

Notes of YBF Meeting 5:30pm 19 September 2018 **at West Offices**

1. Chair's Introduction and Welcome

Graham Collett (GC) in the chair welcomed Outer York MP, Julian Sturdy (JS), Peter Dew (PD) - Executive Member for Transport, and Julian Ridge (JR) - Better Bus Program Manager, City of York Council, members and visitors, noting apologies from Cllr Mary Cannon, Carole Green and Gail Shuttleworth. Attendance record is lodged in the YBF files.

2. Minutes of 19th June 2018 Forum meeting and Matters arising

These were approved. Item 5 (Bus Station Report) - the Forum's bus interchange proposals had been discussed at the previous evening's meeting and were being taken forward with City of York Council. Item 6 (Bus Matters) – these were being taken forward by the Chair.

3. Presentation by Julian Sturdy MP for York Outer 'The Outlook for York's Bus Services'

Julian noted the positive interventions the Forum had made since its foundation - he had some particular views as the MP for outer York on bus issues there.

He described the provisions of the 2017 Bus Services Act stating it was a means for Local Authorities (LAs) to improve bus services. It is an enabling Act, and the DfT wanted to see more people taking bus journeys as part of a greener transport agenda. Of particular interest to York was the provision for councils to specify a bus route network for their area and tender the services they required. However, this was dependent on a mayoral authority covering York being established. He noted the sense of frustration in the City that they were outside of that currently, but he was a believer in devolution, and wanted to see that across the region. It might be smaller or larger areas, and may start small, but head to a larger pan Yorkshire authority. He had correspondence about the lack of franchising outside of mayoral areas and acknowledged the frustration on that. He noted that West Yorkshire will be able to take up the powers, and the need for logical areas from a governance point of view, also that higher growth was occurring outside metropolitan areas – he wondered why – was it more untapped demand in those areas? The whole thrust of the Act was there is no single solution – LAs were best placed to decide what was right for their areas. He recognised that there were funding issues, but the Act should not be seen as Government simply passing the buck to LAs. JS offered his help to the Forum in trying to resolve any problems experienced by bus users.

On Clean Air Zones it was right that York was being ambitious, but recognised concerns over smaller bus operators being able to comply, and that it was still a stiff financial challenge for larger operators. There needs to be sensible phasing.

On Talking buses, regulations which have yet to be implemented would require bus operators to provide audible and visual announcements of each stop – an issue which the Forum was pressing First York to implement as soon as possible. It was noted that some of the other bus companies serving York already offer these announcements.

Finally he talked about some of his constituency issues. He recognised he tends only to get the big issues, like complete loss of services – smaller ones tend to go direct to the Council or local Councillors. Equally it was sometimes from people who didn't use the service, but wanted it to be there if they did need it. He referred to the Stephenson's situation, which he felt the Council had handled well. Then Utopia's closure followed completely out of the blue, which affected a couple of rural areas – recognised that the City Council was somewhat tied by the County Council's response. He wasn't a North Yorkshire MP and he was very frustrated by the position, ditto local Councillors – they'd found it difficult to get responses. There needed to be joined up Local Authority responses. Peter Dew added his own comments on the Stephenson's and sorting the No. 18 situation.

4. **Questions to Julian and Open Forum**

A wide-ranging discussion on current York bus issues followed. ET asked why there was no money to accompany the devolution of powers? Julian acknowledged there should be, though the main thrust was on enabling. Julian Ridge (JR) from the Council said the Act did allow the Council to do a number of new things through partnerships with operators. Advanced partnerships allowed binding partnerships based on policy commitments, not just funding as before. Enhanced partnerships were potentially much more developed than previous versions. There were also more powers over registrations – before the Council had to simply accept service terminations, now they had powers to request information from the operator on the numbers of passengers and revenue for the current service, and to challenge, or to seek a new operator. He felt the Act was good. JB queried the impact on the Utopia case. JR explained that was different as Utopia had ceased trading as a business, not simply withdrawn.

DR asked about the lack of evening services for the Rawcliffe area. Peter Dew responded on, with several further exchanges, with a particular request for the park & Ride service to stop at the Mitre. Stuart from First York noted the limited Park & Ride stops was a Council contract requirement and not in First's gift. However he pointed to the No. 600 electric bus experiment for Bishopthorpe, and said he'd take away and have a look at. Peter Dew referred to his past operational experience of combining routes to provide higher frequency services, leading to much higher usage than the previous separate services combined - he linked this to users seeing the higher frequency service being seen as lower risk of no bus turning up. Peter also referenced the Holme on Spalding Moor service where York and East Riding were jointly funding the Monday to Friday services, with the parish Council funding the the weekends. He noted he was under pressure to find savings in the current CoYC £700k social bus network support budget.

RH raised the No. of empty service bus runs, and why services back to town couldn't be run. PD noted this may be because the drivers would run over their legal time. Stuart said First would be reviewing in January.

RJ said he lived at New Earswick and the ¾ hour delay he'd experience getting through the Clarence St. Congestion. He also raised the level of concessionary fare payments to operators – 40% for some, but only 20% for the Moors Bus. JR said the principle of the 1985 Bus Act was that operators are compensated for actual costs – no more, no less. In practice it was subject to negotiation between Councils and operators. Some services have

higher concessionary use, but concessionaries wouldn't be making the journey if the service wasn't there. JS recognised that some services were still not viable, but he hoped the Northern outer ring road (ORR) roundabout improvements would reduce the congestion problems, but still not dualling it. Tony Clarke from the Council said the council was actively pursuing funding for some selective dualling – some funding announcements were imminent. PD added that a lot of funding comes via the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport fund, which he attended in a non-voting capacity. JB raised whether the ORR dualling would include any bus priorities, and whether it would just generate more traffic. JS said if get money for dualling, it was always going to be in stages, but the Council had to look at an integrated transport package - he went on to say he'd always supported an integrated transport system. He wondered why the market couldn't deliver this.

TH said he lived in Dunnington and their last service back in the evening was at 7:30pm, which only left getting a Taxi back. Stuart said he have a look at.

A comment was made about poorly or too closely spaced bus stops. Stuart acknowledged the issue and said this was often for historic reasons – he wondered if the Council had reviewed. JR outlined the process and difficulties involved in moving stops, and need to seek agreement with others, but that stops were being constantly moved.

DM raised the air quality issues and massive health toll from diesel vehicles. He suggested that the Government needed to improve the green bus funding to accelerate the change to clean buses, should prosecute and fine the motor manufacturers that had failed to implement the new engine standards as in Germany, and should introduce a diesel scrappage scheme for the older dirty diesel vehicles linked to incentives to purchase electric alternatives. JS acknowledged that those were good points, and there had been confusion in how to address the issue. Some companies were setting ambitious targets. Equally people were delaying vehicle purchase decisions because of the confusion. He felt the Government does need to do more. He wasn't against a scrappage scheme but care was needed on the detail not to create perverse incentives. More work needs to be done by the Government. He noted that York had done well on the Green Bus side. The frustration is over making a policy that everyone can buy into, and has the clarity that people can be confident in making decisions from. Stuart said the technology was still developing - First would like to use electrics on their evening services rather than be charging them.

The Chair and the meeting thanked Julian Sturdy and Peter Dew for attending, speaking and answering questions.

5. **AOB and Future meetings**

RH raised Green Great Britain week in October. JB said the next meeting would be an open committee meeting on Tuesday 16th October. This would be followed by a general meeting on Tuesday November 20th when it was hoped to have a speaker from Bus Users UK on the subject of the difficulties facing bus users experiencing mental health issues.