TRANSPORT FOR GREATER MANCHESTER (TfGM) COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUS NETWORK AND TfGM
SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 MARCH 2019 AT
MECHANICS INSTITUTE, MANCHESTER, M11 6DD

PRESENT:

Councillor David Chadwick Bolton
Councillor Noel Bayley Bury
Councillor Naeem Hassan Manchester
Councillor John Leech Manchester
Councillor Phil Burke Rochdale
Councillor Robin Garrido Salford
Councillor Roger Jones Salford (Chair)
Councillor Barry Warner Salford
Councillor Annette Finnier Stockport
Councillor Steve Adshead Trafford

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nick Roberts Head of Service and Commercial Development, TfGM
Mike Evans Management Accountant, TfGM
Emma Stonier Governance & Scrutiny, GMCA

ALSO PRESENT:

Alistair Nuttall Arriva
Ben Jarvis Stagecoach
Adam Clark Stagecoach
Ian Humphreys First Bus
Matt Rawlinson Diamond
Nigel McKinney MCT
Paul Turner Rosso
BN/19/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Patricia Sullivan, Peter Robinson, Mark Aldred and Alison Chew, TfGM.

BN/19/12 CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND URGENT BUSINESS

There were no Chair’s announcements or urgent business.

BN/19/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

BN/19/14 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2019 were submitted for approval. A Member raised the number 12 bus service and notified Members that following a residents meeting with other elected Members a petition had been handed to TfGM. A full response will be sent to Councillors Phil Burke and Robin Garrido regarding this.

Councillor Annette Finnie informed TfGM that she was awaiting the further information about the proportion of General Network Costs that support staff costs at TfGM. TfGM stated they would follow this up and report back to Councillor Finnie.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2019 be approved.

2. That it be noted that officers would progress the provision of further information to Councillor Annette Finnie regarding proportion of General Networks Costs that support staff costs at TfGM.

BN/19/15 FIRST BUS ANNOUNCEMENT

Ian Humphrey, First Bus, had provided a letter to the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee (TfGMC) on 15th March regarding the sale of the Queens Road Depot. First continued to work with the Glendinning Group. Currently there was not a finalised completion date but an announcement was expected in 3-4 months’ time.

A Member noted that following this announcement, concerns had been raised about the Oldham/Bolton depot being put up for sale. This announcement concerned the Queens Road depot and no further comment was made in relation to the Oldham/Bolton depot. It was also noted that it appeared there were a significant number of changes to services in Bolton and Oldham. It was highlighted that changes in Oldham had been under discussion for some time.

A Member raised concerns around cuts to services in Rochdale leaving communities isolated and inaccessible by public transport. They asked if First could provide any reassurance in
relation to future cuts to services. It was stated that these concerns were operational and that this announcement related solely to the sale of the Queens Road bus depot. TfGM agreed to provide further information to Councillors regarding the implication for services in Rochdale following this announcement.

Members noted the uncertainty and stated that it was best for customers and staff for a resolution to be reached as soon as possible. First informed Members that staff did have questions and that the formal process was being followed in relation to staff in accordance with the appropriate legislation. The letter to TfGMC had also emphasised the commitment to minimise the impact of the announcement on customers and staff.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the update be noted.

2. That it be noted that officers would provide further information to Councillor Phil Burke regarding the implication for services in Rochdale following the First Bus announcement.

BN/19/16 FORTHCOMING CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK

Prior to the discussion of the Forthcoming Changes to the Bus Network report the Chair raised the matter of air quality and the proposed GM Clean Air Plan. Local authorities have been holding a series of meetings with taxi/private hire companies to explain the Outline Business Case (OBC) submitted to Government. The Chair asked operators whether they were aware of the air quality work and whether they would meet the standards outlined in the OBC by 2020.

Stagecoach were aware of the target and had started procuring new vehicles this year, including electric vehicles. They had also applied for funding to retrofit buses. Currently they estimated they would be 400 vehicles short of the target. Members asked whether they were making representations to Government. Stagecoach noted they had had discussions with the Department for Transport (DfT) around ensuring there was funding for retrofitting. It was also highlighted that this work was in the very early stages and that there was a significant amount of work still to do. Challenges were also highlighted in relation to areas around the country introducing different plans with varying timelines.

First have agreed funding to retrofit a number of buses but without further new investment it was currently expected that approximately 200 buses would not be compliant by 2021. They were also discussing this with Government.

Rosso had taken delivery of 16 Euro6 buses last year and some of would begin to be used on their Bolton routes. They had received funding from the first phase of funding for retrofitting 17 vehicles and had put in a bid for a further £20m from the next round. It was also highlighted that some vehicles were not capable of being retrofitted so scrappage would need to be looked into.
Arriva highlighted that clear air zones were going to be introduced in Leeds from 1st January 2020, York 1st January 2021 and Bradford within the next two years. Arriva had begun to work towards targets and had started the process of retrofitting. Capital costs of this were highlighted as was revenue expenditure (for example through increased costs of maintaining vehicles). Other areas had also made arrangements for a ‘cushion’ period if operators had not met targets by these dates.

Members asked the costs of retrofitting vehicles. Costs vary but on average it was around £15-20k per vehicle. The potential financial impact on TfGM and the provision of subsidised services was also raised. Operators also informed Members that there were other considerations in relation to funding which included whether there were enough companies/people to carry out retrofitting, the supply of vehicles by manufacturers and ongoing maintenance costs.

A Member raised the need for public funding to help operators meet these targets. Stagecoach noted that they had invested heavily into their fleet over the preceding years and normally a vehicle would expect to be in service for 12-15 years. Additionally, it was highlighted that emissions targets have begun to be introduced relatively recently.

The Committee asked whether operators would factor in clean air zone charges if their fleets weren’t compliant by the required date. Operators noted that a definitive answer could not currently be provided on this as at present final positions were estimates. Furthermore, it was noted as being difficult to provide definitive answers around charging and scrappage until a decision had made around bus franchising in GM.

Nick Roberts, TfGM, introduced a report which informed Members of the changes that have taken place to the bus network since the last TfGMC Bus Network and TfGM Services Sub-Committee meeting, in addition to reporting on consequential action taken or proposed by Transport for Greater Manchester.

Members asked whether TfGM consulted with Manchester Airport about proposed changes to the bus network when these impacted on timings of early morning services for airport staff. TfGM confirmed that consultation did take place and noted that this was the first time they had received funding from the airport to support services. A service would now reach the Airport at 3.50am and work had been undertaken with Stagecoach and the airport to achieve this. A Member stated that it would be useful to include information around impact on times of first and last services within the report. TfGM confirmed they included this if there was a significant change to either of these.

A Member queried whether the additional 34 services would also run at peak times. There will be additional peak journeys, but not as many as at other times of the day, due to congestion and time taken to get in and out of Worsley in the peak. Stagecoach also informed Members that they had written to the local MP regarding the impact of congestion. It was also asked whether any consideration had been given to the times of the Saturday evening services as the last one out of Worsley is 18:45 and the last one returning from Manchester is 19:18. Officers agreed to discuss this with the relevant Member outside of the meeting.
Additionally, it was highlighted that the 34 timetable available to members of the public was out of date. Officers agreed to look into this.

A Member asked whether there were any further updates in relation to the axed number 58 bus service as this was an important service for local residents and businesses. It was also asked whether the replacement service was likely to be the same 30-minute frequency as the withdrawn service. TfGM noted that this was currently out to tender and more information would be available when the results of this had been received.

A Member raised the withdrawal of the daily evening journeys for the number 68 and the impact this would have on providing links between areas of Farnworth and the Trafford Centre and asked about future plans for the replacement of these services. TfGM informed Members that an invitation to tender for part replacement of this service will be issued on 28th April and more information would be available when the outcome of this was known.

A Member highlighted serious concerns about the withdrawal of the 415 service as it leaves a significant number of people isolated and without access to a bus service. A replacement was out to tender currently and TfGM recognised the importance of this service and again would be able to update Members further when the results of this had been received. First Bus stated that the route/provision had been in excess of what had been required and that, overtime, the market for this route had changed. The importance of solutions being identified which provided best value was also highlighted.

A Member raised the withdrawal of the 501 and asked whether it was possible to consider alternative solutions, such as joint operations, when services were withdrawn for commercial reasons. It was stated that TfGM had the ability to facilitate voluntary discussions between operators, whilst still complying with the legalities surrounding competition legislation. Following discussion, it was agreed that First Bus would consider providing TfGM with information regarding those bus services that could be potentially at risk ahead of the Committee meetings.

A Member noted their thanks to Stagecoach and TfGM for the introduction of the new 12 A service.

A Member welcomed the new services operating through Altrincham, Timperley and the Airport. The need for a transport system which operated 24 hours a day, and enabled people to access employment and leisure opportunities, without using a car was also emphasised.

A Member noted that they were disappointed that the Stockport Metroshuttle had been withdrawn. Officers highlighted that this decision had been made by Stockport Council and that as the service had been subsidised and free it would not be commercially viable for another operator to take this on. It was asked whether the extension of the 312 route would cover all areas previously serviced by the Metroshuttle. Officers confirmed that areas on this route were still covered by alternative services. It was also highlighted that the impact of the withdrawal would be monitored. A Member queried how the 312 route had been decided on. TfGM confirmed they would provide the Councillor with further information about this route.
A Member asked TfGM for further information about the Logistics North bus link including fares, timetables, access to the service and communication and marking of the services. It was agreed that a briefing note would be provided regarding this.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the changes to the commercial network be noted and that the proposals not to replace those de-registered commercial services, as set out in Annex A, be agreed.

2. That the proposed action taken in respect of changes or de-registered commercial services, as set out in Annex B, be agreed.

3. That the proposed changes to existing general subsidised services set out in Annex C be approved.

4. That officers be requested to ensure that an updated 34 timetable was available to members of the public.

5. That it be noted that First Bus had agreed to consider providing TfGM with information regarding those bus services that could be potentially at risk ahead of the Committee meetings.

6. That officers be requested to provide Councillor Annette Finnie with further information in relation to the route of the 312.

7. That officers be requested to provide a briefing note to Councillor David Chadwick in relation to the local link service for Logistics North.

BN/19/17        EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED/-

That in accordance with Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting at this juncture for the following business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule of 12A of the Act.

It would not be, on balance, in the public interest to disclose this information to the public and press.

BN/19/18       FORTHCOMING CHANGES TO THE BUS NETWORK PART B

Consideration was given to the report of Nick Roberts, Head of Service and Commercial Development that provided further detail to Members on the commercial information relating to the proposed changes to the general subsidised service.
Members asked whether there would be any costs incurred by TfGM in relation to the extension of the 103. It was confirmed that all costs were being covered by Manchester Airport Group. This was highlighted as being positive news.

RESOLVED/-

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