

SHERBORNE TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP

**Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 8th June 2017 at 7pm,
Wingfield Room, Digby Hall, Hound St, Sherborne.**

Present:

Mike Keatinge (Chairman)
Peter Henshaw (Secretary, DCN)
Anna Finch (Treasurer, DCN)
Susan Greene (Sherborne TC)
John Warmington (Resident)
Aled Williams (First Group)
Shaun Brimble (First Group)
Kevin Batchelor (First Group)
Bruce Duncan (SERUG, Railfuture)
John Edmonds (Milborne Port PC)
Alan Ward (Battery Vehicle Society)
Jane Smith (Resident)
David Rayner (Resident)
Stan Darley (Chetnole PC, Chetnole Rail Halt)

1. Apologies – Bob Owen, John Andrews, Mike Sage

2. Minutes of meeting held on 2nd March 2017

The minutes were passed.

3. Bus Services

General: Aled Williams (First Bus) gave an overview of current services and answered questions. Yeovil depot is now part of the Taunton area, while local issues of personnel or breakdowns are dealt with locally – timetable enquiries should go to Shaun Brimble at Yeovil or Kevin Batchelor at Taunton. Stalbridge (one stop removed) and Templecombe (now 20hourly with change needed for Stalbridge) were discussed.

Railway/bus co-operation – AW said that a retired employee of First will be covering this, and that there should be better co-ordination. He acknowledged the importance of this but added that schedules are so tight that even a small timetable change can affect many other services – drivers often have to do multiple routes and their hours are limited. Wincanton service was reduced because of lack of demand, and diversion through Marnhull has not noticeably increased usage.

John Warmington asked what were the bus operators' main costs. AW said they were staff wages and fuel (operators pay a fixed rate £1.40/litre) plus maintenance and depreciation of buses (about £80,000 per bus over 20 years). Added that the bus service operators grant makes only small contribution to costs.

Yeovil road works – First has added an extra bus to help reduce delays, at a cost of £30,000/year.

Timetables – AW accepted that the imposition of previous timetable changes without

consultation had not been good.

Shopping Contracts (Tesco free bus etc): In answer to a question, SB said that these former arrangements were killed off by the free concession fare.

Publicity: First Bus now have a promotional budget for the first time and is using a PR company to promote – campaign will start late summer for 12 months. This is partly due to a new clause in the DCC contract, which requires the operator to 'develop' services.

Several members suggested promotions using lower fares or tying up with local businesses (eg cinema) but AW replied that these did not make money, though he agreed more needs to be done. Buses are gradually being rebranded at a cost of £2500 each.

Pre-9.30 Flat Fare £2: DCC are implementing the national scheme in not funding concessionary passes before 0930. Joy Rabbetts reported that some concession passengers are refusing to use the £2 pre-0930 rate but Anna Finch strongly supported the £2 fare, saying that this and the free pass are a good deal for older passengers. Scanner for passes sometimes doesn't work but Kevin Batchelor said that new machines are coming in November, which will also accept credit/debit card swiping.

Service 57 later buses cut: There was strong opposition to curtailing the 57 after 1530, but AW said that the last two buses were not being used much, and that 58/59 is the other late afternoon option.

Damory: Will be deregistering (ie stop running) their routes (X10, X11, 74) on 12th July, and more information would be available at the TAG leaders meeting on 15th June.

(Note: TAG leaders meeting has since been cancelled – more information to come in due course). There are suggestions that South West Coaches will take over the X10 and X11 but will centre on the schools services plus a few inter-urban routes. 74 will stop unless it is taken over as a commercial service and JW said that this would seriously affect Yetminster and Thornford. MK suggested that a taxi people carrier round the top-of-town was a potential replacement, though this would need a different licence, and arranging fares would be complicated.

Sherborne Timetable: Sherborne needs an overall timetable for all bus services passing through town. STAG could finance this and Bruce Duncan suggested Shelleys the printers. David Rayner offered to take a first look at the job. It was noted that many times will be changing in July in any case.

The representatives of First were thanked for attending the meeting.

4. Election of STAG Officers

Mike Keatinge was re-elected as Chair, Peter Henshaw as Secretary and Anna Finch as Treasurer. All three were thanked for their work. Brian Clyst will continue as accountant. The email consultative committee continues and is open to new members.

Chairman's report: This had been circulated and was approved.

Treasurer's report: STAG has £1304 in the bank, running a £116 surplus this year – honoraria and postage/stationary are the only costs at the moment.

5. Train Services

New First MTR Franchise: Bruce Duncan has asked what changes this will bring and whether the service will be developed. The response does not hold out much hope, with 'no benefits at all' for our line in the new franchise except a time saving of 11 minutes into Waterloo, largely achieved by dropping the stops at Woking and Clapham Junction. We agreed this to be unacceptable. There will be no new trains (old ones will be refurbished but with no extra capacity) – SWT did include new rolling stock in its failed bid. Existing trains are already 30 years old, and the response from DfT contained no real

answers. BD thought that SELCA has lost credibility and said that SERUG and RailFuture will be lobbying DfT and First MTR, and this needs concerted, well planned work. MK added that the SWT franchise is one of only two in the country which makes a profit after including Network Rail costs – ie there is a good case for investment.

6. Cycling

The new cycle parking at Sherborne station is on hold, as SWT did not like the design – there will be a meeting on site on 29th June. Although the franchise is changing, many of the same staff will transfer to First MTR, so we may be dealing with the same people.

PH reported that Sherborne Hill pavement has been cleared by DCC, after it turned out that having volunteers do the work would have cost more.

MK is reducing his role in cycling and will put all the routes he has been lobbying for into a single document, to help future work.

6. Highways

Various pedestrian improvements close to A30 at west end of town will be made in due course, according to DCC – crossing of A30, refuge opposite filling station plus new pavements from filling station to bus stop and down west side of Horsecastles Lane to Bradford Rd. Also new pedestrian/cycle link from Marston Rd to new Barton Farm estate. A30 new junction work will start in August and continues for 10 months.

Parking consultation: This is now out and responses needed by 17th June. Jane Smith thought a parking strategy is needed for the whole town, not just the old centre, and pointed out that restricting parking can increase traffic speeds.

7. Next Meeting:

21st September