

York Bus Forum Meeting Tuesday 15th November 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, Catherine Croston (First), Michael Howard (CYC), Jason Murgatroyd, Terry French, Richard Seaton, Adam Davies, Elanor Tew, Richard Parker, Toby Hart, Kevin Fradley, Richard Byron, Wayne Cumberland, Stewart Darley, Carole Green, Glen Simpson, Iris Wells, Ian Anderson, Andrew Hayes, Sue Walker, Roger Pierce, Richard Seaton, Margaret Bicham, Celia Loughran, John Slaughter, Mary Cannon, Heather Marvin and George Wood.

1. The Chair welcomed delegates and was pleased to see so many new faces. Apologies had been sent by Barry Connor, Mary Fairbrother and Lionel Lennox.
2. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted, there were no matters arising.
3. Talk by staff from First York led by Catherine Croston (Head of Operations) assisted by Wayne Cumberland and Andy Hayes.

CC outlined that First have a 25-year history of providing services in York and a staff of around 250. They are successfully turning the bus fleet into electrical operation with more ZEBRA buses arriving in March 2023.

Their current problems are the passenger numbers which have only grown back to 85% of previous use and driver shortages 9 (currently 14% short) for which they are actively recruiting.

First is well engaged with the York community, involved in the District Hospital, Universities, Food Banks and recently a men's mental health charity Menfulness. They communicate through digital media and leaflet drops to promote new services and advertise on radio.

WC outlined the extensive driver training programme which costs around £7K and runs for seven weeks. In addition to driving skills, staff are trained on care of disabled customers, cycle safety and awareness and improving the customer experience.

The training model used in the industry standard 'Smiths' regime.

Analysis of the reasons from drivers leaving indicated it was linked to the unsocial hours which has led to improved driver support in forum meetings and offering recruitment incentives. Also there has been positive encouragement to recruit more women onto the team as the need for a good spirit in the workforce is vital.

DMag thanked the First team for their presentation and asked if they had any success recruiting from rival operators? CC responded that there is a limited pool of qualified drivers which is why they place emphasis on recruitment of new staff.

FW asked why no hydrogen powered buses in fleet? CC responded that the York infrastructure supports EV vehicles.

GC congratulated First on their training programme and asked if the figure quoted for 55 new drivers a week was just for York? CC answered that it was for the country.

NM asked what was the major problem facing bus drivers in York? The unanimous response was congestion. CC asked if we had any opportunity to lobby in the city to push for measures to reduce private traffic in the centre.

RF enquired about unforeseen delays and if there is a policy for diverting buses? CC said yes if there is a need, vehicles can be diverted.

IA asked if the stops on Elmfield Avenue that do not have flag posts are pointed out to drivers? CC responded that drivers are taught where all stops exist even those without poles.

RP suggested that route of the NO.6 around Clifton Moor could be improved as much time is lost in housing estates. CC said this could be considered

TH asked why bus stop times are sometimes shown in just one direction? CC said this could be looked at.

RP reminded all that during COVID buses ran exactly to time can this be restored? CC again suggested we make representation.

DMag asked how optimistic First are for the bus services In York? CC said she felt the future was very promising.

4. RPF presented the Financial Reports, which were approved.

5. BSIP etc.

MH advised that everything is progressing in line with expectations. There will be £1M from the BSIP money used to maintain current services. The first EP Forum meeting will be held on November 28th which will be attended by GC on behalf of the Bus Forum and DM on behalf of the Trades Union.

MH announced that a further 7 EV buses have now been awarded bringing the total to 53 in the fleet. GC pointed out that the University of York had provided some new buses but that they were diesel!

MH also announced that First was to have a new bus livery. He pointed out that BSIP will provide enough funds to improve bus reliability by reducing congestion particularly on the radial routes. The EP Operational Delivery Group has had its first meeting and will implement improvements.

RPF asked if the BSIP money is with CYC? MH responded that this year's money was imminent, He also asked why Poppleton Bar P&R had not been reopened? MH said it was being reviewed and would open when commercially viable.

FW asked if award could be impacted by this week's Financial Statement? MH didn't know but this was to be approved at Decembers Exec Meeting.

NM asked if the No. 11 and 12 services would be retained in their current forms? MH replied that there were no plans to change them and if operators advised that they did not want to continue with routes they would be re-tendered. He emphasised that the need to stabilise and improve the network was paramount.

DM advised that all the recent buses he has travelled on were busy, MH responded that the patronage was patchy **with variable patronage even along different parts of the same route.**

6. Bus Stop Charter and CYC motion

It was advised that the agreed Charter will be sent to all the Councillors and as part of the new Council motion for elected representatives to work with officers and operators on bus matters we are now looking for progress.

7. Bus reliability

RF commented that Transdev are cancelling fewer services **in the last few days**, but it is still happening, he is still corresponding with First to produce statistics for this problem.

GC reported that the 412 service which starts in Wetherby but enters York via Knapton is under threat, our hope is that this is being re-tendered.

8. York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority

DM advised that the public consultation for this process is currently under way. The new elected Mayor will have overall responsibility for Transport, but our concern is they may have a rural focus rather than York. The mayor will have the power to franchise services which could provide better public accountability. The closing date for the public views is 16th December.

9. AOB

It was advised that the YBF posters have now been removed from First buses, but the digital signs remain.

10. Date of next meeting Tuesday 20th December. A members Forum addressed by MH