

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER
BUS SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2022
AT FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, MANCHESTER**

PRESENT:

Councillor Jo Lancaster	Bury Council
Councillor Tracey Rawlins	Manchester City Council
Councillor George Hulme	Oldham MBC
Councillor Howard Sykes	Oldham MBC
Councillor Roger Jones	Salford Council
Councillor David Meller	Stockport Council
Councillor Warren Bray	Tameside Council
Councillor Linda Blackburn	Trafford Council
Councillor Mark Aldred (Chair)	Wigan Council
Councillor John Vickers	Wigan Council

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Lewis	Network Development Manager, TfGM
Stephen Rhodes	Director of Bus, TfGM
Nick Roberts	Head of Services & Commercial Development, TfGM
Nicola Ward	Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA

OPERATORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mark Mageean	Stagecoach
Richard Greaves	Stagecoach
Matt Rawlinson	Rotala/Diamond
Paul Townley	First

GMTBSC 34/22 APOLOGIES

Resolved /-

1. That apologies be received and noted from Councillor Phil Burke.

2. Apologies were also received from Ian Humphreys (First), Alastair Nuttall (Arriva) and Gary Nolan (One Bus).

GMTBSC 35/22 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

Resolved /-

The Chair welcomed the attendance of bus operators present at the meeting.

GMTBSC 36/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved /-

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda.

**GMTBSC 37/22 MINUTES OF THE GM TRANSPORT BUS SERVICES SUB
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 7 OCTOBER 2022**

In relation to the issues raised at the last meeting regarding Vantage services, TfGM officers provided an update that in recent surveys performance issues had improved. Reliability had been good overall, however there were ongoing concerns regarding punctuality, predominately affected by roadworks around Broad Street.

Patronage on the V2 short services during off peak hours had also been monitored and officers had concluded that the current timetable provided the right level of capacity. The issue would remain monitored, however Members commented that there were further wider implications as a result of issues with the vantage services which needed to be addressed.

Officers had also met with Cllr Lancaster regarding service 98, following which a meeting had been arranged to consider a series of parking restriction proposals which would alleviate some of the access issues along this route.

Members highlighted that there were a number of passengers still not scanning passes as they board a bus, officers welcomed further specific information on these incidences.

Resolved /-

1. That the minutes of the GM Transport Bus Services Sub Committee meeting held 7 October 2022 be approved as a correct record.
2. That Nick Roberts would provide a written update to Cllr Vickers regarding the current patronage levels and current status of the Vantage Services.
3. That Cllr Vickers would provide officers with information as to how the issues with the Vantage were impacting other bus routes, including services 132, 582 and 583.

GMTBSC 38/22

**CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK AND REVIEW OF
SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BUDGET**

During this period there had been no tender activity, however there were a number of changes to the commercial network as set out in Annex B that had been addressed through a direct award where possible as many of the awards were short term until the introduction of the Tranche 1 franchise.

Members were concerned as to any potential impact to other services run by Diamond should the operator be awarded further contracts. Officers reassured the Committee that the award process looks closely at an organisations ability to deliver and each contract is closely monitored. Diamond provided further reassurance.

Further deregulation was anticipated ahead of bus franchising and Members were concerned that there would be further subsidies required despite increasing profits for operators.

In relation to services 472 and 474, Members had received complaints from residents regarding their punctuality. Diamond commented that performance issues relating to these services could be attributed predominately to congestion during the afternoon peak which would be resumed once works were completed.

Resolved /-

1. That the changes on the commercial network as set out in Annex A be noted.
2. That it be agreed that no action be taken in respect of changes or de-registered commercial services set out in Annex B.
3. That it be agreed that the action be taken in respect of the service changes set out in Annex B.
4. That the proposed changes to general subsidised services set out in Annex C be agreed.

GMTBSC 39/22 BUS OPERATOR UPDATE

Diamond reported the loss of four vehicles over the past two nights due to vandalism in Little Houlton. Due to a delay in glass production it was likely that these vehicles would be off the road for a considerable period. To highlight the severity of the issue, it was reported that this year alone the operators had spent £115,000 on glass replacement, which equated to the sale of 29,000 tickets. Members urged that operators continue to report such incidences and in relation to the spike in Little Houlton, that a report is provided to Members from GMP and Travelsafe.

First had also experienced a number of anti-social behaviour incidents during October, specifically in the Oldham area and on Vantage services. Although these were reported to GMP and TravelSafe, there have been little outcomes for the perpetrators for a variety of reasons. Patronage was variable across services, but the Oldham depot were reporting c. 90% pre-covid levels. Staffing levels were manageable and recruitment was on track. Services had seen an increased dwelling time since the introduction of the capped fares initiative as there had been an increase in people purchasing day tickets rather than weekly products.

Stagecoach reported that they had been covering 98% of mileage since October and were working to address their staffing issues to ensure that any lost mileage was not as a result of resources. Patronage remained in line with national figures, with concessionary travel still being reported as lower than the overall average. Further campaigns were planned for the Christmas period, targeting young people regarding capped fares and parents and grandparents regarding group tickets respectively. Recent recruitment had been positive

and since September 22 new recruits had been triple the amount than expected in the same period, with c. 20 new drivers starting each week. It was anticipated that by January all vacant positions would be filled.

In relation to Euro 6 standards compliance, Diamond reported that 90% of their fleet were currently compliant, with 100% anticipated by February 2023. Fist reported that their fleet were already 100% compliant. Stagecoach added that all of their buses which could be retrofitted had been done to Euro standards. Members congratulated all operators present on their efforts to retrofit the bus fleet in GM and recognised the size of the task that had been undertaken.

On behalf of Cllr Burke the issue of punctuality of the 163 and 471 services was raised. Diamond explained how the 471 service had been split to help punctuality on the long route, but any specific issues were welcomed to be fed back directly.

Members were concerned that in the north and west of Greater Manchester there were no evening bus services, which seemed a disadvantage to the services provided in the east and south of the conurbation. Operators were asked to consider whether further evening services could be introduced.

In relation to service 328, Members had received complaints regarding punctuality, missed sections of route and cancellations which were affecting students attending Aquinas College. Stagecoach apologised for the recent issues relating to this service which had been caused by the movement of fleet across the city region, however assured the Committee that they would be rectified by next week.

Resolved /-

1. That bus operators be thanked for their verbal updates, and their contents noted.
2. That it be noted that Diamond welcome further dialogue with Cllr Phil Burke regarding the specific issues relating to service 471.
3. That TfGM seek a response from GMP / Travelsafe in relation to the recent spate of vandalism on Diamond Buses in Little Houlton.

4. That concerns regarding service 328 to Aquinas College be passed on from Cllr Meller to Stagecoach directly.
5. That it be noted that Stagecoach welcome notification of any further concerns in relation to the 192 service.

GMTBSC 40/22 RING AND RIDE PERFORMANCE

Following a previous report in March 2022, this report provided the Committee with an update on the performance of the Ring and Ride Service in Greater Manchester. It was clear from an increased patronage over the past few months that this service remained a key component to the overall public transport network and provided a critical local service for some of the most vulnerable residents. However, since the covid lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 the service has recovered slower than other modes and reported current patronage levels of 60% within a dramatically different demand pattern. Evening and weekend usage had remained low, whereas requests for daytime travel had grown significantly compared to patronage levels pre-covid.

There were 42 vehicles now within the service and another 3 vehicles planned to arrive in January 2023, enabling the service to plan for a modest growth of trips by early next year.

Similarly to other bus operators, Ring and Ride had also been subject to supply chain issues, especially regarding glass and other mechanical parts which had seen some vehicles off the road for a period of time. The ageing fleet was being upgraded as by 2028 there would be 28 vehicles due to expire so progress was being made to strengthen the electric fleet ahead of this date and beyond.

Officers were aware of the recent booking challenges and the constraints as a result of managing the service through the customer hub, which would be alleviated once the merger with the TfGM contact centre was completed over the next couple of months.

Members echoed these frustrations with regards to the booking service and expressed concerns that for some residents Ring and Ride was the only option for travel and its challenges were having a direct impact on their access to service provision. A volunteer

through Age Concern had reported complaints in relation to disjointed services accessing the Jubilee Centre, resulting in clients of the day centre missing some of their activities due to the required timings of the pick ups and drop offs. Officers asked for some specific data to investigate these concerns but anticipated that such incidents could be mitigated through the planned increase in capacity.

Members reiterated their previous concerns regarding the incompatibility of some larger electric wheelchairs and the tail lifts on some vehicles. Officers acknowledged this issue and spoke of up to 50 registered users who were affected by this barrier. It was anticipated that the new imminent vehicles would provide a more accessible service, and, in the meantime, alternative provision was being sought in acute circumstances. Members urged that communications should be made with the wheelchair manufacturers to make clear the wider impact of their current product specifications.

A member questioned the current status of the wider Accessible Transport Review and was informed by officers that it was being delivered in component parts due to the vastness of the provision. The report gave specific detail on the Ring and Ride Service, however there was also work being undertaken regarding the home to school services, non-emergency patient services, Local Link and other demand responsive provision. Members asked for a follow up report to provide a status update on all strands not covered in this report at their next meeting.

Resolved /-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a further update on the expansion of the electric fleet for Ring and Ride be provided to the Committee in due course.
3. That officers at TfGM would pick up the concerns raised by Age Concern regarding Ring and Ride in Bury.
4. That the Chair would write to electric wheelchair manufacturers on behalf of the Committee, asking for consideration to be given as to how their chairs could more compatibly work with accessible transport provision to reduce any future exclusion.

5. That TfGM would provide an update to the next meeting on the progress of the Demand Responsive Transport review, with specific reference to Local Link and other areas not included in the Ring and Ride report.

GMTBSC 41/22 WORK PROGRAMME

Resolved / -

That the proposed Work Programme for the GM Transport Committee and its Sub Committees be noted.

GMBSC 42/22 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

1. That future dates for the Bus Services Sub Committee be noted as below –

Friday 20 January 2023

Friday 10 March 2023

2. That it be further noted that these meetings would take place in the Boardroom at the GMCA Offices, Tootal Buildings, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester.

GMBSC 43/22 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 44/22 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.