

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

**AT A MEETING OF THE BUS WORKING GROUP
HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON
WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2008**

PRESENT: Councillor D Congreve (Chair)
Councillors T Brice, C Campbell, K Rhodes and G Wainwright

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none received.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2007 be approved.

17. BUS ISSUES

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the progress in implementing the bus strategy and an update on the provisions of the Local Transport Bill.

Members were advised that progress was being made in scoping a potential Bus Quality Contract application in parallel with work on partnership approaches.

Demonstrating an understanding of costs, revenues and benefits would be a key component of a Bus Quality Contract application. Metro had been working with other PTEs to develop a financial model. Some preliminary work had also been undertaken on contract size, structure, specification and depot location.

Partnership Approaches

It was reported that following a meeting, the Bus Priority Programmes would be reviewed and a business case prepared for increased investment by First with the objective of achieving a 100% low floor fleet by 2011. In this respect

it was stressed that First had indicated that peak period journey time savings in the region of 6% would be required for their business case.

The Working Group were also advised that a £4.8m bid had been submitted for regional funding to accelerate traffic light priority linked to real time information across West and South Yorkshire.

Conditions of Contract for Tendered Services

The Working Group noted changes to conditions of contract for tendered services and work undertaken on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with operators which sought to enhance operator approach to staff development, customer care and corporate social responsibility.

Approaches to Tendered Services

The Working Group were advised that protocols were being prepared which would be reported to a future meeting for members' consideration.

Service Development

The Working Group noted the following recent service development initiatives:

- Metrolocal services piloted in Kirklees.
- FreeCity/town buses in Leeds, Huddersfield and Wakefield and the future introduction of a service in Bradford City Centre.
- Boxing Day services in Leeds and Huddersfield.
- New services linked to hospitals funded through the service development allocation.

Performance

The Working Group were given a progress report on the development of Punctuality Improvement Partnerships in Kirklees, Leeds, Calderdale and Bradford.

It was noted that there had been little progress made in Wakefield generally as attention had focussed on proposals for Wakefield city centre.

Local Transport Bill

It was reported that the Local Transport Bill had been debated by Parliament. Members were advised that the most significant issues which had arisen was the ability of operators to effectively veto aspects of Quality Partnership agreements and amendments to allow agreements between operators on co-ordinated timetables. Members expressed disappointment that an amendment submitted by *pteg* to allow PTA's to determine Quality Contracts and to give PTE's powers to be the 'operator of last resort' had not been accepted.

It was also reported that the Department for Transport were currently undertaking a consultation on the proposal for a bus passenger watchdog. It was the Working Group's view that a new body should be passenger focussed and not led by such groups as Bus Users UK as they were unrepresentative of the typical bus user.

RESOLVED -

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the *pteg* response with regard to the DfT consultation document on proposals for a bus passenger watchdog be endorsed.

18. INNOVATION FORUM

The Working Group considered a progress report of the Passenger Transport Executive on innovative partnership working in Huddersfield which represented a first in partnership working in the UK.

The Working Group were informed that the Innovation Forum had approved a grant of £12,500 per annum over 2 years.

With regard to freedoms and flexibilities, the Working Group were informed that the scheme potentially held difficulties for operators due to Competition Law.

In order to resolve these issues, Metro and Kirklees MC met with the DfT and OFT to discuss a means of progressing the following measures:

- Simplifying fares.
- Rationalising the bus network.
- Common branding.
- Performance Incentive Regime.
- New powers in Local Transport Bill to tender (or use de minimis contracts) for enhancements to services.

In this respect it was reported that an action plan and risk register had been compiled identifying the key actions that need to be undertaken and the key areas of risk, including operator acceptance which was key to its success. Meetings would be held with operators and a review would be undertaken on the next steps to be taken.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

19. AUDIT COMMISSION REVIEW OF BUS USAGE

The Working Group considered a report and presentation of the Audit Commission's review of bus usage in West Yorkshire and the initial responses to the recommendations set out in their report.

It was reported that following the Audit Commission's recent review, both Metro and the District Councils had now commented on the draft report. The Working Group were given a summary of the conclusions of the review, which included strong leadership by Metro, a high level of satisfaction with bus services and information, good understanding of community needs by Metro/District Councils, improved performance management partnerships and a clear structure for managing/reporting information. However, West Yorkshire was not on track to deliver its LTP target to increase bus patronage by 5% by 2010/11. It was acknowledged that issues surrounding the quality of the overall services, particularly fares and ticketing, punctuality and reliability were barriers to improve patronage. It was also suggested that measures including increased LTP investment and enhanced partnership working, including better liaison with District Councils, would improve outcomes.

It was, therefore, proposed that an action plan in response to the report be developed by the West Yorkshire authorities, the basis of which was set out in the submitted report.

RESOLVED - That the action plan, as outlined in the submitted report, be developed further through discussions with District Councils and operators and be reported to a future meeting of the Group.

20. ACCESSBUS UPDATE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on the AccessBus service.

The Working Group were given an update on the following:

- AccessBus Operating Contracts
- AccessBus Passenger Entitlement
- Changes to AccessBus telephone numbers
- Replacement AccessBus vehicles
- Taxi services
- Fleet issues
- Metro Local services

It was reported that the initial batch of low floor buses had been in service for 9 years and would require replacement or substantial refurbishment in the future. A number of options had been explored, including the use of funds from the Local Transport Plan and lease arrangements. The Working Group were informed that there was no easy solution due to financial constraints on the Authority's revenue budget and the Local Transport Plan funding profile.

It was reported that initial feedback from the first pilot phase of the MetroLocal concept had been extremely positive. Discussions were currently in progress with the Area Committees in Dewsbury, Mirfield, Batley, Birstall and Birkenshaw regarding the development of MetroLocal in these areas.

RESOLVED -

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That officers be requested to further investigate future options for the AccessBus service and that a report be prepared for a future meeting of the Authority.

21. MYBUS UPDATE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive giving an update on the Mybus project including:

- Project update.
- Results and end of project conference.
- Mybus project gains national recognition at awards ceremony.
- Future aspirations.

It was reported that since the launch of the first two Mybuses in January 2008 all 150 buses were now operational carrying over 9,000 registered pupils travelling on over 200 services at 140 schools.

The Working Group were reminded that at a previous meeting they had considered a number of primary schools which were not meeting patronage targets and had agreed that their operation should continue until Easter. Further promotional activities were being undertaken. It was therefore considered prudent to continue the operation of services during the summer so that assessment of projected use from September could be made.

The Working Group were also given an update on recent incidents relating to Mybus in the Bradford and Calderdale Districts.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.