

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2021 AT
COMMITTEE ROOM 6/7, LEEDS CIVIC HALL**

Present:

Cllr Amanda Parsons-Hulse (Chair)	Calderdale Council
Cllr Peter Caffrey (Deputy)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Harry Ellis	Wakefield Council
Councillor Stephen Fenton	City of York Council
Councillor Jackie Ferguson	Wakefield Council
Councillor Dot Foster	Calderdale Council
Councillor Sharon Hamilton	Leeds City Council
Councillor Anthony Smith	Kirklees Council
Councillor Nic Stansby	Wakefield Council
Councillor Ruth Wood	Bradford Council
Councillor Paul Wray	Leeds City Council

In attendance:

Khaled Berroum	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Helen Ellerton	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Donald Firth, Robert Finnigan, Yusra Hussain and Luke Majkowski.

The meeting was confirmed as quorate, with 11 members present out of 11 needed for quorum, after a 10-minute delay.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

3. Possible exclusion of the press and public

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

4. Notes of the inquorate meeting held on 23 September 2021

Resolved: That the notes of the inquorate meeting held on 23 September 2021 be noted and entered as public record of what was discussed.

5. Scrutiny and governance arrangements

The Committee considered a report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer outlining membership changes since the last meeting and amendments to Scrutiny Standing Orders section on substitute rules to be proposed to the Combined Authority on 9 December.

The Chair welcomed new member Cllr Jackie Ferguson, representing Wakefield Council, to the committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. Chair's update and comments

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair on her activity since the last meeting and a number of matters, including:

- The three Scrutiny Chairs have written a joint letter with Mayor Tracy Brabin to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Local Government, Michael Gove, asking him to consider lowering statutory quorum requirements for combined authority scrutiny and allowing remote or hybrid meetings.
- Following up on queries raised by members at the previous meeting, or afterwards via email, with the Mayor and directors – including safety on buses, shortage of bus drivers and its effects on service reliability, disabled peoples' passes, experience of neurodiverse and refugees inability to access public transport.
- Meeting with Mayor Brabin 1-1 to discuss the transport scrutiny workplan and the committee's plans for the year. The Mayor expressed support for scrutiny's critical friend role and is very keen for scrutiny to have early sight of developments in transport for maximum transparency and accountability.

Resolved: That the Chair's verbal update be noted.

7. Transport Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22

The Committee considered a report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer outlining the 2021/22 Work Programme which was based on the discussion held at the previous inquorate meeting and subsequent conversations with directors and heads of service.

The Chair also reminded members that the next meeting scheduled for 20 January 2022 would primarily feature a Mayor's Question Time session during which members will be able to question the Mayor on her transport pledges, policies and performance. A virtual workshop will be held a few weeks before the meeting for members to agree topics and questions.

Resolved: That the appended 2021/22 Work Programme be approved.

8. Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Transport & Property Services and Director of Policy & Development providing an overview of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which was submitted to the government in October 2021 and a general update on bus related matters including bus franchising, a bus network update, and Metro branded services and activity.

The Chair noted the Government's announcements regarding the future of high speed and integrated rail projects in the region and asked that officers provide a note to scrutiny members on the impact when they complete their analysis.

It was also agreed that scrutiny members would receive:

- the regular transport network updates submitted to Transport
- more information on a recent Wakefield Council pilot scheme which promoted pupils travelling to school on foot or by bus.
- more information on work being undertaken at City of York Council on behaviour change as part of their own BSIP.

Discussion took place around the following topics:

1. **Implementation date and numerical targets:** The 2027 implementation goal is a long way away for many of the older generation that currently rely on buses the most. The numerical targets for the BSIP were ambitious and the key behavioural drivers for getting passengers back onto public transport would need to be explored in more detail and prioritised alongside other drivers such as price and liability.
2. **HGV and bus driver shortage:** The delay in licensing and testing is an issue at the moment with some driver reporting not being able to find work – on certain routes – at the moment. Bus companies reported no shortage in people applying to become bus drivers, but there has been a delay in getting drivers on the road.
3. **Digital accessibility and information:** The increasing reliance on QR codes and digital methods for bus services and information risks disenfranchising older transport users. Paper distribution and printing was largely reduced and discontinued in the past for efficiency reasons (can't be updated as regularly), cost reasons as well as due to challenges from the pandemic. There are plans to reintroduce them more often for accessibility reasons. In other areas such as the AccessBus it is bookable by phone only – recognising the need for access.
4. **Audio-visual accessibility on buses:** Accessibility for people with audio and visual needs requires improvement. The systems need to be developed and used further to improve. All new buses were equipped with audio-visual technology as standard, similar to most trains, and some older buses are being retrofitted where possible.

5. **Demand led transport services:** A demand-led pilot called FlexiBus is ongoing in East Leeds, a bookable system service using 7 fully accessible electric vehicles. Demand led services could solve a lot of problems being faced by older and rural based passengers or areas which are near employment zones but lack strong connectivity. If left to the market, people would commonly use demand-led modes like taxis for shorter 'sideways' journeys to a GP or hospital, but buses towards city centre or between towns. FlexiBus has been running successfully for 2 months, attracting strong demand while remaining within capacity. Although the pilot seemingly popular and efficient, the demand-response nature of the scheme means it would likely not be a big revenue generator and always require public subsidy. Data and use will be analysed internally and make a full report in latter half of 2022 outlining all findings, performance, risk and costs.
6. **Mcard and general ticketing pricing:** The possibility and demand for greater suite of family ticket packages and the potential for a review of pricing to encourage family use of public transport on daily journeys E.g. a parent and their children, rather than separate payments. People using the Mcard mobile app are more likely to select lesser known ticket products as they can see the full range, unlike someone getting onto a bus who needs prior knowledge. More work needs to be done to promote certain products.
7. **Connectivity and planning:** Historically bus routes and public transport in general were designed based on going into city and town centres, and between cities. There's a need for a greater focus on intracity connectivity between urban and rural, and linking routes and corridors to behaviour and other needs, such as employment and the health system and leisure – which people currently rely on taxis for – which have historically been underestimated. There is a need to consider transport links and risks more strongly in planning applications for employment, health and housing sites. Members know their wards best and could be involved in the consultation stage of planning schemes if it affects transport in their ward. There is also the matter of cross-authority consultation as transport is across areas, York and West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire all share transport corridors in employment and housing.
8. **Zero emission fleet:** The BSIP commits the region to a zero emissions fleet. The current focus is on electric due to national government focus and funding, but other options such as hydrogen are being explored for the long term as well. Although the market is transitioning to more renewable, the public sector must invest in it if its to be done quicker and by target.
9. **Promotion of public transport in schools:** Behaviours, habits and mentality is often set at a young age. In areas such as London which embed public transport use early in the city's culture, more young people grow up to use it. The Combined Authority was in consultation with local schools in relation to the promotion of public transport and encouraging the use of the ticketing schemes for families and the

young. Some areas, such as Wakefield, have trialled schemes encouraging parents and children to use public transport (or walking) to school, getting the support of parents in it. Difficult to reach all schools in engagement due to the number, but there is marketing of buses as a mode and ticketing products – but could always improve, and could be a role for Members, especially those who are also school governors.

10. **Behaviour change:** Behaviour change is a vital area of further enquiry, if public transport use, including buses, is to be increased and improved. A recent British Psychologists Associations report showed that most people want to travel sustainability but don't feel its practical. Even if all infrastructure is built and improved and everything is zero emissions, if people are not using them for whatever reason, then their value is diminished. Motivational drivers can be identified and habits can be formed.

Resolved:

- i) That the report be noted and the Committee's feedback and conclusions be considered further.
 - ii) That a note providing an update and analysis of the impact of the Government's high speed rail announcements on the West Yorkshire region and the Combined Authority's plans, projects and strategies.
9. **Date of the next meeting – 20 January 2022, Mayor's Question Time**