

SHERBORNE TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP

**Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 2nd March 2017 at 7pm,
Wingfield Room, Digby Hall, Hound St, Sherborne.**

Present:

Mike Keatinge (Chairman)
Robert Gould (Dorset CC)
John Warmington (Resident)
Peter Henshaw (Secretary, DCN)
Bob Owen (Resident)
Susan Greene (Sherborne TC)
Peter Lawrence (Yetminster)
Garth Hentley (Yetminster PC)
Joy Rabbetts (Stalbridge TC)
Chris Hook (Dorset CC)

Apologies

Jane Smith, Mike Sage

2. Minutes of meeting held on 9th December 2016

The minutes were passed.

3. Bus Services

Chris Hook, Operations Manager for transport at DCC, gave a comprehensive account of DCC's current and future strategy for buses. School services remain central, as DCC has an obligation to provide these. One key point is giving operators more flexibility to use vehicles of different sizes and the opportunity to raise more revenue.

Community Car Schemes: There is more emphasis on community car schemes to serve the villages, feeding into inter-urban bus services. There are now 70 such schemes across the county and DCC offers a community transport toolkit to help them get started. CH gave examples of the social benefits of community schemes – eg villagers getting to know each other. He confirmed that community schemes will not be used for school runs. Joy Rabbetts said that not everyone wants to use these schemes, which are seen as being aimed at the elderly.

Pre-9.30 Flat Fare: This will allow pass holders to use pre-9.30 buses for a nominal flat fare – will be introduced this summer by some operators and will allow them to run services directly after school run. CH said DCC will help promote this and that operators can see the commercial benefit, as current concession scheme barely covers costs. MK welcomed the flat fare.

Bus stops/Real-time information: – Real-time tracking is now available from some operators via the traveline website (www.traveline.info) and new bigger bus stop flags will highlight this. CH also said that stops need to be smarter, better maintained and more welcoming – will encourage online reporting of issues with particular stops. Some need improving to become hubs on the inter-urban routes for connection with local car services.

Longer contracts: Big news is that the new contracts will be far longer at 9 years (7 + 1 + 1) and in answer to Bob Owen, CH said that operators will have to deliver on reliability, growth and offer a minimum number of journeys – the contract can be withdrawn if the service is deemed unacceptable. He added that longer contracts should give operators the incentive to invest in newer buses.

Consultation response: Mike Keatinge noted that response to the bus consultation had been mostly from occasional bus users instead of the regulars – majority were aged 65-80, car owners, and 43% use the bus less than once a week.

General: MK said that there was a strong emphasis on the school buses and that cuts in DCC support will mean cuts in service buses. CH accepted that there will be a cut in services in the short-term but cited Purbeck as an example of these policies increasing passenger numbers. Concerns were raised about 74 service (Sherborne-Yeovil via Yetminster), which has had DCC support removed and may now be withdrawn – CH said 25-30% of such services do carry on without support and wants to give operators the incentive to chase profits eg DCC gives operators details of new housing schemes for potential new routes. In answer to MK, CH said that DCC does have some influence with the operators, with regular meetings and frequent contact. Susan Greene asked if electric buses might be used – CH replied that the infrastructure isn't available to support them and that they don't suit the longer inter-urban journeys.

Promotion/Timetables: As ever, there was general agreement that operators' lack of promotion of services is a key problem. John Warmington asked why DCC had stopped producing timetables (for cost reasons, said CH) and Anna Finch and Joy Rabbets said that First staff at Yeovil were very unhelpful, with First also singled out as being poor at promoting its services. In answer to a question from AF, CH said that drivers are now getting training to improve their friendliness! MK raised the problem of Greenhill and other stops being left out of First's own timetable – CH will obtain that information.

4. Train Services

SWT Franchise: MK reported there was no decision as yet – will be announced in April with new franchise starting in August, though this may be delayed thanks to major works and partial closure of Waterloo that month. (*Confirmed at TravelWatch meeting on 4th March that a decision is expected in the next six weeks for implementation in August.*)

SERUG (Salisbury-Exeter Rail Users Group): MK said that SERUG will be officially launched at Yeovil Junction 6th April, with speakers from rail magazines. SERUG will be different from the existing Community Rail Partnership as it is supported by Rail Future and must be independent – CRP is financed by SWT. Priority is to push for extension of the Tisbury loop eastwards to Wilton and west into the station – the space is there and presents no build problems. SERUG also wants to see splitting and connection of trains at Yeovil Jct, which would give more flexibility. SERUG membership form is enclosed with these minutes. Another possibility is the purchase of Tisbury south platform, but significant investment would be needed to make this wheelchair accessible. Peter Lawrence asked whether some trains could be faster, and not stop at smaller stations – MK replied that mixing faster and stopping trains on a single track needs a great deal of line space.

Friends of Chetnole Halt: BO reported that this has now be launched, and will work to publicise the station, currently the least-used in Dorset.

DCC: Robert Gould said that DCC is lobbying the rail operators through the Local Enterprise Partnerships to increase capacity in West Dorset, both on the Salisbury-Exeter line and Weymouth eastwards.

5. Cycling

AF and Peter Henshaw reported that Kevin Humphreys of DCC has agreed to provide more cycle stands in Sherborne – at Westbury outside the dentist, an addition stand/s at Digby Rd and also at the rugby club at Terrace Fields. Trevor Savage (STC) is in support and the dental practice has no objections. The new covered cycle stand at Sherborne station is going ahead, with a meeting on the station on 7th March.

6. Highways

Barton Farm Access: RG reported that this was due for completion in January, but has been delayed due to obstruction by the developer. Latter is now in flagrant breach of the planning agreement, though contact with DCC continues. MK asked if the plans include a pavement from Budgens filling station to the bus stop, which would link with the new pedestrian crossing – RG thought this is included but will check, adding that the whole A30/Horsecastles Lane area will become more pedestrian friendly. This should also include a new pavement on Horsecastles Lane from the new hotel entrance down to Bradford Rd.

Parking in Sherborne: Continues to be a hot topic, and RG said that residents' schemes and pay-on-street are under consideration. In answer to a question from PH, he said the new double yellow lines on Horsecastles and elsewhere are currently going through the long legal process required for a Traffic Regulation Order, and will be in place this year.

7. Next Meetings:

8th June, 21st September