

SHERBORNE TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 8th September 2016 at 7pm, Digby Hall, Hound St, Sherborne.

Present:

Mike Keatinge (Chairman)

John Warmington (Resident)

Anna Finch (DCN)

Bruce Duncan (Holwell PC)

Garth Hentley (Yetminster PC)

Bob Owen (Resident)

Alan Ward (Battery Vehicle Society))

Shaun Brimble (First Bus Yeovil)) Retired after relevant business

Paul Adams (First Bus Yeovil))

Joy Rabbetts (Stalbridge Town Council)

Philip Lock (Milborne Port Parish Council)

1. Apologies

Peter Henshaw, Robert Gould, Jane Smith, David Greening, Sue Greene

2. Minutes of meeting held on 9th June 2016

The minutes were agreed, with two amendments notified by the Secretary:

Under 5 SW franchise line 2 should read "Treasury are likely to pick the most expensive option" (ie that gives Treasury the most money).

Line 3 - Contract /franchise should be awarded in March 2017 for a summer 2017 start but unlikely as the ITT still has not been issued

3. Bus Services

In furtherance of previously announced budget cuts, papers from DCC had been circulated, including a commendably detailed report on responses to the consultation on principles carried out in the spring. MK had been given to understand at that time that there would be a further stage of consultation when specific proposals had been formulated. But it was now understood that this would not happen.

MK reported a telephone conversation with Joseph Rose of Dorset Travel. The intention is that operators will be given a brief stating broad requirements. Thus DCC will not themselves know the shape of the new network until bids are received, so there will be no time for consultation. Thus the network will be announced in Spring 2017 as a *fait accompli* for implementation in Summer 2017.

MK had protested against this lack of consultation and asked if the briefs could be made available to TAGs so that we might have an opportunity of discussion with operators. BO now asked if this scheme had been approved by Members and if the information could be repeated in public (*this minute subsequently cleared with DCC*). He noted that the Health authorities are in parallel centralising some services, which will lead to increased transport demands. Is this being taken into account? He also lamented the lack of transparency and commented on the potential impact on local plans. Others were sceptical about the use of school buses by the public, noting that they often run the wrong

way for the public need and that the mid-afternoon return run does not help people returning from work.

It was noted that, while in principle STAG was willing to fund local timetables, including a Community Rail Partnership proposal for rail/bus timetables, there was no point in doing this until the new network was defined. JR said that locally-produced timetables in Stalbridge are much appreciated.

The consultation had shown strong support for the 57 service round the West End and First confirmed that there were no plans for any change to this commercial service. They also noted that the 58 Yeovil-Wincanton bus is well used for much of the day. Responses also showed much support for the 74 (Yeovil-Sherborne via the villages) including one suggesting that a 3-day service might meet the essential need. Others said that the absence of a Saturday service was crucial. JR reported that the X10 (Blandford via villages) was well-used and service to the bottom of Sherborne was valued. She also noted that the current local buses take shoppers to Dorset towns rather than Somerset ones.

The consultation showed support for the concept of some charge for concessionary fares rather than losing the service, though AF said this would cause some passengers to return to their cars. MK would continue to press for a national review of the scheme.

In a discussion about access to Yeovil, it was noted that revision of the Pen Mill junction would disrupt traffic for some 8-months. After this we would review the use of lanes at the Babylon Hill roundabout, though First thought that the present 'either lane' was working well.

4. Train Services

South West Trains Franchise: Bids had been returned on 7 September. Award was scheduled for February, with the new franchise starting in the summer. Bidders were South West Trains (Stagecoach) and Great Western Railway (First with Hong Kong MTR). There was much concern that SWT's established experience of a complicated franchise might be overcome by a blunt but financially better bid by First. There was some concern at a new franchise starting just as Waterloo was closed for major works. Looking to the future, the possibility of SWT taking over the Bristol-Weymouth line was noted but the concept of a systematic Waterloo-Yeovil-Weymouth service was regarded with some scepticism. Heavy investment would be needed to raise the line speed between Yeovil and Maiden Newton from 45 to 75mph. From a STAG point of view, possible loss of services to the Wriggle Valley halts was of concern

The Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership (CRP), covering Tisbury to Crewkerne, is funded by SWT and some government support. Caroline Rowlands, employed two days a week, is developing a programme including a website. The Salisbury Exeter Rail User Group (SERUG East) covers the same section, but campaigning independently with three initial priorities: double track between Tisbury and Wilton, joining and splitting of trains at Yeovil Junction, and ultimate renewal of 30-year old rolling stock.

5. Cycling

We noted the recent article in the Sherborne Times by Peter Henshaw and Mike Riley revisiting several wished-for cycle routes through Sherborne and the need for more cycle racks, particularly at Westbury/Cook's Lane and at the Digby Road bus stop.

PL renewed the call for a cycle route between Sherborne and Milborne Port. MK said that, given adamant opposition from Sherborne Castle Estates or their tenant, the time was not ripe to re-open this debate.

6. Dorset County Council

Officer Report had been received, focussing largely on buses as above. Community Transport Toolkit has been issued. (MK has copy available to others)

7. Any Other Business

a) MK reported a memorandum just received from Sherborne Town Council Plans Committee recommending that a planning application for a new School Sports Hall on Carey's Field (between Ottery Lane and River Yeo) should not be approved until the Westbury / Ottery Lane junction is physically changed to alter the priority. Discussion identified, in particular, concerns about pedestrian provision and the need for a proper traffic assessment. MK would draft a response for Committee approval.

b) AW had tabled a document from Dorset Highways indicating that they would no longer undertake many non-core maintenance activities, leaving these to town and parish councils. The meeting noted that, while there was a case for devolving responsibilities where local capability existed (eg verge cutting in Sherborne town), there was no logic in devolving work to a parish council with no paid staff. If contractors were required, the County Council was better able than a parish council to obtain good terms. In many cases there are safety implications: eg grass cutting at junctions to ensure visibility, clear visibility of signs to avoid last-minute manoeuvres, flooding due to blocked gullies, etc. We felt that this document went too far in retraction of public responsibilities.

8. Next Meeting:

8th December