

VALE PUBLIC TRANSPORT GROUP

Notes of Open Meeting – 22nd May 2019 – Pershore Town Hall

1. Welcome

Julian Palfrey, Chairman, welcomed all to the meeting. He commented on several changes since the last open meeting in June 2018. These included – loss of some village fifties services with withdrawal of WCC subsidy, decreased funding overall from WCC, WCC Passenger Transport Review being undertaken, work on revising Hopper/PlumLine services, funding from other sources including Pershore TC, Wychavon (£50,000 rolling), general funding issues as well as future increases in rail services from Pershore.

Nigel Eggleton, First Midland Red and Tom Pierpoint, GW were welcomed as well as various councillors and members of the public. The number of attendees was around 60.

2. Apologies

Alan Amos, Andy Baker - WCC, Martin King - Wychavon, Peter Brookbank - Pershore TC

3. Bus services

Services from First including the fifties and Village services including Pershore and Evesham as hubs – Nigel Eggleton (First) commented on a number of points

He was disappointed to be unable to sustain some fifties routes – passenger numbers could not justify continuing; e.g. Eckington 09.10 service ex village, previously 4 passengers - upped to 7 - not sufficient despite publicity. (Eckington population – circa 1400)

All services in Worcestershire are commercial but run on back of school transport funding, recently Upton service subsidised in the short term by the local county councillor.

Revenue from bus passes; average £1.10 – funding gap between revenue and cost; note loss of full Harrogate – York service which was filled by individuals with bus passes - not commercially viable.

Some areas are far better supported than WCC; e.g. Nottingham – positive discrimination to bus users, increased car parking fees.

Road congestion is a major problem; need more buses to cope thus increasing running costs

JP raised potential of some routes for 'tweaking' to increase use of empty buses, re-timing etc. NE indicated any changes would be in place for September. (Note these are under review by NE).

Discussion Points

WCC Passenger Transport Review; for completion late 2019, bus service changes on hold until April 2020.

X50 morning school service full; possible double decker? – Action NE

Option to pay half fare or only in one direction, not legal otherwise; possibility of group bookings – “Friends of the Fifties”? note - high fare = high subsidy

NE - running cost per bus - £30-£40 per hour, driver - £16 per hour

Bus company accounts available on Companies House website

Routeing X50 back through villages? NE - numbers very low and not commercial, would add to journey time

Much detailed work has been done on PlumLine/Hopper routes & timings by Colin Tether, John Bolt and VPTG which should be very useful to WCC.

Query; amending Eckington Hopper route to be taken up with Astons – include estate at top of Nafford Road

Bus stops; WCC responsible for poles with timetables etc provided by operator. Need for formal stop at Wick on B4084

Useful to have e mails of any timetable change for PCs and users

Congestion; bus lanes and cycle lanes – Leicester experience 250 cyclists compared with 2500-3000 bus users (Leicester) congestion increase due to bus lanes

Political re financial support – note Zurich funded 80% from the public purse

Electronic displays at bus stops - wish for generally better info

4. Rail services

Update on Current situation including the car park at Pershore and Worcester Parkway progress. Tom Pierpoint commented on a number of points:

reliability markedly increased as new trains embedded in the service, small changes in May timetable, new timetable December – Parkway then open.

Train software updates to serve lengthened platforms almost complete – must be done on by Hitachi at Bristol; platform extensions delayed but now signed off.

Ticket machine likely for Pershore

Pershore car park; footbridge from Reading identified, various issues relating to disabled access to agree, 283 spaces, disabled at platform side. GWR working with Wychavon and Network Rail to move forward.

Future double tracking – would need partnership with business case.

Current franchise until 2022 – likely extension to 2024

Discussion points

Line capacity; a passing loop at Pershore would need to be lengthy, not just at the station

Ticket machine at Evesham unreliable; Penalty issue if a queue and need to get on the train?

Improving stations; next April funds available - matched funding with partnership

Bus/rail connections; Parkway, Evesham to Broadway and Stratford

Overcrowded trains on West Midlands line

Future proofing of new road bridge at Pershore; wide and high enough for double track and electrification.

Julian Palfrey, Chairman, thanked all for coming and reminded people about the just published (May 2019) Home Office Report into Bus Transport in England outside London and the VPTG website (www.vptg.org.uk)

HW, 26 May 2019