilst the service had demonstrated a demand for travel to the Dales the prospects for the service to be self-sufficient were very limited. Following an approach from the Dales Society for a further contribution it was proposed to award a grant of £20,000 which would secure

the operation of Sundays and Bank Holiday services together with the wider use of MetroCard and the 'Get Around for a Pound' promotion.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That a grant of £20,000 to the Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company for the operation of Dalesbus services in 2009 as detailed in the submitted report be endorsed.
- (b) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Working Group to consider the Integrated Transport Authority's role in cross boundary links.

65. ISSUE OF ACCESSBUS TENDERS

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the proposed invitation of tenders for the operation of the AccessBus service.

It was reported that the current AccessBus contracts expire in September 2009 and that tenders would need to be reissued in February to meet EU procurement regulations and to allow time for the effective handover of the service. The revised contract would reflect the change previously agreed and would also require the following bespoke conditions and specification particular to the AccessBus service.

- Service Specification
- Service Registration
- Fares
- BSOG
- Status of AccessBus Contractors
- Vehicles
- Drivers
- Health & Safety Responsibilities

The Working Group was advised that tenders would be issued in one batch comprising five separate contracts for each of the five district council areas. Each contract would be for the operation of the current number of vehicles in operation in their respective district areas. As a consequence the current practice of awarding a separate contract for the two floating "countywide" vehicles would be discontinued. Those vehicles would be incorporated into the Leeds and Kirklees contracts. Comment was also made that bidders would be able to bid for any complete district or a combination of districts.

RESOLVED - That tenders be sought for the operation of the AccessBus service as detailed in the submitted report.