



Report of the Director of City Development

Executive Board

Date: 5 January 2011

Subject: Deputation to Council, 17 November 2010
Bus services in Morley and the surrounding areas

Electoral Wards Affected:

Morley North
Morley South

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report informs the Executive Board in relation to the Deputation received by Council on the 17 November 2010 concerning bus services in Morley and the surrounding areas.

The Deputation details problems with the bus services serving Morley and the surrounding areas and calls for the re-regulation of these services in order to address the issues identified.

This report also provides a position statement on the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority's (Metro) proposals for a Quality Bus Contract Scheme for bus services in West Yorkshire.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report provides information in relation to bus services in the Morley area following the Deputation received by Council at the 17 November 2010 meeting and also provides a position statement on the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority's (Metro) proposals for a Quality Bus Contract Scheme for bus services in West Yorkshire.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 A Deputation from Morley Town Council was heard by the 17 November 2010 meeting of Council. The subject of this was a concern by members of the Town Council regarding the local bus services which serve Morley and the surrounding areas. A copy of the Deputation is attached.
- 2.2 The Deputation's concerns were as follows:
- Unreliability of services to and from Morley;
 - Impacts of re-routing services and re-organising timetables;
 - Specific issues for older and less able people;
 - Specific issues for children and their parents travelling to school;
 - Cost of fares and pricing structure;
 - Lack of cooperation from the bus service operator, First Bus; and
 - A request for services in the area to be re-regulated.
- 2.3 As Members will be aware the City Council does not have a statutory responsibility for the co-ordination, provision or financial support of bus services which in West Yorkshire lies with the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (Metro). As a Highway Authority the Council works with Metro to develop and implement a Local Transport Plan in line with the requirements of the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. Through this the Council has an input to Metro's public transport policies but does not have any powers in relation to the provision of services.
- Bus services
- 2.4 Metro has confirmed the following changes which have been made to services in the Morley area:
- In 2008 Arriva made some route changes in Morley which caused concern, in particular the removal of the link from Bruntcliffe Road to Leeds, and also reduced the frequency of services;
 - In 2009 First revised their network of services in the Morley area creating a one-way loop, Fountain Street, Britannia Road, Bridge Street. This has been unpopular as it restricts the function of the service to link people in and out of Morley centre. The new one-way south Morley loop also reduces the frequency of service from every 20 minutes to every 30 minutes. With a terminus half way around the loop customers also do not like waiting there to continue their journey. The problem for these people was exacerbated as their service was 'diverted' via Cottingley extending their journey time to Leeds further. First assert that this has improved punctuality and has given everyone access to a service into Leeds. These changes were made by First to reduce operating costs and were part of a package of service and frequency reductions throughout the city.
 - In 2010 First reduced service 85 Morley – East Ardsley – Middleton – Leeds to off peak only.
- 2.5 In terms of consultation about these changes, these bus services are being provided on a commercial basis by the bus companies. There is no requirement under the current framework for operators running a commercial service to either consult or to adhere to a code of practice other than meeting their statutory obligations to the Traffic Commissioners. Metro as the appropriate public authority seeks to involve

operators in partnership working and promotes best practice, but it is a matter of individual company decision as to how they respond to such engagement.

- 2.6 The Deputation highlighted problems with the high cost of fares and the pricing structure of the bus service operator which appears to penalise customers who only travel short distances; an issue particularly pertinent to parents/carers accompanying children to/from school.
- 2.7 Metro has attended two public meetings in Morley and is aware of the concerns outlined in this report. Under the current legislative arrangements for bus services, bus fares are determined by operators and cannot be regulated by Metro. Metro has, for several years, raised concerns with operators that the cost of short journeys acts as a disincentive to travel to local centres such as Morley.
- 2.8 The frequency of bus services between Morley and Leeds city centre is largely consistent with most district centres in Leeds and comprises both Leeds based services provided by First and longer distance services passing through Morley between Leeds, Wakefield and North Kirklees. The particular issues in Morley lie around routing which create variable levels of service around the town and some areas with a lower frequency than could be expected.
- 2.9 At the present time Metro is unable to specify service requirements where such services are provided on a commercial basis. Whilst Metro has been able to secure some adjustment of school services they have been unable to persuade the operators to alter the commercial bus route network.
- 2.10 As of 31st January 2011 a new bus operator, Yorkshire Line, will be operating a half hourly service between Asda, Morley town centre, Leeds Vicar Lane and St James's Hospital. In addition to providing a new link from the town to the hospital, this service will operate in both directions on Fountain Street which First currently only operate westbound as part of a one way loop. This latter facility will address one of the concerns expressed by people in the town.

Quality Bus Contract Scheme

- 2.11 Members may be aware that Metro is developing proposals for a 'Quality Bus Contract Scheme' (QBCS) to help deliver improved local bus services in West Yorkshire. Introduced by the Transport Act 2000, a QBCS involves replacing the existing deregulated market with a system of contracts, as currently operates in London. Under a QBCS, the Integrated Transport Authority (or local authority) specifies the bus services that are to be provided in the area of the scheme, and invites tenders from operators to provide those services under contract.
- 2.12 A Quality Bus Contract Scheme in West Yorkshire would mean that Metro, as the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority, has responsibility for deciding where buses run, how often they run, what fares and tickets are available, what quality standards buses run to and what happens if things go wrong.
- 2.13 Changes introduced through the Local Transport Act 2008 have made the delivery of QBCSs a more realistic option by removing the old requirement for the local authority (i.e. Metro) to show that a QBCS was the 'only practicable way' to deliver its objectives. Five 'public interest' criteria are set out in its place. The Act also removes the requirement for schemes in England to be approved by the Secretary of State. Scheme proposals will instead need to be submitted to an independent board for consideration, but the final decision on whether to make a QBCS in

England will rest with the appropriate local authority (Metro). The legitimate interests of bus operators will be safeguarded by the five public interest criteria, the independent scrutiny provided by the QBCS boards, and the right to appeal to a tribunal.

- 2.14 It is Metro's adopted policy to proceed to Quality Bus Contracts for bus services in West Yorkshire. Metro is undertaking an initial consultation (December 2010) on proposals for a Quality Bus Contract Scheme and aims to start a full public consultation in early 2011. The scheme could be introduced from late 2012, with a phased approach across West Yorkshire until completion by 2017. At the same time bus operators have been asked to set out how they can achieve the same benefits through partnership and co-operation.

3.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 3.1 This report has no specific legal or funding implications for the City Council.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 This report has outlined the issues relating to the Deputation to Council concerning bus services in Morley and the surrounding areas.
- 4.2 The City Council does not have statutory powers to intervene in relation to the procurement and specification of bus services.
- 4.3 As of 31st January 2011 a new bus operator will introduce a new service between Morley and St James's Hospital which will operate in both directions on Fountain Street and address one of the concerns expressed by the Deputation.
- 4.4 The Local Transport Act 2008 contains a number of important changes that have given local authorities (i.e. the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority, Metro) improved powers to influence the provision of bus services in their area.
- 4.5 The Deputation is seeking the re-regulation of buses in order to address the issues identified. Quality Bus Contracts are the means of achieving this objective within the current legislation.
- 4.6 Metro is developing proposals for a Quality Bus Contract Scheme in West Yorkshire to help deliver improved local bus services. A full public consultation will commence in early 2011, following an initial consultation in December 2010. The scheme could be introduced from late 2012, with a phased approach across West Yorkshire until completion by 2017.
- 4.7 The City Council supports the improvement of our local bus services and is supportive of the steps being taken by the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority and Metro to develop a Quality Contract Scheme for West Yorkshire and looks forward to having the opportunity of examining further detailed proposals, particularly the financial implications, when they are available.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Members of the Executive Board are recommended to:

- i) note the contents of this report and that Metro will publish further information in due course concerning the consultation being undertaken on proposals for a Quality Bus Contract Scheme in West Yorkshire; and
- ii) agree that the Leader of the City Council should meet with the local bus operators and Metro to discuss the issues raised by the Town Council and to highlight the City Council's concerns.

Background Papers

The following background paper relates to this report:

- i) Deputation to Council 17 November 2010 by Morley Town Council