

York Bus Forum Meeting Tuesday 20th December 2022 17.30 by Zoom

Attending; Doreen Magill (Chair), Graham Collett (Vice Chair), Niall McFerran (Secretary) Dave Merrett, Roger French (Finance and Membership), Flick Williams, Tom Bridge (First), Michael Howard (CYC), Terry French, Catherine Odell, Eleanor Tew, Richard Parker, Jim – Harbus, Carole Green, Iris Wells, John Slaughter, David Stuart, George Wood, Tony Hudson, John Bibby, Alan Robinson, Mary Fairbrother, Duncan Millar and George Wood.

1. Chair welcomed attendees and reported apologies from Kevin Fradley, Rachel Melly and Gail Shuttleworth

2. The minutes of the November meeting were accepted, and the names of Tony Hudson and David Stuart added to the attendees.

3. **Michael Howard from CYC** announced that he had recently been appointed Head of Active and Sustainable Transport. He outlined the achievements and challenges faced by his team throughout 2022. To date CYC have received £4.5M of the £17.3M BSIP funding with work ongoing to secure the remaining funds and it had been agreed with the Department for Transport that some would be carried forward to 2023/24 financial year. He added that of the 35 authorities that have been awarded funds only 13 had received any yet.

The £2 maximum fare has been adopted by all York operators and will run Jan/Feb/Mar.

He reported the negative impacts of increased operator running costs and driver shortages which have resulted in service cutbacks. He went on to respond to a series of questions asked by members.

GW asked about printed bus timetables and was advised these are available at the Visit York shop in Parliament Street. When asked when a new bus map will be produced it was suggested that the services may undergo further changes so it would be best to stabilise the current position first and suggested it would be Spring 2023 before revised bus maps would be available.

GW also asked about duplication of services to Copmanthorpe and it was suggested that this issue should be presented to the Enhanced Partnership (EP) Stakeholder Forum meeting.

The question regarding advertising on the J.C DeCaux shelters was discussed and as the contract is up for renewal at the end of 2023 MH agreed to raise the issue of badly placed advertising material for discussion at the EP Passenger Liaison Group. The issue of the working and provision for electronic information boards was raised and this is a subject of much hard work. MH acknowledged problems which they were trying to resolve. A further 100 electronic signs were to be provided as part of the BSIP plan. MH requested that his team be informed of all faults by email to Buses@york.gov.uk.

MH said the Council had repaired a number of bus shelters. However sometimes this was delayed to give time to address repeat vandalism issues first.

RF advocated that there should be a one week standard for getting new timetables up at stops. MH said the Council team was very small to do the updates.

RF asked about service levels within public subsidy agreements. MH advised his team was working hard to improve the current situation.

MH advised that responding to complaints on service deficiencies was problematic due to staff shortages. Delay around the Christmas markets was caused by high traffic which the transport team are working to manage.

When asked what criteria are applied to bus stop upgrades MH suggested that this be brought to the EP Stakeholder Forum. There is sufficient funding within BSIP to provide for extra bus stop shelters.

Asked why the No.10 stop at the Banana Warehouse stop in Piccadilly was still being used, MH responded that Coppergate had been approved as one-way by the Executive in December 2022; the City Centre Bus Study will report on it but no changes were proposed at this time. They were looking at a short term fix, but bearing in mind it wouldn't be there very long.

On the subject of ageing buses on the 11 and 12 services, MH responded that the fleet would receive an additional 51 new vehicles next year from the ZEBRA funding and that the Optare buses on the fleet would shortly be returning following refurbishment which he said would then go on to the number 11 route (NB these have lower capacity). His role is to encourage bus operators to use the best vehicles available to improve passenger experience.

When asked about Sunday services to Bishopthorpe, MH had no answer at this time. In response to observations about congestion from Richard Parker and David Stuart, MH said that he is aware of the problems of congestion around Wiggington Road and Fulford Road and this will be the subject of further studies. Regarding pollution levels in Gillygate he said this would be picked up in the City Centre Bus Study as would the issue of any potential congestion charge. MH indicated that YBF and the EP would be consulted as the study progressed.

MH confirmed that the 13 Saturday service and 412 service will be supported by BSIP funding on a short-term contract basis up to the end of March – both continuing to be run by Connexions . They will look to retender for 23/4.

MH confirmed that the Station Front project is proceeding with completion anticipated at the end of 2023, he did not expect delays.

The re-opening of Poppleton Park and Ride is expected to occur in spring 2023 in time for Easter.

When asked about accurate bus passenger numbers, MH replied that he expects to be able to share this information shortly.

The question of clawing back subsidy payments if service levels fall below accepted levels was raised. MH conformed that if levels fall more than 1% in a given accounting period or 10% on a given day, this is an option. He confirmed that CYC are commissioning base-line studies to establish norms of passenger satisfaction.

The process of re-tendering of services will be carried out to bring operators to account.

MH said that the BSIP funding would be allocated as per the documents that had been submitted to the City Council and appendices shared with YBF. He also indicated that the scheme for January- March £2 single fare was being picked up by local operators but he had little information to date on how it would be publicised. However, this could be something of a distraction from the main issue of attracting bus passengers back to buses permanently if operators simply then reduced services once the reduced fare period, funded by the DfT, was withdrawn, along with no extension to the current bus support measures due to end 31 March 2022.

DMag asked that if First decline to open the Poppleton Bar P&R, would this be offered to another operator? MH declined to comment.

FW asked why the Councillors had been asked to nominate the bus stops where electronic boards could be erected, as this should have been agreed at the EP Forum. MH replied that they were working with a broad range of groups.

TB added that Poppleton P&R will be ready to operate at Easter as the driver position has improved. They have had to recruit further afield.

DM expressed concern that the recent spate of widescale service cancellations had done damage to the reputation of the bus service in the city, particularly for discretionary users. Would the Council take into account the consequentially depressed bus usage figures on funded services when they were being retendered. MH shared his concerns – the new real time displays would help. DMag asked if the displays would show cancellations. MH said they were looking to remove ghosting and improve their reliability.

NM asked how the recent Council motion instructing representatives to engage in bus affairs will help. MH said he welcomed the move.

NM also asked about the title to the buses purchased under the ZEBRA scheme and could they be moved away from York? MH confirmed that they are contractually obliged to remain in York.

NM asked how many bus shelters could be provided under the BSIP funding as it appears only £250,000 is currently allocated? MH said they were working up a detailed program which the bus studies would influence. They will provide info as it becomes available to the EP / Bus Forum.

NM also suggested that an overview document providing a summary of the benefits provided by the BSIP funding be produced, MH felt this was unnecessary.

FW pointed out that the new ZEBRA buses destined for the city have only one disabled space whereas vehicles from the same supplier are being provided to other cities with two spaces. MH agreed to investigate this further.

FW also reminded MH that one of the chief causes for delay of passenger boarding at bus stop was the deployment of manual ramps for disabled passengers. The use of electronic ramps would reduce delays, MH agreed to look into this.

Tap on Tap off was raised. This was a new system for Yorkshire and concern was expressed about the lack of publicity, leading to a risk of passengers being overcharged.

DM asked if allocated bus funds by York would be passed to the new devolved authority when it takes over control of transport? MH said he did not know at this

stage, discussions were still going on, but the BSIP programme was unlikely to be affected.

AR asked if the current transport team will be expanded to carry out additional work? MH replied that recruitment is under way.

DMag thanked MH for his time and helpful answers.

4. First EP Stakeholder Forum meeting report (28th November) – this was to have been given by GC but he had lost contact due to a technical issue. DM stepped in to report that the initial impressions were good, but some issues remained on the ‘process’ and engagement with the main ‘Board’. The initial chair, who will also be on the main partnership board, had been appointed by the Council and was from the Confederation of Public Transport (CPT) regionally. The absence of any operators from the meeting had been raised, but a proposal that particular operators attend the meetings in turn had emerged later in the meeting.

The meeting frequency was agreed as quarterly. It was agreed to hold face to face meetings just ahead of main Board in order to pass comments on its agenda to the Board. A second wash up meeting (on line) would follow the main board to give feedback on it. There is already a suggestion that a representative from a user group sit on the Board, and also on the performance sub-group. These are early days, so it will take time for the changes from the QBP to be established.

5. Network Review – again GC unable to comment, but we were represented by GC at the Council Exec. meeting and there remain several concerns.

6. Rural Buses – needs a holistic approach to the problem of funding for rural services as many are threatened with closure. JH expressed grave concerns given the poor track record of NYCC in supporting bus services. March/April will see the end of central funding and could see many services lost.

7. Any Other Business There was no extra business.

8. Date of next meeting January 17th 2023