

AGENDA ITEM NO: 10b

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

AT A MEETING OF THE TENDERED SERVICES WORKING GROUP HELD IN WELLINGTON HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY 2006

PRESENT: Councillor J Akhtar (Chair)

Councillors R Downes, K Iqbal, J Jarosz, P McBride and G Wainwright

120. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G Phelps.

121. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

122. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2005 be approved.

123. ARRIVA BUS SERVICE CHANGES

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on revisions to tendered bus service contracts to mitigate some of the effects of the service changes announced by Arriva in the Wakefield area from 28 January 2006.

It was reported that arising from discussions held with Arriva, the following links/services had been restored:

Service 128 Wakefield-Middlestown-Thornhill-Dewsbury

Maintenance of all school journey times

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

Whilst mitigating some of the impact of the service reductions, Members expressed very serious concerns that the remaining service withdrawals would have a significant impact on passengers with many communities in North Wakefield being in excess of desired 400 metres access to a bus stop/ service particularly those living in Bottomboat, Moorhouse Estate and parts of Outwood and Stanley. Passengers in East Ardsley and West Ardsley would also be affected.

The Working Group agreed that this issue should be brought to the attention of the Passenger Transport Authority. It was their opinion that Arriva were failing in their duty to provide a quality service for passengers in North Wakefield and other parts of West Yorkshire and that the intended service changes were a prime example to reinforce the need for quality contracts.

Concern was also expressed that the current regulatory framework did not make provision to impose penalties on bus companies and make them more accountable.

Comment was made that the withdrawal and reduction in services inevitably led to gaps in the core service network which often led to pressure for replacement services which were having to be met through Metro placing more pressure on the Authority's tendered services budget.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That in accordance with the Authority's policies, contracts for the operation of tendered bus services in the Wakefield District be amended as detailed in the submitted report.
- (b) That this matter be brought to the attention of the Passenger Transport Authority.

124. BATCH 386 – AWARD OF BUS SERVICE TENDERS - HUDDERSFIELD

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the award of contracts advertised in Batch 386 comprising evening and Sunday services in the Huddersfield area.

It was reported that tenders were received from First and one other operator who had only tendered for one service within the Batch. First had also submitted an alternative "company option" which sought to meet Metro's requirements through alternative timetables for some services. Acceptance of the option had reduced the annual cost of the batch by a significant amount. Members were informed that whilst the saving had been achieved by mileage reduction the optimisation of timetables meant that in most instances passengers' accessibility to services would be maintained.

RESOLVED - That the award of the contract as detailed in the submitted report be noted as being consistent with the Authority's policy for the provision of local bus services.

125. AWARD OF BUS SERVICE TENDERS – CALDERDALE DISTRICT

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the award of contracts as advertised in Batch 394 for local bus services in the rural areas of Calderdale.

It was reported that one tender had been received from First who had also tendered an alternative “company option” which sought to meet Metro’s requirements by alternative timetables for some services.

Concern was expressed that the “company option” would result in the loss of service from Wakefield Road and the reduction in frequency to Copley. In response it was commented that patronage on the Wakefield Road service was very poor and did not meet the Authority’s 6 and 20 criteria. Acceptance of the bid was therefore recommended. Opportunities to maintain a service along this route were however being examined utilising Section 106 funds secured by Calderdale MBC. The District Spokesperson agreed to assist in securing these funds.

RESOLVED - That the award of contracts as detailed in the submitted report be noted as being consistent with the Authority’s policy for the provision of local bus services.

126. AWARD OF CONTRACT – METROCONNECT HEBDEN BRIDGE NETWORK

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the results of tenders received for the MetroConnect Hebden Bridger local bus network.

It was reported that tenders were invited for a revised network, which reduced the service provided from a four to a three-bus operation. Only one tender was received from First, which represented a 25% increase in the price due to fuel and labour cost rises. Clarification and discussions had resulted in a reduction in the tender price for a five-year period, which was comparable to other similar type networks.

Comment was also made that First currently operate the Hebden Bridge and Todmorden network from the Todmorden depot. The current premises had operational limitations and the company were seeking alternative premises in the area. In tendering for both networks, First had based their prices on the operation from a local base. Operating the services from Halifax would increase operational costs. An alternative cost for the contract would be agreed with First in advance if that did occur.

Comment was also made that Services 591 and 593 which previously provided hourly links to Hebden Bridge and Halifax from Heptonstall and Old Town on a deminimis contract would now be run on a commercial basis following revisions made by First to their commercial network in the Calder Valley.

RESOLVED - That the award of a contract to First for the operation of the MetroConnect Hebden Bridger services be noted as being consistent with the Authority's policy for the provision of local bus services.

127. AWARD OF CONTRACT – METROCONNECT TODMORDEN

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the results of tenders received for the MetroConnect Todmorden network.

It was reported that two tenders had been received, the lowest being from First, which still represented a 48% increase from the previous award.

The Working Group was informed that the Rural Bus Challenge Scheme had included provision for a demand responsive bus or taxi bus service to supplement the local bus network. The only bid received was from First, which did not demonstrate value for money. Alternative options were therefore being considered prior to the issue of further tenders.

The Challenge Project included for new accessible buses to operate the local Todmorden network. Funding for vehicles would be provided by means of a grant under Section 106 of the Transport Act using the same arrangements that were in place on the MetroConnect Hebden Bridger network. The same specification of bus would be used to enable the fleet to be interchangeable between Hebden Bridge and Todmorden. It was planned to purchase the buses in March ready for the commencement of new contracts in April 2006.

RESOLVED - That the award of a contract to First for the operation of the MetroConnect Todmorden services be noted as being consistent with the Authority's policy for the provision of local bus services.