

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
BUS SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE
HELD ON FRIDAY 15 JANUARY 2021 AT 10:30AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT:

Councillor Roy Walker
Councillor John Leech
Councillor Angeliki Stogia
Councillor Phil Burke
Councillor Roger Jones
Councillor David Meller
Councillor Warren Bray
Councillor Nathan Evans
Councillor Mark Aldred

Bury Council
Manchester City Council
Manchester City Council
Rochdale Council
Salford City Council
Stockport MBC
Tameside MBC
Trafford Council
Wigan Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Alison Chew
Catherine Towey
Bob Morris
James Lewis
Nick Roberts
Gwynne Williams
Nicola Ward

Interim Head of Bus Services, TfGM
Senior Service Account Manager, TfGM
Chief Operating Officer, TfGM
Section Manager, Services Planning, TfGM
Head of Services & Commercial Development, TfGM
Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA
Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer, GMCA

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Alistair Nuttall
Matthew Rawlinson
Ian Humphreys
Nigel Featham
Adam Clark
Paul Turner

Arriva
Diamond
First
Go North West
Stagecoach
Trans Dev

GMTBSC 25/20 APOLOGIES

Resolved /-

That apologies be received and noted from Cllr Barry Warner, Salford.

GMTBSC 26/20 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

Resolved /-

There were no chairs announcements or urgent business.

GMTBSC 27/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

That there were no declarations of interest.

GMTBSC 28/20 MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE BUS SERVICES SUB COMMITTEE HELD 13 NOVEMBER 2020

Resolved /-

That the minutes of the meeting held 13 November 2020 be approved.

GMTBSC 29/20 GMTC WORK PROGRAMME

Gwynne Williams, Deputy Monitoring Officer for the GMCA presented the latest draft work programme for the Greater Manchester Transport Committee.

Members were reminded that the Bus Reform consultation was due to close on the 29 January 2021 and were advised that decisions regarding Bus Reform were within the remit of GMCA and the Mayor and not the Transport Committee or its Sub Committees.

Members suggested further items for the work programme including a report detailing how de-carbonisation initiatives were being measured, and a report detailing plans by which confidence in the public transport system would be addressed.

Resolved /-

1. That the GM Transport Committee Work Programme be noted.
2. That Members of the GMTC be updated on the 'Doing Buses Differently' consultation outcomes in due course.
3. That it be noted that if Members have specific issues to raise in relation to the 'Doing Buses Differently' consultation, that they raise them directly with the Leader of their Local Authority.
4. That the GM Transport Committee receive a report on Decarbonisation of Transport before the end of the municipal year.
5. That a report on building public confidence in the public transport system be received by the GMTC at a timely opportunity.

GMTBSC 30/20 UPDATE FROM BUS OPERATORS

The Chair invited all Bus Operators present to update the Sub Committee on their current position and challenges and activity over the past two months.

Comments included –

- Patronage levels remained low at c. 30% of pre-covid levels.
- Some service changes were planned from the end of January, predominately in relation to reducing the frequency of some of the higher frequency services between Monday-Friday.
- There had been no further information received from DfT in relation to any changes to the current funding picture. It was noted that there were a number of various models being discussed and it was hoped that any changes would be on a phased approach to ensure that there was no dramatic effect to the network.
- Positive covid cases amongst staff had reduced and there were low numbers of clinically extremely vulnerable isolating.
- There were some concerns in relation to new driver training as this was not possible without a dedicated examiner, many of which were not currently available.
- Concern remained as to whether the 2-metre social distancing measure would be re-introduced and the obvious impact on maximum passenger capacity.

Members expressed their appreciation to bus operators for ensuring that services had still been able to run throughout the extremely difficult circumstances as a result of Coronavirus. The introduction of contactless payments was welcomed and urged for this provision to be used across all operators.

If there were any service reductions as a result of lockdown 3 and changes to Government funding, Members urged that this be reviewed at the earliest opportunity to ensure that no community was disadvantaged for any longer than necessary. It was confirmed that any service change since February 2020 was classified as temporary, and therefore these changes would have to be re-registered following the usual process including local authority consultation.

Members were aware of a number of cases where stolen credit cards had been used to purchase tickets on board vehicles. Operators reported that this was a well-known crime that was happening across all GM operators, however as stolen cards were not hot listed until the end of the day and therefore they were being used multiple times before they were reported. Operators were having to remove the option to purchase high value ticketing products (System One day tickets) as a preventative measure.

Resolved /-

1. That the updates from bus operators be noted by the Committee.
2. That it be noted that there are ongoing conversations with DfT in relation to future bus funding, and the efficient use of current funding.
3. That thanks be expressed specifically to staff at Diamond for maintaining a good service in Bury during the difficult recent months.
4. That it be noted that the sub committee support the action to influence DfT in relation to

bringing back driver examinations by DVSA to full capacity as soon as possible.

5. That it be noted that TfGM would continue to look at how to support the roll out of contactless payment facilities to smaller operators in GM and would update the sub committee in due course.
6. That it be noted that all temporary changes to bus timetables since February 2020 would need to be re-registered following the pandemic, and that this would be undertaken on a phased approach, subject to local consultation.
7. That in relation to contactless fraud, it be noted that all operators have decided that the System 1 weekly ticket can no longer be purchased contactless on vehicles.

GMTBSC 31/20 CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BUDGET

Nick Roberts, Head of Services & Commercial Development TfGM took Members through the regular report on forthcoming changes to the network and explained some of the governance process that results in the publication of the report. Over the last period, there had been £9.5m worth of local bus contracts reviewed in preparation for the April 2021 tender round. The current climate created by Covid-19 makes service forecasting even more difficult for both TfGM and operators tendering for contracts as there were a number of assumptions that had to be made including the future of the Government's Covid Bus Service Support Grant. The outcome of this review had seen 36 contracts extended, 52 re-tendered and all but 11 contracts remaining the same.

A review of schools' services in light of the latest lockdown situation, schools only open to key worker and vulnerable children and intelligence gathered from lockdown 2 had resulted in the removal of duplicate services and 30% of the remaining schools' network. This work had been undertaken in conjunction with schools to ensure that there was enough capacity remained but there were no empty vehicles and would continue to be monitored to ensure there was no significant impact to any students.

Discussions with DfT were underway in relation to proposed bus service levels during lockdown 3 that were related to the local market and met local demand. There was also a watching brief regarding social distancing guidance, but there had been no changes to date. Initial principles shared had indicated a desire to retain first and last trips, a minimum 30-minute frequency and further consideration of access to vaccination sites. These principles seemed to be supported by Operators, with some initial plans for slight timetable changes to come into effect from 31 January 2021 expecting to reduce mileage to c.85% of normal levels.

Members welcomed the provision of Ring and Ride services for access to testing and vaccination centres. It was confirmed that there were details of public transport access to the Mass Vaccination Centre at the Ethiad Tennis Centre on the TfGM website.

Annex A

The inclusion of first and last service time for each potential change within the report was

welcomed by Members, however, further clarification as to the logic for moving the 300 service 15 minutes later was requested. Stagecoach confirmed that this was only in relation to Saturday services, and that this service was reinstated after being withdrawn in lockdown 1. Further to this, Members asked whether the 635 service would return to every 15 minutes from the revised timetable for a 20-minute service. It was confirmed that this service change would be monitored by Stagecoach and patronage levels reviewed.

In relation to service 151, Members expressed their satisfaction in the prior engagement undertaken with local councillors and the long term solution which had now been found.

It was felt that service 184 could see patronage growth after lockdown, as this service previously provided access to leisure facilities in Oldham. Members urged that this service renewal be considered at the earliest opportunity.

Annex B

It was suggested that bus service improvements should be a condition on planning consents, especially in relation to new housing development sites as a result of GMSF which had the potential to put additional pressure on the bus service subsidised budget. Officers confirmed that this was an ongoing concern in relation to all planning applications, however this was mitigated through early work with developers and local authority colleagues. Members urged that further conversations were pursued to ensure that future planning consent is shaped to include TfGM colleagues in relation to any potential transport implications.

Annex C

There were concerns raised regarding the reliability of service 41 and the potential further issues caused through the proposed changes. Officers confirmed that the revised length of this service would be taken into consideration.

It was also confirmed that the changes to service 41 would be monitored to ensure that the changes proposed to the timetable still provided an effective link between the north and south of Manchester during the evening period.

Resolved /-

1. That the presentation slides be shared with Members.
2. That it be noted that travel advice in relation to access to the mass vaccination site at the Ethiad Tennis Centre was now available on the TfGM website.
3. That the changes to the commercial network and the proposals not to replace the de-registered commercial services as set out in Annex A of the report be noted.
4. That it be agreed that no action is taken in respect of changes or de-registered commercial services as set out in Annex A of the report.
5. That it be noted that the changes to services 36 and 37 as outlined in the report by Diamond would no longer be going ahead.

6. That it be noted that TfGM had undertaken a review of schools' services for this lockdown period, and in consultation with all schools, have reduced services by 30% with no impact to pupils.
7. That the proposed action taken in respect of changes or de-registered commercial services as set out in Annex B of the report be approved.
8. That it be noted that Cllr Fielding would share his suggestions with TfGM offline in relation to the use of bus stops for both directions.
9. That the proposed changes to general subsidised services set out in Annex C of the report be approved.
10. That TfGM would continue to monitor the changes to the 41 service and ensure that north and south Manchester remain connected.

GMTBSC 32/20 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved /-

That, under section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on business on the grounds that this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as set out in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

GMTBSC 33/20 CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BUDGET

Resolved /-

That the financial implications of forthcoming changes to the bus network be noted by the Committee.