

RMBC TRANSPORT LIAISON GROUP
Wednesday, 25th March, 2015

Present:- Councillors Atkin, Sharman, Swift, Whelbourn, Whysall and Wootton.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beaumont, Burton, J. Hamilton, Hoddinott and Sansome.

16. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Agreed:- That Councillor A. Atkin be appointed Chairman for this meeting.

(Councillor Atkin in the Chair)

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 3RD DECEMBER, 2014

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Transport Liaison Group, held on 3rd December, 2014.

Agreed:- That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

18. UPDATES FROM THE TRANSPORT OPERATORS

(1) First Group – Members welcomed Mr. Paul Flanagan (Business Manager, First Rotherham) to the meeting. Thanks were also extended to Mr. A. Timewell, who had attended previous meetings and who had now joined another company. First buses will be increasing bus fares with effect from Saturday 28th March 2015, although the increase is not large and represents value for money. Purchase of the weekly travel card will entitle the purchaser to discounts when using the shop local card in Rotherham. Various single fares will have an increase of 10 pence. At the end of April 2015, a number of service adjustments will take effect, in order to improve punctuality. However, there are no major alterations to services. The Pool Green (A630 Centenary Way) highway improvement scheme had inevitably caused some delays, although service punctuality had been maintained at 91-92%.

The recent results from the South Yorkshire county-wide passenger survey group had shown that 87% of service users are very or fairly satisfied with the First bus services, which is an improvement of 6% on the previous survey results from 2012. Highlights of the survey were the ease with which passengers are able to get on and off buses, the comfort of seats, the cleanliness of buses, value for money and the good customer focus of bus drivers.

Additionally, the First bus company will extend its community work and be actively involved in the Crucial Crew training of Year 6 school pupils and also elderly persons, in respect of public transport safety. The company is

replacing the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, which has withdrawn as a consequence of budget reductions. A refurbished First bus will be located at the Lifewise Centre, Hellaby, for use as part of the training. Members thanked the First company for becoming involved in this community initiative and training.

Members asked the following questions:-

(i) Referring to the currently plummeting oil prices and zero inflation and acknowledging that companies will purchase oil in advance, are the bus fares likely to remain the unchanged next year ? Members were informed that bus fare increases are being kept to a minimum and weekly ticket prices had been reduced. Value for money is important and if fuel prices do remain unchanged, it may possibly be the case that bus fares could remain unchanged next year. However, the whole issue remains uncertain.

(ii) The price of a First day ticket is going up. When the Rotherham bus partnership was announced in 2014, there were promises of lower fares in Rotherham, but they are already going back up. Why ? Members were informed that there was a reduction in fares for weekly and day tickets when the Rotherham Bus Partnership began. However, circumstances do change and commercial demands mean that variations in prices are unavoidable.

(iii) In the context of the First company's operating climate, what were the First group's profits in the United Kingdom last year ? Members were informed that the company's end of year figures are not yet available and that they will be commercially sensitive.

(2) Stagecoach – no report

(3) South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTE) – Members were informed of the imminent first anniversary of the Rotherham Bus Partnership. Bus passenger numbers are continuing to rise and buses have better punctuality and reliability. There is increasing customer satisfaction with bus services. Improvements made to the highway network are also important for the reliability of bus services.

Members asked the following questions:-

(i) Request for an update concerning the possibility for a bus service on the Wentworth Parks estate, Piccadilly, Swinton. Members were informed that there is already a high frequency of bus services to the Kilnhurst area. Some fifteen years ago, the SYPTE had provided a financial subsidy for the operation of bus services to the Piccadilly area. However, because of a combination of increasing costs and low passenger numbers, that subsidy had been withdrawn as a budget saving measure. Very recently, the SYPTE has been involved in discussions with a number of bus service operators, but none has been prepared to begin operating

a service to the Wentworth Parks estate. None of the operators are able to make a viable commercial case to operate the service in this area. Members noted that the Rotherham Bus Partnership will continue to review the position and the estimated cost of providing a bus service such as the one being requested.

(ii) The travel centres are due to close in a few months, does this include the customer desk in Rotherham ? Members noted that the Rotherham Transport Interchange will remain open for the provision of customer advice, as well as a mail box facility to accept re-applications for concessionary travel passes.

(iii) Time and again, the schools' lifestyle survey says that young people are afraid of the Rotherham bus interchange. What improvements have been made to safety in the last year ? Members were informed of the extensive commitment to ensuring and improving public safety at the Rotherham Transport Interchange. The closed circuit television system is in place and is monitored regularly. There is active liaison with the South Yorkshire Police, who have allocated an Officer specifically for this liaison with the Interchange staff. There was sometimes the perception that the Interchange is an unsafe place, but one which is not borne out by actual experience. It was noted that there is a consensus amongst bus drivers that the bus stations in South Yorkshire are safer places than stations in other parts of the region.

(iv) For the coming financial year (2015/2016), will there be fewer staff working in the Rotherham interchange than there are during this year ? Members noted that a detailed written response will be provided to this question. As a consequence of the necessary budget reductions, it is likely that there will be fewer staff, as well as service reductions (eg: building cleaning). Every endeavour will be made to reduce the impact of any reductions upon customers and the travelling public.

(4) Rotherham Community Transport – no report.

(5) Northern Rail - no report.

(6) Robin Hood Doncaster Sheffield Airport - Members welcomed Kellie Naylor (Environment and Community Officer, Peel Airports Management) to her first meeting. It was noted that Aer Lingus flights to Dublin will begin operating from the Robin Hood Airport, during May 2015. Customers will be able to access flight to America from Dublin airport. In addition, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft makes flights to and from Jamaica. The Robin Hood Airport cargo operations continue to thrive. The Airport has recently recruited an Aviation Development Manager.

Consideration was also given to the minutes of the two most recent meetings of the Robin Hood Airport Consultative Committee, both held on 15th January, 2015 : (i) an ordinary meeting; and (ii) the annual general meeting. The contents of these minutes were noted.

19. UPDATES FROM RMBC TRANSPORTATION UNIT

Members received details reported by the Traffic and Transportation Manager concerning the following highways improvement projects within the Rotherham Borough area:-

(1) A630 Centenary Way, Rotherham (adjacent Tesco supermarket) – the staging of the traffic signal controls will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended, so as to improve and assist bus and pedestrian movements in this locality. Sometimes, vehicles queuing at Drummond Street obstruct the buses which are leaving the transport interchange.

(2) A633 Rotherham Road, Parkgate and Dearne corridor - a new Toucan Crossing has been installed near to the Retail World complex at Parkgate, enabling pedestrians to cross the whole width of the highway at once, instead of having to halt in the central refuge.

(3) Taylor's Lane, Parkgate – a new Toucan crossing is being installed in this location for the benefit of pedestrians crossing the highway.

(4) Parkgate centre (A633 Broad Street) – an investigation is taking place in respect of a possible scheme to link the series of traffic control signals together, to try and ensure better traffic flows through Parkgate.

(5) A630 Rotherway and West Bawtry Road roundabout (near to Holiday Inn premises) – recent highway improvements, completed in December 2014, have served to reduce the traffic delays in the Canklow area.

(6) Whiston crossroads, A631 East Bawtry Road and A618 Moorgate Road – Members noted that, although long queues of vehicles do build up, they tend to discharge quite quickly when the traffic signals change; the pattern of staging of the traffic signals will be altered to improve the right turn manoeuvre from East Bawtry Road onto Moorgate Road; the Council is awaiting delivery of the specific equipment required (a 'mast arm'). In the section of the A631 from the Rotherway roundabout to the Whiston crossroads, a "freer flowing left turn green light" will be installed, together with 'Give Way' road markings and traffic signs. This facility will also serve to improve traffic flows. Members discussed issues relating to the queuing of traffic at this very busy road junction.

(7) 'Smart' Motorways project (M1 Junction 32 (M18 intersection) to J35A) – the project works are due to begin after Easter, in April 2015. Three lanes of the M1 motorway will be open for vehicles, with a 50 mph speed limit imposed during the construction works. The coalition Government's Transport Ministers have assured that there will be a minimum length of ten kilometres of 'free running' for motorway traffic, between the various sections of works in the motorway.

(8) A630 Sheffield Parkway – the Council is preparing a major scheme

proposal which may in the future be funded from the Growth Fund, the Government's allocations to the Sheffield City Region. This highway improvement will reduce traffic congestion on the A630 Sheffield Parkway (near to Catcliffe) by widening the highway to three lanes. A feasibility study will initially be undertaken, as the future development of areas such as Waverley will inevitably lead to an increase in volumes of vehicular traffic.

Members asked the following questions:-

(i) A630 Rotherham Road, Parkgate, is there sufficient carriageway width to accommodate a dedicated bus lane ? Members were informed that, in the past, funding from a local developer may have paid a proportion of the cost of installing a bus lane inbound towards the Rotherham town centre. It would be necessary to construct a bridge over a culvert and the costs of such work have increased considerably. The currently proposed scheme will facilitate some minor widening of the carriageway around existing bus stops, allowing vehicular traffic to pass the bus which is collecting and/or leaving passengers. However, funding has not yet been confirmed for such works.

(ii) Taylor's Lane roundabout, A633 Rotherham Road, Parkgate, have there been changed priorities for vehicular movements ? Members noted that an assessment of vehicular traffic movements is currently taking place and the implementation of a signalised crossing facility necessitates that lane designations are to be changed on the approaches to the roundabout. This roundabout is part of a very congested highway corridor and a delicate balance has to be struck in order to ensure the flow of traffic and avoid lengthy waiting times.

(iii) A630 Centenary Way, Rotherham, from the Tesco supermarket to the St. Ann's roundabout – in response to a question, Members noted that the operation of the sequence of the various traffic signals is currently being assessed.

20. PINCH POINT SCHEMES - UPDATE - POOL GREEN AND OLD FLATTS

Members received details reported by the Traffic and Transportation Manager concerning the following highways improvement projects within the Rotherham Borough area which were being financed by the Department for Transport Pinch Point Fund:-

(a) A630 Old Flatts Bridge (adjacent M1 motorway Junction 33) - works to strengthen the bridge

Members noted that the majority of the bridge strengthening works are happening underneath the carriageway and are therefore not immediately visible to anyone passing by. These works are progressing on schedule and are due for completion during October 2015.

(b) A630 Pool Green (Masbrough) roundabout (Centenary Way/Main Street, Rotherham) – this £5 millions highway improvement scheme is also progressing on schedule and is due to be open to all traffic towards the end of May, 2015. Members questioned the vehicle right turn manoeuvres permissible in the new junction design. It was noted that the right turn is permissible for vehicles from Masbrough Street onto the A630 Centenary Way. However, the right turn manoeuvres from the A630 Centenary Way, in either direction, will require a ‘U turn’ using the newly-constructed, dedicated lanes in the A630 carriageway and then a left turn either onto Main Street or onto Masbrough Street. Vehicles intending to turn right from Main Street must instead make a left turn onto the A630 Centenary Way and then make the ‘U turn’ manoeuvre within the A630.

Agreed:- That the information be noted.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Further to Minute No. 8(2) of the Parish Liaison meeting held on 20th January, 2015, discussion took place on the possibility of Parish Council representation on this Transport Liaison Group. Members agreed that two Parish Council representatives be nominated to join, if possible one each from the northern and the southern parts of the Borough area and these representatives shall be chosen by the Parish Councils themselves.

22. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Agreed:- (1) That the next meeting of the RMBC Transport Liaison Group be held at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Wednesday, 24th June, 2015, commencing at 2.00 p.m.

(2) That future meetings of the RMBC Transport Liaison Group take place on:-

- Wednesday 23rd September, 2015
- Wednesday 2nd December, 2015