

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 16 March 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Bob Johnson (Chair), Ian Auckland (Deputy Chair), Lewis Dagnall, Neale Gibson, Julie Gledhill, Ibrar Hussain, Roy Munn, Robert Murphy, Joe Otten, Ray Satur, Martin Smith, Steve Wilson and Paul Wood

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Helen Mirfin-Boukouris.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 In relation to Agenda Item 7 (Bus Services in Sheffield), Councillor Ray Satur declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as a bus driver in the City, and did not speak or vote during that item.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17th February 2016, were approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 The Chair agreed that all public questions and petitions relating to Agenda Item 7 (Bus Services in Sheffield) be considered as part of that item.

6. BUS SERVICES IN SHEFFIELD

6.1 Petitions

6.1.1 The Policy and Improvement Officer, Alice Nicholson, submitted a report containing details of the six petitions submitted to the Council meeting on 2nd December, 2015, relating to the changes to bus services in the City, which had been implemented by the Sheffield Bus Network, with effect from 1st November, 2015. The report indicated that the Council, following a public debate triggered by one of the petitions, resolved that the petitions be referred to this Committee for further consideration, and four of the six petition organisers attended the meeting to put forward their views and raise further questions, as

follows:-

(a) Joanne Lumley stated that, whilst she accepted that there had been some improvements to bus services, she still considered that the changes had had a detrimental effect on the public's ability to travel across the City, whenever they wished. Ms Lumley raised the following questions:-

- How has the punctuality been monitored?
- How have these changes impacted on road congestion?
- How were the usage figures devised?
- What rationality was used to devise routes?
- What is the Council, as a member of the Sheffield Bus Partnership, in a position to do if the bus companies do not deliver their 'promises'?
- If services become 'under capacity', will funding/routes be cut?
- Why were early morning/late evening services cut when they were used by people depending on them to get to work and back?

(b) Yvonne Collins stated that since December 2015, passenger numbers on Service 10/10A had reduced by around 40%, which equated to a reduction in income of around £1,000 per week, and queried how this was possible as before 1st November 2015, it was very well used as it went where the passengers wanted it to go. She referred to a letter in The Star, concerning this service, which indicated that passengers had left the service in their droves. Mrs Collins stated that, in her opinion, now the service was running up Glossop Road and Fulwood Road, very few passengers were using the service, which represented a waste of drive time and fuel. She stated that there was a need to revert to the old route used prior to 1st November 2015, as it went where people wanted to get on, as opposed to travelling on roads where there were very few passengers and no bus stops. Mrs Collins also queried why, as part of the service changes, did the bus companies have to change bus numbers as it was very confusing for passengers, particularly the elderly. She made reference to the presentation by the Bus Partnership, indicating, that, in her opinion, the information reported was not particularly helpful, and that people wanted their questions answered.

(c) Paul Barker, on behalf of John Yale, raised the following questions:-

- What progress has been made by First in getting the routes 85 and 66 to merge?
- What is the reluctance to route the No. 1 via the Herries

Road entrance of the Northern General Hospital as the old No. 87 used to? There is no Stagecoach bus passing the Hospital entrance on Herries Road. On Barnsley Road, there are Nos. 265, 88 and 1 for Stagecoach, and No. 75 for First. You can interchange at Morrisons from a No. 1 to either a No. 88 or 265 for Stagecoach if the No.1 was altered. We have checked the SYPTE's idea of using the Hospital courtesy bus, however, this could mean a wait of half an hour to get a connection, hence missed or late appointments.

- Why is there again, a reluctance by First and Stagecoach to alter the routing in High Green? Why does the No. 1A go down School Road to Sheffield and up Worrall Road to High Green? This does not make sense as it cuts out people living on that part of the estate. It should return to its original route. Similarly is the reluctance to split Nos. 1 and 1A within High Green, with one route going up and down Wortley Road and the other up and down Foster Way. This would ease congestion on Wortley Road and provide a better service to the west side of High Green, which is already being done in Ecclesfield, where the two routes split.
- What progress has been made on the bus terminus (pull in) at Cottam Road, where there can be as many as five buses parked, creating a traffic hazard?

(d) Andy Nash raised the following questions:-

- Will an investigation take place to address the issues highlighted following the bus changes?
- Will members of the public be re-consulted?
- Has the Council scrutinized bus company data, which doesn't appear to match public experience, and does this include buses that show on boards, then disappear?
- Can we guarantee no further reductions?
- Have we learnt a lesson regarding renumbering?
- Why was there such a delay between the changes and this meeting?

6.2 Diana Stimely stated that following the Bus Partnership meeting on 29th February 2016, at which Kevin Bellfield, Managing Director, First Group, stated that First would look closely at the bus problems, she had received an e-mail from the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTE) indicating that there were proposals to change the Service 72/72A, and asking for people's opinions on the change by 18th March 2016. When contacting the SYPTE to see if there were any other planned service changes, she was advised that there were not. Ms Stimely questioned whether there were any other service changes.

6.3 The Committee received a presentation from Stephen Edwards, Executive Director, SYPTE, on the Sheffield Bus Network Review. Mr Edwards referred to the members of the Sheffield Bus Partnership, and provided a brief background to the Partnership. He reported on the reasons for undertaking the Network Review, which not only included input from members of the Bus Partnership, but also from external consultants, the Competition and Markets Authority, the Department for Transport and members of the public of Sheffield. Mr Edwards referred to the launch of the revised Network, indicating that the launch had highlighted a number of performance issues, and reported on the improvements made with regard to this. Mr Edwards reported that, following the Council meeting on 2nd December 2015, at which the six petitions had been submitted, the Partnership had been asked to address operational issues and feedback on performance of the Network in February 2016, specifically to review the punctuality and reliability of services, the number of customer comments received and the number of passengers travelling, and he referred to statistical information with regard to these four areas. Mr Edwards referred to the concerns raised at the Bus Partnership meeting held on 29th February 2016, together with the lessons learnt in terms of what had worked well and what had not worked so well, and concluded by reporting the next steps in terms of the action the Partnership would be taking.

6.4 In response to the questions raised by the petition organisers, Mr Edwards stated that, in terms of the collection of data, all buses had an on-board tracking system, which logged departure and arrival times, together with key timing points along the routes and, together with details of the numbers of passengers, this information was forwarded to the SYPTE on a regular basis. The bus companies had used the same data-collection methods for the last three years, which would make it easier to make comparisons. With regard to customer feedback, Mr Edwards stated that the statistics quoted referred to all the complaints/enquiries received in connection with the service changes, and dealt with by the SYPTE. Regarding the Bus Partnership meeting on 29th February 2016, whilst a request had been made for members of the public to submit any questions in advance, there had still been an opportunity for the public to raise questions at the meeting. He stated that the main aim of the change to the bus network was to see an improvement in services and increase in passengers, as well as to provide a more stable and sustainable network for years to come.

6.5 Representatives of the bus companies in Sheffield, a City Council officer and the relevant Cabinet Member made comments, and responded to the petitioners' questions, as follows:-

6.5.1 Paul Lynch, Stagecoach Yorkshire

Mr Lynch confirmed that the collection of punctuality data by Stagecoach related to all trips on all routes, and was undertaken using satellite trackings, therefore was transparent and also publicly available live, via the company website. He accepted that congestion levels in the City had increased, and that one reason for this could be as a result of the recent changes to bus services, but stressed that traffic levels had increased before the changes had been implemented, which could have been for a number of reasons, including, most likely, a reduction in fuel prices, and that such levels had increased in other towns and cities. The statistics regarding passengers were collated directly by the bus operators, who would study them, and share them with other partners. In terms of changes to services in the High Green area, Mr Lynch stated that the former No. 87 had changed to the No. 1, as a result of consultation with local residents. He stated that it was right that issues with regard to performance should be addressed if such performance was not up to an acceptable standard, although it was difficult to judge all the changes until such a time it is found that they had settled down. He stated that he would like to hear members of the public's views and ideas in terms of how the bus operators could improve their consultation and communications. With regard to the issue of renumbering buses, the Partners had given considerable thought to this issue and had determined that, if a major change to a route had been decided, it was considered better to change the number of that service to avoid the impression that nothing had changed which may cause confusion.

6.5.2 Kevin Belfield, First Group

Mr Belfield stated that punctuality in terms of First buses was monitored and managed throughout the day, and that the issue of punctuality was taken very seriously by the Company, being discussed weekly with the depots in South Yorkshire. Particular attention was given to monitoring the first journey of the day in respect of each route. In terms of the bus services regarding High Green, he stated that detailed comments made by a number of members of the public at the Bus Partnership meeting on 29th February 2016, were made, and there was now a need to make decisions, in liaison with the SYPTE and other bus companies, as to whether any further action was required. The current bus network had been designed in conjunction with independent consultants, and was then consulted on with the public, with further changes being made following the public's comments and responses.

6.5.3 Paul Hopkinson, TM Travel

Mr Hopkinson reported that TM Travel had only made a small number of commercial changes to its services, with the main changes focusing

on Derbyshire. The Company had taken on some routes which had been left uncovered as part of the changes, including the Nos. 6 and 64/62 which, apart from a few issues regarding punctuality on the No. 6 route, had been operating successfully. He considered that the public had benefited from the Bus Partnership, in terms of the restoration of a number of missing links in the network and improvements to ticketing, including a reduction in some prices and the all-operator tickets. TM Travel had invested in additional software to help monitor reliability and punctuality and, as well as planning some changes to the No. 6 route in May 2016, there could be possible changes to the No. 72 route, in High Green, which was subject to consultation at the present time.

6.5.4 *Dick Proctor, Transport Vision and Strategy Manager, Sheffield City Council*

Mr Proctor stated that the issue of bus punctuality was strongly linked to how buses were able to operate on Sheffield's highways, and described how a number of problems had been experienced in Autumn 2015, due partly to pre-Christmas build-up of traffic and partly to roadworks. As part of a broader approach for managing the highway network as efficiently as possible, and to assist the bus companies with regard to their vehicles completing routes in a reliable and punctual manner, the Council's Urban Traffic Control Section had now moved its offices to the Town Hall, and the Section now included representatives from bus operators in the City, resulting in tangible benefits for the Bus Partnership.

6.5.5 *Councillor Terry Fox, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport*

Councillor Fox made reference to the major budget cuts being faced by the Council, which were likely to result in a proposed cut in the levy to the Passenger Transport Executive. He referred to the changes and reductions in fares, as part of the service changes, indicating that this did not appear to be a problem and, in fact, the new flexibility in terms of tickets had proved to be a major success. Councillor Fox confirmed that, as well as the problems with the City's highways network, caused by works being undertaken by the utility companies, the City was also undergoing its biggest ever highway improvement programme – Streets Ahead – which had also had a major effect on bus reliability and punctuality. He stated that, in his opinion, the service changes had not gone as well as they could have done, but considered that the public had had the opportunity to raise any concerns in terms of the changes at the meeting of the Bus Partnership on 29th February 2016. As well as members of the public being invited to raise questions/concerns at the meeting, a surgery had been held at the end of the meeting to discuss any individual issues.

6.6 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The network changes had been made following discussions by the Bus Partnership, as well as input from independent consultants, and the proposed changes had been consulted on with members of the public. As part of the proposed changes, consideration had also been given to future planning. It was envisaged that the full effects of the changes would be able to be seen after six to nine months. The main reasons for the change had been to introduce a more resilient and sustainable bus network as the Partnership had identified some over-capacity and operational difficulties in terms of a number of routes.
- The last major review of the Sheffield bus network had been undertaken in 2012, at which time a similar drop in patronage had been identified following the changes made. This continued for around six months, until improvements were seen.
- In terms of the accountability of the Bus Partnership, it was considered that all the partners had contributed equally, as well as taking responsibility for dealing with the problems and issues that had been created following the changes, as well as the concerns raised by members of the public. Such action had included some bus operators adding extra capacity on routes where capacity issues had been raised, which had included additional vehicles or replacing single-deckers with double-deckers.
- The introduction of the service changes had resulted in a saving of £320,000 for the SYPTE against its tendered services budget. This was as a result of bus operators providing some services on a commercial basis that had previously been funded by the SYPTE.
- Whilst it was accepted that the problems associated with the service changes would temporarily have an adverse effect on the reputation of the SYPTE and the bus operators, the Bus Partnership was currently focusing on dealing with the issues arising from the changes.
- It was difficult to say whether introducing bus franchising would have addressed the problems and issues caused following the service changes, and it was believed that such problems and issues could have occurred with or without franchises.
- A considerable level of analysis was undertaken in terms of the punctuality of bus services in the City, which revealed that performance was down by around 4% to 5% across the network.

Whilst a large proportion of this drop was due to operational issues and the timetabling of some services, a lot of the problems were caused by the poor condition of the City's road network, together with road works undertaken by utility companies on key parts of the road network. It was also accepted that it may not have been the best time of the year to implement the changes. Whilst there were no plans for any further service changes at this time, any required changes would depend on a number of different factors, including changes to the economy and congestion levels. There were a number of things that needed to be taken into consideration, when planning service changes, including integration with other transport systems. In the light of the problems caused to some bus users following the recent changes, it was hoped that there would not be any further changes, on a similar level, in order to provide some stability for years to come.

- In terms of communication, all bus stops had information placed on them by the SYPTTE, over 200,000 leaflets had been delivered to all households in Sheffield, and there had been a considerable level of advertising by the bus operators prior to the changes, to support the production of both joint and individual timetables. In addition, the SYPTTE had deployed a Street Team to assist the travelling public during the week leading up to the change, and First and other operators had deployed staff on the streets, mainly in and around the City Centre, but also in other areas of the City. Some staff were still out carrying out these duties to date.
- There were still issues regarding punctuality in terms of some peak frequency services, and the operators were looking to address this, such as by adding extra time into those journeys identified as having problems in terms of punctuality.
- It was accepted that incidents regarding poor reliability and punctuality had been identified on some cross-city routes, that if such routes were split, with the buses simply running into town and returning, this would help to improve punctuality. However, this was not possible as there was not sufficient road space in the City Centre to enable this to happen. Cross-city routes, however, did provide benefits for a lot of travellers.
- One of the main aims of the Bus Partnership was to improve patronage by 2% a year, for the next five years, as well as reducing car usage.
- The Devolution Deal available to the Sheffield City Region (SCR) would provide new opportunities to review bus network provision, as well as "filling in" gaps in existing networks, particularly to

improve access to jobs. The SCR Team was in the process of commissioning of some analysis of current gaps in bus services to areas of employment, although this covered a much greater area than the current Sheffield network. Other bus operators were also under review, for example, across Derbyshire, but the results of this were not known as yet.

- In terms of those situations where buses breakdown on busy routes, all the operators had access to heavy duty bus removal vehicles/equipment, which could be called upon for use in such circumstances.
- There was a general willingness, on behalf of all the bus operators, to share data with regard to punctuality, reliability and patronage, with the majority of such data being available on the operators' websites.
- In the light of Ian Jenkinson, Sheffield Community Transport, not being able to attend this meeting, arrangements had been made for a meeting between the public and representatives from Sheffield Community Transport to discuss a particular route provided by them.

6.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes:-
 - (i) the contents of the report now submitted, containing details of the petitions which had been submitted to the Council meeting on 2nd December 2015;
 - (ii) the additional comments made, and questions raised, by those petition organisers in attendance;
 - (iii) the presentation made by Stephen Edwards, Executive Director, SYPTE;
 - (iv) the contributions made by the representatives of the bus operators, the City Council officer and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport; and
 - (v) the responses to the questions raised by the petition organisers and members of the Committee;
- (b) thanks the petition organisers, the representatives of the bus operators, the City Council officer and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport for attending the meeting, and making their respective contributions; and
- (c) requests that (i) written responses be provided to all the petition organisers and to the public questions raised at the meeting and (ii) a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the

Committee, containing an update in terms of performance, following the implementation of the service changes.

(NOTE: Prior to the passing of the above resolution, an alternative motion, in addition to paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) above, moved by Councillor Ian Auckland and seconded by Councillor Martin Smith, in the following form, was put to the vote and negated:-

- “(d) apologises to the petition organisers, and the public in general, for the failures in terms of the consultation on, and implementation of, the network changes;
- (e) recommends to the Cabinet that any further reductions in the total bus network are opposed using all remedies available; and
- (f) requests that this issue be added to its Work Programme 2016/17.”

The votes on the alternative motion were ordered to be recorded and were as follows:-

- For the Motion (3) - Councillors Ian Auckland, Rob Murphy and Martin Smith
- Against the Motion (8) - Councillors Lewis Dagnall, Neale Gibson, Julie Gledhill, Ibrar Hussain, Bob Johnson, Roy Munn, Steve Wilson and Paul Wood

(NOTE: Councillor Ray Satur declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in this item, and did not speak or vote during the item.)

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on a date to be arranged.