

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL
7TH FEBRUARY 2024**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Maynard)
Councillors Lawrence and Seaton

Councillor Blackshaw (Cabinet Lead Member for
Communities and Neighbourhoods)
Christian Allen-Clay (General Manager - Kinch
Bus)
Ross Hitchcock (Head of Commercial – Trent
Barton)
Toby France (Head of Commercial - Arriva)
Andy Allen (Network Manager - Arriva)

Democratic Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Campsall, Fox and O'Neill

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

9. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Campsall, Fox and O'Neill.

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2023 were approved.

11. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND
NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

12. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

13. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions were submitted.

14. SCRUTINY SCOPING DOCUMENT

Considered and discussed, the scrutiny scope document for the Panel, updated following the last meeting.

AGREED that the panel notes the scoping document.

15. PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVIDERS

In accordance with the scrutiny scope document (key tasks), there was a discussion with public transport providers, including the reliability and demand of bus services.

In attendance were Christian Allen-Clay (General Manager - Kinch Bus), Ross Hitchcock (Head of Commercial – Trent Barton), Toby France (Head of Commercial - Arriva) and Andy Allen (Network Manager - Arriva). The following summarises the discussion:

- i. There were a number of factors affecting bus service provision in the community which were not under the control of bus companies. Some examples of these non-controllable factors included road works, congestion, the planning of new estates and highways designs and staff sickness. Bus companies held regular internal meetings to look at future service issues (for example, before school term dates) and monitored services daily to identify more immediate issues and to find solutions. Representatives from local bus companies also attended regular Enhanced Partnership meetings with Leicestershire County Council and other partners to discuss challenges. Bus providers aimed to limit disruption to services and to prevent bad service experiences as much as possible.
- ii. Bus services were primarily measured in punctuality and reliability. GPS technology was used to identify the location of buses every 20 seconds and this information was used to plan future timetables and make amendments to services where necessary.
- iii. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were used by bus service providers to measure performance. There were controllable measures that affected bus services, such as replacing buses that were out of service, and uncontrollable measures, such as road works and staff sickness. In addition to formal performance monitoring, customer feedback was important as it provided an idea of issues not picked up by monitoring equipment.
- iv. It was highlighted that communications about road works and other issues on the roads were not always communicated to bus companies in good time, to allow them to proactively respond.
- v. It was difficult for bus service providers to communicate service issues to customers. It was possible to use tracking apps to inform customers, although not all bus users would access apps to track bus services.
- vi. There were recruitment and retention issues across the sector and a shortage of skilled bus drivers and engineers. It was time intensive to train bus drivers and an enhanced medical was required prior to training. Bus companies were

- actively trying to recruit more people into in-house training programmes and were present at careers fairs and on recruitment websites. It was suggested that recruitment drives aimed at women may be beneficial.
- vii. Bus companies were experiencing supply chain challenges and there were problems with the availability of parts for buses requiring repairs. It was possible for bus companies to loan vehicles to other companies in the event of an emergency. However, drivers were used to specific vehicles so this was not preferred.
 - viii. It was highlighted that some new estates were difficult for buses to access as the road designs were not suitable for large vehicles. In addition to this, it was difficult for buses to access some new estates that were built with one entry and exit road. This was because customers already using a service would not want more time added to their journey to enable the bus to travel around a new estate.
 - ix. The new Broadnook development would not include a bus gate, and it was unclear why this proposal had been rejected. The panel felt that it would be beneficial to ask the Team Leader – Strategic Development why a bus gate was not accepted in the planning of the Broadnook development.
 - x. The Fox Cub buses that had been popular in the 1980s were discontinued because they were no longer financially viable. The buses were initially cheap to run and small enough to use in smaller estates. Bus driver salaries had increased and the demand for the service had not increased at the same rate. Stagecoach buses had recently trialled a service called 'Little and Often' which aimed to provide high-frequency transport. The trial was not financially viable and the service was discontinued.
 - xi. It was suggested that local bus companies may benefit from advertisements and notifications in local magazines. Recruitment information and information regarding the restrictions on services, or changes to services could be communicated in this way. Councillor Seaton offered to help with advertisements in the local paper in Thurmaston.
 - xii. Members felt that some areas of the Borough had good and reliable transport links.
 - xiii. It was recognised that there was a negative perception around the punctuality and reliability of buses. The reality was that very few buses were cancelled, although the public perception was that cancellation of journeys was a common occurrence.
 - xiv. Illegal parking was a significant issue for local bus services. There had also been problems with parked cars during the week of the Loughborough Fair. It was suggested that additional enforcement in problem areas would be advantageous.

- xv. Parking in Oxford City Centre was priced significantly more than parking in surrounding park and ride sites in order to encourage more sustainable methods of travel. In addition, Councils in Oxfordshire had made good use of Section 106 and Section 278 contributions from new developments to improve bus services and supporting infrastructure.
- xvi. The panel wished to draft a recommendation based on the parking in Loughborough Town Centre, to increase the inspection of parking and enforcement.
- xvii. Bus service providers stated that there were a number of ways the Borough Council could support the reliability and punctuality of bus services;
- By encouraging more involvement of bus service providers in the Planning process.
 - By participating in the Enhanced Partnership Forum at Leicestershire County Council.
 - By considering the impact on bus services and bus service users when decisions such as pedestrianization were made.
 - To communicate with bus service providers at the earliest opportunity when there may be disruption to bus services.
- xviii. Charnwood Borough Council did have a delegate on the Enhanced Partnership Forum, but it was unclear who this was. The Head of Commercial at Arriva agreed to liaise with the Democratic Services Officer to find out who the delegate was.
- xix. It was anticipated that the £2.00 bus fare scheme introduced by the Government in response to the Cost of Living Crisis would continue until December 2024. It was likely that real bus fares would have increased since the scheme had been implemented, due to inflation.
- xx. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on bus passenger numbers. Some routes were yet to receive the same numbers of passengers as pre-pandemic levels. Concessionary passenger numbers were at approximately 70% of the total numbers pre-pandemic. This may be due to changes in routines and reduced confidence. It was recognised that increasing advertisements would potentially increase passenger numbers, highlighting reasons to use public transport.

AGREED

1. That the panel notes the information.
2. That the Team Leader – Strategic Development respond to the panel regarding the rejection of a bus gate as part of the Broadnook development.
3. That the Head of Commercial at Arriva liaise with the Democratic Services Officer to identify the Charnwood Borough Council delegate on the Enhanced Partnership Forum.

4. That a draft recommendation be noted (wording to be confirmed): 'The parking in the Baxter Gate/High Street area of Loughborough Town Centre be inspected more regularly and enforcement action be taken where there were issues'.

16. IMPROVING PASSENGER TRANSPORT THROUGH BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN PLUS AND NETWORK NORTH FUNDING

The report approved by the Leicestershire County Council Cabinet on 19th December 2023 was submitted (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Democratic Services Officer explained that officers at Leicestershire County Council were not permitted to participate in scrutiny at other local authorities, and so there would not be a representative from Leicestershire County Council available to attend a panel meeting. Leicestershire County Council had an Enhanced Partnership Board and an Enhanced Partnership Forum, which enabled local stakeholders to provide input and suggestions on how the Bus Service Improvement Plan should best be implemented.
- ii. It was highlighted that the Council had a representative on the Enhanced Partnership Board and the panel felt that it would be useful for that representative to attend a panel meeting and it was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer liaise with the representative to find a suitable date for them to attend.
- iii. The panel felt that it was important to be able to feed recommendations into the plans for public transport developed by Leicestershire County Council. It was highlighted that one of the supporting principles of the Passenger Transport Police was that *'Leicestershire County Council will engage with local communities that approach us, to identify any demonstrable and significant unmet demand for travel for the high priority purposes identified in PTP5. The Council will also work with these local communities to discuss ways of shaping passenger transport services to best meet local needs.'*
- iv. The panel decided that there was a need to identify a way of feeding into the public transport plans implemented by Leicestershire County Council.

AGREED

1. That the panel noted the report.
2. That the Democratic Services Officer liaise with the Council's representative on the Enhanced Partnership Board to find a suitable date for them to attend a panel meeting.

17. SECTION 106 BRIEFING NOTE

In accordance with the scrutiny scope document (key tasks), considered and discussed, a briefing note by the Team Leader – Strategic Development outlining Section 106 Processes. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The panel felt that increased clarity was required regarding the use of Section 106 money. It was suggested that examples of Section 106 money usage would be advantageous to help the panel understand more thoroughly.
- ii. It was highlighted that the ‘Improving Passenger Transport through Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus and Network North Funding’ report suggested using more flexible wording in Section 106 agreements. This would potentially mean that if a situation changed before the development was built, the contribution could still be used on other sustainable transport interventions to achieve the same aims, where other feasible options existed. Members felt that this approach may be beneficial for Charnwood Borough Council to consider. The panel felt that this could form a draft recommendation.
- iii. The panel felt that it would be beneficial to ask the Team Leader- Strategic Development about the pedestrianisation of Loughborough Town Centre and whether this had been reviewed in terms of the impact on bus routes and bus reliability.

AGREED

1. That the panel notes the information.
2. That the panel notes the draft recommendation (wording to be confirmed): ‘That more flexible wording in S106 agreements be used’.
3. That the panel ask the Team Leader- Strategic Development;
 - About the pedestrianisation of Loughborough Town Centre and whether this had been reviewed in terms of the impact on bus routes and bus reliability.
 - For an example of successful Section 106 monies usage.

18. PUBLIC TRANSPORT SURVEY

A report to consider a further draft of the Public Transport Survey, was submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes). The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The panel approved the survey but were concerned that respondents would not understand what ‘subsidised bus services’ were. It was considered to be advantageous to list the subsidised bus services in the survey. The Democratic Services Officer and Councillor Lawrence agreed to meet again to discuss a solution to this.
- ii. The panel agreed that the survey should be reissued to ward Councillors and Parish and Town Clerks, and also local residents groups in Loughborough.

- iii. It was agreed that the responses to survey be received by the panel at their meeting scheduled on 29th May 2024, due to the volume of work involved in issuing the survey and collating the results.

AGREED

1. That the panel approved the survey and that the Democratic Services Officer and Councillor Lawrence should meet again to discuss the issue regarding the 'Subsidised Bus Services' questions.
2. That the survey should be reissued to ward Councillors and Parish and Town Clerks, and also local residents groups in Loughborough.
3. That the responses to surveys be received by the panel at their meeting scheduled on 29th May 2024

19. WORK PROGRAMME AND KEY TASK PLANNING

Considered and discussed, the key tasks in the scrutiny scope document and items raised during the meeting, to be considered at the next meeting of the Panel, and subsequent meetings, and any work members of the Panel would undertake in advance of the next meeting. The following summarises the discussion:

The panel made no changes to their work programme, other than those highlighted earlier in the meeting.

AGREED that the work programme be updated to reflect the discussions during the meeting.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 26th February 2024 unless notice to that effect is given to the Head of Democracy by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Public Transport Scrutiny Panel.