York Bus Forum – Members Monthly Meeting 17.30-19.00 Tuesday 15th August 2023, by Zoom

Attending: Doreen Magill (Chair), Graham Collett (Vice Chair), Niall McFerran (Secretary), Roger French, Christine Cooke, Eden Blyth, Debby Cobbett, Jim Forrest, Roger Pierce, Tony Hudson, Jason Murgatroyd, Diana Robinson, Andy D’Agorne, Lionel Lennox, George Wood, Richard Parker, Dave Merrett, Flick Williams, John Bibby, Ian Anderson, Tom Bridge (First), Tom Donnelly (First), Mary Fairbrother, Edwin Barry Connor and David Stuart.

1. The Chair welcomed delegates and reported apologies from; Gail Shuttleworth, Robin Jorimann, Terry French, Julian Ridge, Pete Kilbane, Mary Cannon, Iris Wells, John Slaughter, Toby Hart, Kevin Fradley and Michael Howard.
2. Presentation by Tom Bridge, Operations Director of First.

He reported that the reliability levels of their buses in York is currently very good following some difficult years.

The driver position is improved with no loan drivers currently being used. This has required an uplift of 20% on driver salaries. Brexit and COVID are still impacting their business. A big impact could come from moves in Manchester to establish a single driver pay rate.

Improvements in last six month of STA’s (Start Time Adherences) which are monitored by GPS, York has the best performance of the group.

P&R patronage is back to previous levels, but it is not uniform. City network is now 96% recovered with commuter and concessionary travel still down.

Price inflation has negatively impacted costs and margins.

Wrightbus deliveries are underway, and the depot upgrade is progressing. The target is to be net zero by 2024.

Plan is to convert P&R sites into transport hubs being open for 24 hours and to provide interchanges for out-of-town services linking to city centre destinations.

DMag thanked Tom for his talk.

ADA asked how many wheelchair spaces will there be on the new buses? TB thought possibly two but will check. FW suggested that there will only be one space.

DMag reminded TB that YBF are calling for two spaces on each bus, alongside the new fleets in Manchester and Liverpool.

DR suggested that First consider allowing the No.9 service to stop at Monkgate, TB replied that he would consider the suggestion.

NM asked if any of the recent cost increases are likely to be reversed? TB suggested that the price of diesel might reduce.

EBC asked if the electric buses would require top-up charging points. TB agreed that this may be necessary.

TH raised concerns regarding evening service levels and the reductions in late night buses. TB agreed that whereas punctuality of services has improved there is a reduction in customer satisfaction.

RP felt that access for disabled passengers was still inadequate and interior design is failing to keep up with modern demands.

LL focussed on the services to York Hospital considering the recent withdrawal of the P7R bus. Surely these can be improved, and the relevant parties can reach an understanding. TB advised that the money subsidising the previous service is now funding free travel for NHS staff.

ADA asked what First are doing to improve bus services in York? TB advised that Tom Donnelly has been recruited to achieve improvements.

FW asked why the performance of the Askham Bar P&R is poor? TD advised that the fall in commuter traffic affected its performance.

RF pointed out that the plans to upgrade the P&R were discussed years ago, why no progress? TD agreed that things must be speeded up.

GC advised that local marketing is poor, and this may be an area that we can assist. It was suggested that along with Bishopthorpe we may be able to promote the No. 11 service.

EBC asked what impact is expected from the change to the new combined authority? TB suggested that franchising would not improve the picture.

NM asked how well TOTO is going as there does not seem to be much use from observation. TB advised it is not going as well as would have been liked and more work is required.

1. Minutes of last meeting accepted.
2. Enhanced Partnership

GC reported that there is still no dialogue between users and operators making the whole process of little value.

ADA reported that there are some administration improvements, such as future meeting dates advice, but the whole process requires greater transparency.

TB reiterated that First are willing to attend EP Forum meetings and would endeavour to improve support.

RP felt that this type of meeting would be regarded as non-productive and so would be uninteresting for senior managers.

GC felt that all operators should supply a representative to the meetings and reported that YBF has written to Cllr. Kilbane outlining our concerns.

DM also voiced his concerns about the working of the EP.

1. Fare structures

ADA advised his concerns that discounted fares are being offered to TOTO users without back-up information to passengers.

NM also felt that the problem is the lack of passenger information, leaving bus drivers to explain.

GC advised that CYC will not generate publicity until all operators are using the scheme.

FW felt that no-one has taken into account the needs of those with learning disabilities who could be disadvantaged by TOTO.

1. Bus accessibility day

FW reported that this is supported by YBF and a venue suggested. TB replied that this is happening on September 2nd. All agreed that this would not leave enough time to generate awareness. TB will check position.

1. Transport Plan etc.

Response to LTP4 plan has been submitted, RF to circulate.

City Centre Bus Shuttle proposal appears to be on hold. ADA suggested that as it was included in BSIP plan we should be asking the reasons?

BSIP – still awaiting further information.

1. AOB

FW raised concerns regarding passenger information on the No.3 P&R service as to the destinations served.

IA reminded group of forthcoming YOPA meeting.

Date of next meeting 19th September