

SCRUTINY BOARD (SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY AND CULTURE)

THURSDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor M Rafique in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, D Cohen,
P Wadsworth, R Harington, M Ingham,
J McKenna, B Urry, J Chapman and
M Harland

64 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

65 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no resolutions to exclude the public.

66 Late Items

There were no late items added to the agenda.

67 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

Councillor Urry declared a significant other interest in Agenda Item 7 – Scrutiny Inquiry – Bus Services in Leeds as a Member of the Leeds Passenger Consultative Committee.

68 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for Absence were received from Cllr Lyons , Cllr Harland was present as substitute.

69 Minutes - 18th October and 1st November 2012

The minutes of the 18th October and 1st November 2012 were approved as a correct record.

70 Scrutiny Inquiry - Bus Services in Leeds

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the first formal session of the scrutiny inquiry into bus services in Leeds.

In attendance were:

Andrew Hall (Acting Head of Transport Policy);and
Dave Pearson – West Yorkshire Metro.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 20th December, 2012

The Acting Head of Transport Policy took Members through the report of the Director of City Development which provided background information on Bus Services in Leeds.

Members opened the discussion by giving consideration to the reasons behind the decrease in usage of bus services and the increase of rail services in Leeds. Members were informed that the bus network in Leeds had shrunk and that the focus was now on a number of busy core routes. The changing economy, and Leeds being part of a wider city region which has resulted in people commuting further distances, were also factors.

A major issue highlighted by the Board for the reduction in patronage on Leeds buses was the above inflation increases to ticket prices, making bus travel expensive. It was noted that this is particularly an issue for short journeys within the City, these have seen the sharpest reduction in passenger numbers. The Green Zone which aims to make sure short journeys are cheaper was highlighted by Members and it was suggested that this be extended so that more people can take advantage of it.

Members commented that due to the number of differing bus companies operating within Leeds, ticketing was confusing and not integrated, meaning that unless a premium was paid you could not use all the buses that might be running on the routes you wish to travel.

At this point Members also raised the potential of increasing the usage of smart cards and put it to witnesses present that work should be done to make the Breeze Card, issued to young people in Leeds, a half fare pass that could be used to travel on buses.

Frequency and punctuality of bus services was brought up by Members and that more work needs to be done to improve this so that bus services can be relied upon by the residents of Leeds. Officers responded that more work is still to be done on increasing bus lanes, bus priority at traffic lights and reducing boarding time for passengers. The real time bus information system was brought up and its merits were discussed, in that it enables tracking of where buses are but that it can also be frustrating for passengers.

Members brought up the issues surrounding funding of bus services and the effect that the Quality Bus Contracts might have on funding received from Central Government.

Discussion took place on the possibilities of looking at examples of transport systems outside of the UK and that lessons could be learned in terms of integration. It was confirmed that examples of other transport systems in Europe were considered by Metro, although the differing legislative frameworks and subsidy systems also needed to be considered.

Members also asked questions about how and on what basis bus services were allocated to areas. The representative from Metro described some work

taking place in Kirklees where consideration was given to local issues and hubs across the City to enable the most effective use of buses.

Members sought clarification on the number of stops permitted when purchasing a £1 ticket.

At this point in discussion the Chair referred to the introduction of free travel for children and young people in London and suggested that if possible it would be a real advantage to children in Leeds in being able to attend events and become involved in a range of activities.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the report be noted; and
- (b) that information requested with regards to the number of stops permitted with a £1 ticket be provided to Members.

71 Draft terms of reference - Scrutiny Board inquiry on flood risk management

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor presented a report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which asked Members to comment on and agree the terms of reference for the inquiry. It was reported that the Directorate had proposed that Neighbourhood Management/Locality Teams be included in the inquiry due to their responsibility for gully maintenance.

RESOLVED – that the Board agree the terms of reference for the inquiry, subject to the addition of input from Neighbourhood Management/Locality Teams regarding gully maintenance.

72 Work Programme

The Board received a report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which considered the Board's work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

Concern was raised that the December agenda is very crowded and that this might not allow Members to thoroughly scrutinise the reports in the detail that they would like to.

It was proposed by the Chair that a working group should be set up in January 2013 to provide an additional session of the inquiry on bus services, with all members of the Board invited to attend.

It was also confirmed that the meeting on 20th December 2012 will commence at 9:45am with a pre meeting for Members starting at 9:15am due to the number of items on the agenda.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the work schedule be noted;
- (b) that the Executive Board minutes and the Forward Plan attached to the report be noted;
- (c) that a working group be set up for January 2013 to provide an additional session of the inquiry on bus services; and
- (d) that the start time of the December Board meeting be brought forward to 9.45am.

73 Date and time of next meeting

9.45am, Thursday 20th December 2012.

The meeting closed at 12:10pm