

York Bus Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 17th December 2019, West Offices

Present: Ray Walker (Chair), Graham Collett (Vice-Chair), Brian Nye (BN), Stuart Irvine (SI), Toby Hart, Duncan Miller, John Whitworth, Gordon Smith, David Stuart, Barry Thomas, Ben Hughes, Doreen Magill, Debby Cobbett, Mrs Hart, Lionel Lennox.

In attendance: Martin Higginson (Guest Speaker), Brandon Jones (First Group) (BJ), Barry Bottomley (Yorkshire & Humber Pensioners Convention)

1. Apologies: Niall McFerran (Secretary), Mary Cannon, Tony Hudson, Dave Merrett, Councillor Edward Pearson, Gail Shuttleworth

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 19th November

These were agreed.

3. Guest Speaker – Dr M P Higginson Transport Research and Consultancy

‘The Real FTR: Three Stages to Making York’s Buses the Mode of Choice’

Dr Higginson described the three stages as:

Stage 1 Quick Wins - Achievable quickly and cheaply (over the life of the current City Council), without major infrastructure engineering

Making roads easy and safe to cross to and from bus stops
Simple and good value fares
Much better marketing
‘Legible’ network with easy interchange between services, whoever runs them

Stage 2 Medium Term Proposals (Achievable within 5 years)

Road traffic reduction

More bus gates

Improve terminals and interchanges to help buses move quickly and efficiently
Improve routes to and from the station, across the city centre, suburb to suburb, to out of town commercial, entertainment and employment centres

Stage 3 – Long Term Aspirations (Schemes which could take a decade or more to implement)

Comprehensive network of orbital services

Develop Park & Ride sites as hubs for a wide range of local services

Public transport for new developments

Advanced concept of mass transit, e.g. largely segregated bus routes, rail transit or light trams.

More details are given in his presentation slides which will shortly be available on the YBF website (paper copies can be supplied on request to anyone who is unable to access these).

4. Questions and Discussion

Dr Higginson's proposals were welcomed. He pointed out that for these to be introduced, a more pro-active approach was needed from bus operators (eg on branding and promotion of services) and from the Council, which seemed to lack an overall bus strategy. He stressed the importance of the Council deciding on their approach and sticking to it. There was general agreement on the need for bus gates to restrict highway capacity at the main entry points to the city and on a reduction in city centre parking - both public and private.

BJ said that there was some partnership with bus operators (eg in providing evening park and ride services), but only limited prioritisation for buses. There were also lots of opportunities for operators to work with retailers – especially on the less well-used services. There was the opportunity to use technology to improve the real-time information system. The new park and ride fleet will have audio-visual (AV) announcements and the rest of the fleet will be upgraded to the same standard. The Bus Services Act requires AV on all buses, although the implementation arrangements are not yet known. On branding and promotion, he said that there would be a significant effort with the new park and ride fleet and this might trigger further work.

Dr Higginson also drew attention to the difficulties of access from the outer areas of the city, where bus services were less frequent – especially in the evenings and on Sundays. He suggested that Council Officers needed to get together to address the issue, taking specific areas one by one eg Copmanthorpe.

Ray Walker (RW) said that he had drafted a letter to Councillor Andy D'Agorne, seeking a statement on how the new Council intend to operate on bus matters – will they ensure buses get priority? Debbie Cobbett pointed out the need for urgent action as York is expected to have used up its carbon budget in 6 or 7 years. RW said that this point was being made very strongly in the letter.

In answer to a question about the need to address the transport needs of each part of the city, Graham Collett said that the results of the recent York Civic Trust/ York Environment

Forum/York Bus Forum Survey, (expected to be released in early January) would provide valuable information which would feed in to the next Local Transport Plan.

5. Printed Timetables/December 1st Service Alterations

BJ said that early indications were that the new timetables were significantly better, although it was too early to say because of the Christmas traffic impact. It would, however, need more resources to go from a 40 minute frequency to clock-face timetables.

Toby Hart said that First York's approach to timetabling compared badly with other local operators and with First's approach in other areas. Doreen McGill drew attention to an out of date timetable being shown for the No 11. There was also a call for bus stop timetables (eg for the No 12) to be made more legible. The new earlier Sunday bus from Clifton Moor on the No 6 was not shown in the timetable.

David Stuart described the problems he had experienced in getting a No 1 bus home to Haxby from the city on the previous Friday, due to bunching and several buses being taken out of service. He had reported these to First Customer Services and wanted to ensure that the issue was being addressed. BJ explained the impact Christmas shopping traffic was having on punctual bus operation. He agreed to pursue Mr Stuart's concerns and report back.

RW said that there needed to be shared control arrangements between the Council and bus operators eg by First York having their controller based in the Council's West Offices Control Centre.

6. Date of Next Meeting

This was confirmed as Tuesday, January 21st (5.30pm at West Offices).

GC 13/1/20