

RMBC TRANSPORT LIAISON GROUP
Wednesday, 7th December, 2011

Present: - Councillor Smith (in the Chair); Councillors Wootton, Buckley, Whelbourn, Dodson, Pickering and Goulty.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Hodgkiss, Swift and License.

17. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from: -

Councillor Simms	RMBC Ward 13 (Rotherham West)
Councillor Whysall	RMBC Ward 18 (Wales)
Councillor Swift	RMBC Ward 11 (Rother Vale)
Councillor Read	RMBC Ward 20 (Wickersley)
Councillor License	RMBC Ward 16 (Swinton)
Councillor Beaumont	RMBC Ward 9 (Maltby)
Councillor Hodgkiss	RMBC Ward 7 (Hoover)
Councillor Falvey	RMBC Ward 4 (Dinnington)

Stephen Gaines had left his post at Robin Hood Sheffield Doncaster Airport and no representative was available to attend from the Airport. Recruitment was underway to recruit to this post and Stephen's successor would attend future RMBC Transport Liaison meetings.

19. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28TH SEPTEMBER 2011.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th September, 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

20. ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES (NOT COVERED BY THE AGENDA ITEMS).

There were no items arising from the previous minutes that were not covered by the agenda items.

21. UPDATES FROM THE TRANSPORT OPERATORS:-

The following updates were submitted:

1) First Group:- Adam Hawksworth:

Adam Hawksworth reported a minor timetable change that would become effective in January 2012. This would involve the addition of a works bus on Saturday mornings to service the Rotherham General District Hospital.

A planned fare increase was also due to take effect from January 2012.

2) Northern Rail:- Stuart Rands:

There was no representative from Northern Rail in attendance at the meeting.

3) Robin Hood Sheffield Doncaster Airport – Stephen Gaines:

There was no representative from Robin Hood Doncaster Airport in attendance at the meeting.

4) Rotherham Community Transport:- Stephen Hewitson:

(i) RCT Annual Report:

Stephen Hewitson updated members on the outcomes of the Rotherham Community Transport Ltd Annual Meeting and service review.

- Door 2 Door support services had experienced a decrease in usage during 2010/1, mainly due to severe winter weather conditions.
- Home to School and Day Care Services were continuing to see an increase in usage.
- Personalised Care Service budgets had experienced a 7% increase in usage.
- RCT Services' operating hours and miles had increased during the year.
- There had been a slight drop in revenue per mile.

Reference was made to the Transport Executive Passenger Survey (2010). This survey would not be repeated in subsequent years due to budget cuts. Previous surveys had been a useful method of judging customer satisfaction and service development requirements. This year's survey measured passenger satisfaction in relation helpfulness and reliability of the service, safety, and fares. In general, there was a high level of customer satisfaction reported by customers.

During the year, RCT had undertaken work to improve the experience of service users who had mobility issues. This included:

- Policies had been reviewed in relation to the safe boarding and alighting of powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters;
- A 'wheelchair' passport was being developed for service users to present to drivers and care assistants that provided information in relation to the safest way to transport their particular model of wheelchair/electric scooter;
- Extended passenger safety training was being provided to all drivers and care assistants;
- Passengers were being encouraged to be more involved in their personal safety whilst on board RCT vehicles.

Other issues that were being explored included:

- The fitting of CCTV to vehicles;
- Future contracts;
- Vehicle fleet – maintenance of aging vehicles.

Discussion ensued and it was noted that taxi firms were operating with advertised fares comparable to bus transport for the same journey. However, it was felt that the shuttle bus, which operated with a subsidy, offered greater flexibility for passengers, especially those with physical disabilities, than the taxi services available and still provided a comparable and cost effective alternative to a taxi journey.

(ii) Proposed Changes to RCT “shopper services”:

Changes had been proposed to the shopper services provided by RCT. The service cost £1.50 for a return journey to the local shopping area and/or supermarket.

Consultation with service users suggested that using the shopper bus service was the only time that many service users were able to leave their houses during the week. Very high levels of satisfaction were reported in the Transport Executive Passenger Survey in 2010. These ranged between 91% - 100% positive responses against the categories asked.

The revised service would seek to:

- Provide all zoned areas with a twice weekly service;
- Provide and promote more journeys on a Monday;
- Schedule service times that take into account the commitments of many older people, for example care needs may make earlier bus services inconvenient for some customers;
- Review timetabling for return journeys as some service users had felt that a two-hour shopping window before the return journey was too long.

It was envisaged that the alterations would improve the service for communities and increase their availability.

A representative from RCT could attend community groups and forums to discuss the proposed service revisions if required.

5) South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive:- Pam Horner

(iii) Bus Service Update:

It was planned to withdraw a Stagecoach service running from Rotherham to Ravensfield and Ravensfield to Rotherham at 7.00 pm.

The x12 service was being withdrawn, although some works buses would remain along the Barnsley to Rotherham route, as this stretch of the route was well used.

(iv) Rotherham Station:

The project was currently on schedule to complete building works for February 2012. It was noted that there had been no delays to trains arriving or departing from the station as a direct consequence of the building and renovation works being undertaken. Work on the ticket office facilities and waiting areas had been completed.

Work was ongoing on the following aspects of the station:

- Ticket inspection to protect revenue and decrease ticket fraud;
- Dwelling times between alighting and boarding a connecting train were being analysed.

(v) Sheffield and South Rotherham Partnership:

A 'bus vision' consultation had been completed in conjunction between SYPTE, First and a number of smaller operators in 2010 and work was underway in relation to addressing customer satisfaction issues that had been reported.

6) Stagecoach East Midlands:- David Stevenson

There were no changes to route or fares to report. Stagecoach East Midlands were pleased to announce that nine new vehicles would be joining the fleet in the coming weeks.

7) Stagecoach Yorkshire:- Rupert Cox

Stagecoach Yorkshire's supported journey via the number 4 bus has been finished. The route was also covered by First's 108 and 109 services.

Industrial action had been undertaken by some of the operator's staff. The contingency plans, fares and customer service issues that had been deployed in order to maintain services were noted.

22. UPDATES FROM RMBC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAYS UNIT:-

The Chair welcomed Andrew Shearer, Transport Planner, Environment and Development Services, who provided an update on the local authority's bid to the local sustainable transport fund that had secured the maximum amount available of £5million.

One aspect of the bid was the promotion of a cycling scheme. Rotherham was the first local authority in the surrounding area to provide employees with access to a scheme that challenged participants to ride to work at least 50% of the time during a four-week period. The facilities available through the scheme included:

- Free bike and cycling equipment loan;
- Support, training and route planning;
- Bike maintenance.

The trial scheme ended in October, 2011. Sixty-one people had taken part and five-thousand miles had been ridden. The majority of participants had cycled for at least 50% of their journeys and most indicated that they would continue following the scheme's closure. Participants reported that the scheme had provided helpful encouragement and would recommend it to others,

Other work covered by the scheme included:

- Ventura Business Park - will be upgrading their cycling parking to

- include covered parking;
- Links had been developed with other businesses who were keen to get involved;
- A capital element to the funding had been secured to improve cycling infrastructure on roads and would concentrate on deprived areas.

A further bid was in the final steps of preparation and was a major business case that related to improvements to key bus corridors, congestion improvement, walking and cycling schemes, expansion of existing bus services, and an electric vehicle pilot.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Tates Travel: it was noted that Tates Travel were operating a hail and ride operation within the Borough, whereby drivers were stopping at any location they deemed safe to do so. With hail and ride operations, it usually transpired that drivers would establish regular stopping places and passengers naturally congregated at these sites to board the buses. There were no plans to erect permanent stops in the areas where buses had been stopping. There was positive feedback in relation to this service from local residents.

Pam Horner: All noted that Pam would retire at Christmas, 2011. The Chair thanked Pam for her excellent work over the years and wished her well for the future. It was noted that recruitment to the SYPTTE External Relations Manager role had begun and the successful candidate would attend future meetings.

24. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING:-

The next meeting of the RMBC Transport Liaison Group will take place on Wednesday 21st March, 2012, at 2.00 pm in the Rotherham Town Hall.