

**Minutes of YBF Branch Meeting: West Offices – Tuesday 10 January '17 (18:00 – 19:30)**

**Present:** Ron Healey (Chair), Toby Hart (minutes' taker); Graham Collett, John Bibby (Convenor); Dave Merrett; Diana Robinson; Alan Dawes (Transport Action Group, Rawcliffe Parish Council); Carole Green (Bishophorpe Parish Council); June Trammer; Mary Hartington; Marc Bichtemann (Managing Director, First Bus in York); Neil Bailey (Operations Director, First Bus in York).

1. **Introduction – Chair (Ron Healey):** A representative from Rawcliffe Parish Council's Transport Advisory Committee attended and was introduced.
2. **Apologies:** Dee Boyle; Eleanor Tew; Andy D'agorne
3. **Minutes of the last meeting held on 08/11/2016:** these were agreed as being an accurate of what was agreed and reflection of items discussed and were formally accepted.
4. **Matters Arising:**
  - a) As reported at the previous meeting progress had been made with setting up YBF website and feedback had been sought, but Ron since experienced difficulty accessing the website. b
  - b) Regarding the council's recent joint ticketing initiative with operators, Dave Merrett had advised that he had deferred seeking an update from the city council on progress made with smart ticketing initiatives owing to being unwell around the time he had set aside to do this.
  - c) With regard to the contact that had so far been made with parish councils in the area, it was suggested by the chair we needed to widen our attempts to make contact with a wider range of potentially interested groups.
  - d) The representative from Rawcliffe Parish Council's Transport Advisory Committee who was in attendance then gave an overview of the sorts of issues that the organisation was concerned with. These ranged from access to Park and Ride, with a ¾ mile stretch with no stops, conventional bus - and in particular the lack of evening buses - to taxi bus and dial-a-ride. Alan finished on a positive note by advising that the Rawcliffe Residents' taxi-bus scheme had been reprieved as a result of the firm responsible for providing this service had been rescued from going out of business. Following on from this update, the Chair, RH, referred to the alternative sources of funding secured by the Dales bus and that this is something we should, as a group, be exploring.
5. **Reports – Finance/membership**The Treasurer said he did not have a great deal to report but gave an estimation of the current membership as standing at approximately 60, and that there had been a teething problem with the bank account. At this point, the chair interjected to query the membership rates that had appeared on the mock-up of the website - Graham said they were notional numbers and would be duly clarified. It was also suggested in relation to communicating members that we should use electronic notification as the primary means of keeping people informed of the group developments and activities.
6. **AGM Arrangements – constitution etc.** The date for the AGM was confirmed as being Tuesday, 04 April and that Rachel Maskell, MP would be attending. Although the venue had yet to be confirmed the Railway Institute, Priory Street Centre and the Friends' Meeting house were amongst those suggested. The time of the meeting was agreed as being the slightly earlier time of 17:15 for a 17:30 start. It was also suggested we publicise the meeting by means of a press release. The matter of the constitution was raised which some felt was too woolly for anything other than a starting constitution. At this point, it was agreed that any comments that members had should be sent to Graham, with a specific

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suggestion being mentioned by DM that Officers matters should be dealt with in alternate months, starting from after the AGM.

**7. First York Presentation by Managing Director, Marc Bichtemann and Neil Bailey, Operations Director,**

The two representatives were introduced by the Chairman, followed by the MD's opening comments that there had been a lot of change managerially in the last year. Besides himself and Neil, there was also Rachel Benn, Business delivery manager, covering the park & ride & University bus contracts, Paul Shon (?), Engineering manager, plus a training manager and a new network manager.

He went on to say that he felt it was more efficient to respond to issues raised by user groups in person rather than by written correspondence.

**8. Response to points raised in the letter sent by YBF:**

1) **Service reductions** Marc went on to outline the company's current priorities which continue to be the further reviewing of the changes made in August 2015, with the next route to have a more detailed bottom up review undertaken being Service 6, which was suffering overcrowding and reliability problems, with a 16th April relaunch. He apologised for the delay while they'd been recruiting appropriate expertise, but said the service was coping in the post Xmas lull. It was asked if that meant a return to a 10, not 15 minute service? Maybe. At this point, it was asked by DR if consultation would be undertaken as part of this exercise and was advised that the company did not favour this as encouraged individual's with their own agenda who not necessarily representative of a greater number of customers. In response to this DR pointed out that Parish Councils were stakeholders that would potentially represent a number of local residents' views. Marc added that there might still be standing at peak times, but they would not be leaving people standing at the stops. It's partly been an issue of services not running to time. He also that that overall bus usage had increased in the previous 12 months. A question was asked if First rated all customers equally in their evaluations. Marc replied yes – a full bus of concessionary fare payers is viable. A further question was asked about the possibility of routing alternate No 6 services via Rawcliffe in the evening when there was no No 19 or 20.

2) **Cancellation of Services:** covered in point 3

3) **Staff Shortages:** The MD responded by stating that the situation had improved recently following retirements, disciplinary and others leaving for other jobs. There had been some mis-reporting of this in the local press which they believed was down a disgruntled member of staff who may have been one of those they had needed to dismiss over poor performance. The problem was now largely overcome, but mileage had dropped. They have both spare drivers and buses, though the former are always the constraint.

4) **Lack of Availability of Printed Timetables:** covered in point 5

5) **Poor Level of information about service changes:** We then moved onto the issues raised by members around publicity and communication and what a number of people felt were problems caused by the inadequate levels provided by the company. The company's initial response to this was to cite the internet as the means that was increasingly be made use of and that printed material was the more traditional method and the latter had a place for the time being but probably less so in the future. They went onto to comment further in support of this view by saying that if prospective customers wanted to find out about services they could do so and that the company

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would even print off copies of pages from the website and post them to the customer's address. At this point a number of members took issue with this approach by citing examples of changes they had not been aware and only found out through word of mouth or misfortune. One example of this that was mentioned by the Bishopthorpe Parish Council representative was the experimental route 500 and asked if it could be promoted in the local newsletter with First York agreeing to provide details by email. Another example DM pointed out was the case of the service 14, as timetables not been available for at least 6 months. GC suggested that YBF may be able to help if any planned changes were communicated by email, which the company said it would look into this possibility with wider stakeholders and was prepared to listen over concerns about lack of timetable leaflets.

- 6) **Too-Small vehicles:** covered in point 8
- 7) **P&R Services should Cater for Local Travellers/Residents More:** the point about serving more intermediate stops to cater for local residents was covered and re-routing of existing services to fill gaps left in the network, particularly during evenings and Sundays. There were, however, conflicting views as to how this should be done with DR arguing that an additional stop on the number 2 to serve Shipton Road would have minimal impact on the service and its existing users, whereas company felt this may have a negative impact on existing users' perceptions – a view which was shared to some extent by another member. The company did, however, indicate, that they were looking at a number of options for extending travel opportunities and these included cross-city links on park and ride and running buses slightly later into the evening.
- 8) **Older, Lesser Quality Vehicles:** The MD said they had transferred double deck vehicles from Scotland to increase capacity where the greatest need for this had been identified – such as on the number 6 route - but that the level of profitability of the company could not justify brand new vehicles at this stage. They were going to replace the Euro II vehicles with Euro IIIs
- 9) **Service 10 re-routing away from the Station:** The MD said that the company were not willing to re-route the No 10 via the station because of the extra journey time. They had noted our members' concern about the location and inadequacy of the stop in Leeman Road. The company would get in touch with York Council about the possibility of improving the lighting and/or moving it nearer to the footpath to the station rear.

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The Chair then thanked the First York for attending and the meeting closed at 19:30 hours.