

Bus Advisory Board

Thursday 17 February 2022

10.00 am



To: The Members of the Bus Advisory Board

Cllr J Woodman (Chair)

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend meetings of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer and Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services – 9 February 2022.

For further information about the meeting, please contact Michael Bryant at mbryant@somerset.gov.uk or Democratic Services via email: democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers



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AGENDA

Item Bus Advisory Board - 10.00 am Thursday 17 February 2022

****Public Guidance Notes Contained in Agenda Annexe****

1 **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

To welcome attendees and receive any apologies from Board members.

2 **Minutes of the Last Meeting** (Pages 9 - 12)

To review and accept the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 as an accurate record.

3 **Public Question Time**

Public questions should be submitted in writing no less than three clear working days before the meeting (in this case by 5 pm on Friday 11th February 2022) to democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk.

4 **Update on the Appointment of the Bus User & Stakeholder (BUS) Group Chair & Vice Chair**

To receive the update.

5 **Update on EP Timeline / DfT Announcement**

To receive the update.

6 **Formal Consultation Process Feedback**

To receive the report (report to follow).

7 **Process for Making and Signing the EP**

To receive the verbal report.

8 **Bus Passenger Charter** (Pages 13 - 18)

To receive the draft report and discuss.

9 **Any Other Business**

To discuss any other business.

10 **Date of the Next Meeting**

Item Bus Advisory Board - 10.00 am Thursday 17 February 2022

The next meeting will be held virtually at 10:00 am on 14 March 2022.

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General Guidance notes for Somerset County Council virtual committee meetings

1. Virtual Council Public Meetings

Please be advised that this committee meeting is not subject to the 1972 Local Government Act and therefore can continue to take place virtually.

2. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers.

3. Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed on the council website at [Code of Conduct](#).

4. Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

5. Public Question Time

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within

the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 20 minutes in total.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chair may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

6. **Meeting Etiquette**

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting. As a matter of courtesy to the public, anyone wishing to film or record proceedings is asked to provide reasonable notice to the Committee Administrator so that the relevant Chair can inform those present at the start of the meeting.

We would ask that, as far as possible, members of the public aren't filmed unless they are playing an active role such as speaking within a meeting and there may be occasions when speaking members of the public request not to be filmed.

A copy of the Council's Recording of Meetings Protocol is available from the Committee Administrator for the meeting.

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BUS ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting held Virtually via Microsoft Teams
on Tuesday 16 December 2021 at 10:00 am

Attendees:

Cllr John Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport (**Chair**); Natasha Bates, Service Manager, Commissioning – Highways & Transport; John Perrett, Service Manager, Transporting Somerset; Mike Holmes, Director – Transport Planning, WSP; Tim Reynolds, Associate, WSP; Lee Jones, SCC In-house Fleet; Andrew Ardley, South Western Railway; David Redgewell – Campaign for Better Transport; Peter Travis – Somerset Bus Partnership Co-Chair; Cllr Glenda Burrows - Somerset Bus Partnership Co-Chair; Anthony Reese - Somerset Bus Partnership Co-Chair; Phil Grocock, Wiltshire Transport Authority; Carl Nicholson, North Somerset Transport Authority; Dan James, Exmoor National Park; Daniel Pickford, Faresaver; Deborah Fiddik, Dorset Transport Authority; Owen Clark, Dorset Council; Joe Walsh, South Somerset District Council; Josh Strickland

Welcome and Apologies for Absence – Agenda Item 1

The Chair noted that the meetings of this Board are not subject to the statutory public meeting requirements and will therefore be held virtually, with a recording to be made and published on the Council's website. Members of the public can also observe virtually. The Chair reminded attendees that the role of this Board is to provide a formal structure for discussion and engagement between the local authority and bus operators.

There were apologies from Doug Claringbold (First West of England), David Northey (Network Rail)

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 November 2021 - Agenda Item 2

The minutes were accepted as accurate and signed by the Chair.

Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3

There were two public questions, to which responses were provided ahead of time; the second question and response was read by Chair:

Question 1:

"Following on from the formal submission of the Electric Bus Partnership proposal to Somerset County Council on 8 December, what is the timeframe for

processing the associated request for Option 24/7 and TravelWatch SouthWest to join the Bus Advisory Board as members?"

Response:

The Terms of Reference for the Bus Advisory Board have now been agreed. In order to have an effective and business focussed Board, we will keep the membership as it is.

The Chair of the Bus User and Stakeholder (BUS) Group (once appointed) will sit on the Bus Advisory Board and will ensure that the views of passengers and stakeholders are fed into the Board for consideration. Representatives from both Option 24/7 and TravelWatch Southwest are invited to the Bus User and Stakeholder Group and will have the opportunity to feed into the process through this Group.

Question 2:

"My question is that the timescale for the setting-up of the BUS group is too long. The election process needs to be shortened, so that the incoming chair can make the BUS group truly independent from mid-February at the latest. The chair can then call meetings to his/her (and the BUS group's) timings and start commenting on developments in bus services as they are promulgated."

Response:

The timeframe has been designed to give interested parties sufficient time to discuss any queries with Democratic Services in advance of submitting their Expressions of Interest (this takes into account the Christmas period and other pressures on everyone's time). Time will be needed following submission of the Expressions of Interest to collate and circulate the responses, and to undertake a voting exercise to identify the successful candidate. The Chair will be formally elected at the 8th February meeting, and (providing they are comfortable to do so) they can take up that role with immediate effect and chair that meeting (with support from Democratic Services if required). They will also be able to attend the Bus Advisory Board meeting on the 17th February in their capacity as the BUS Group Chair.

Updated Board Attendees - Agenda Item 4

The Chair noted a minor amendment to the Board Attendees document. This does not change the agreed membership but ensures that Stagecoach is now correctly recorded under 'Bus Operators operating registered bus services' as opposed to 'Express Coach operators', as the Falcon is a registered bus service. Apologies for the original error and any confusion.

The Bus Advisory Board noted the updated list of Board attendees.

Update on Enhanced Partnership Process - Agenda Item 5

The Chair invited Tim Reynolds, Associate-WSP, to present the update. He stated that the Enhanced Partnership Scheme and Plan continue on schedule; currently the 28-day formal objection (from operators) period is proceeding up until early January, after which time the formal consultation period will commence. Thus far, there have been no objections, and regular dialogue is continuing with operators, who are providing suggestions; however, the EP Plan and Scheme themselves cannot be altered until early April in order to not trigger another objection/consultation period.

David Redgewell stated that he understands this statutory process, but he is concerned that if the Covid funding process is not updated after the holidays, there will be a de-registration of services due to plummeting passenger numbers. It was replied that such an issue is outside of the Enhanced Partnership process, which cannot be altered at this time.

The Bus Advisory Board noted the Enhanced Partnership process update.

Formal Consultation Process - Agenda Item 6

The Chair invited Tim Reynolds, Associate-WSP, to provide the update. He stated that it is set out in the legislation who must be involved in the formal consultation; they are working on the logistics of it, but they will not take the consultation any wider than necessary or extend the list of stakeholders (the public, for example, will not be included). After the current objection period finishes, a Members Briefing will be held to update County Councillors on the next steps. There have already been discussions with the Bus Users and Stakeholders (BUS) Group, who will be advised of how the process will be carried out; an email with a copy of the EP Plan and Scheme will then be sent to all stakeholders in order that they can formally review the plan and scheme and provide feedback.

The Bus Advisory Board noted the update on the formal consultation process.

Update on Bus Users and Stakeholders (BUS) GROUP - Agenda Item 7

The Chair invited Natasha Bates, Service Manager, Commissioning-Highways & Transport, to present the update. She noted that the BUS Group's first meeting was held last Tuesday, 7 December 2021, where the Terms of Reference for the Bus Advisory Board and the remit of the BUS Group were introduced. The Group also received a presentation on the EP Plan and Scheme process and time scales. The process for electing a Chair and Vice Chair was also reviewed, and expressions of interest for the positions are now being received, with a deadline of 4 January 2022.

The actual election of the Chair and Vice Chair will take place at the 8 February meeting.

David Redgewell stated that he appreciates the establishment of the BUS Group, but he wanted to note that as the Group is following legislation for funding and the development of grants, they should get a 'steer' from SCC, given their expertise on transport matters, rather than simply having a wide discussion about what they would like. It was responded that Democratic Services will continue to support the Group and the Chair with the agendas and meeting, while SCC officers will continue to provide updates for the Group as the process progresses. The Chair added that it was important to make the Group and the process very organised.

The Bus Advisory Board noted the update on the BUS Group.

Any Other Business - Agenda Item 8

David Redgewell again brought up the importance of the bus operators grant, noting that First Group are in a difficult financial position and after 12 January 2022 will have to scale back services if they do not receive more grant money. The Chair replied that these are valid points and he is very concerned about the matter, but that it is not on the agenda and this meeting was for the purpose of updating the status of the processes which are underway. He suggested that the issue should be raised with the relevant officers outside of the meeting.

The Board were informed that the next three meetings of the Bus Advisory Board will be held on 18 January, 17 February, and 14 March, 2022.

The meeting ended at 10:30 a.m.

CHAIR

SOMERSET BUS PASSENGER CHARTER

Area covered by this Bus Passenger Charter

This Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) has been produced for the Somerset County Council (SCC) area as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). It covers all locally registered bus and coach services provided by all operators across the commercial and council-supported networks, including any services operated on a flexible or demand-responsive basis or provided by Community Transport operators through Section 22 operations.

Date and Validity of this Charter

This BPC was ratified by all partner organisations and published on DD/MM/YYYY, valid for a period of 365 days. It will be reviewed every six months (180 days) to ensure it remains in line with current legislation.

Statement of Commitment

This charter sets out a collective commitment from SCC and locally registered bus and coach service operators to work together to provide services which meet passenger needs across the BSIP area. It also sets out the rights passengers have under EU and UK legislation but does not affect your legal rights.

Your Rights

This Customer Charter sets out our commitment to provide a good service which meets passengers' needs. You can request appropriate and comprehensible information about your rights when you use locally registered 'regular' bus and coach services. These are included in the Conditions of Carriage produced by each individual operator.

Passenger Entitlements

Every time you choose to travel by bus in Somerset, you are entitled to a journey which is reliable and safe, on vehicles which are clean, comfortable, and accessible to all.

Safety & Security

Safety of passengers and staff is of highest priority. We will do what we can to discourage unreasonable behaviour by other passengers on the bus. Each individual operator will manage their activities and co-operate with other bodies such as the police, to make your journey safe. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the individual needs of passengers while maintaining a reliable service. All (customer-facing) staff will undergo ongoing disability awareness training.

CCTV

When passengers are recorded on any CCTV systems, each organisation will follow the CCTV code of practice as published by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Information

All information provided for passengers will be as accurate and relevant as possible.

Information Displays on Buses

All buses will clearly display a route number (or letter) plus the service destination or other indication of where they are going.

Information in Accessible Formats

SCC and the operators will help to provide timetable and fare information in accessible formats on request. All information will be made available in large print, on audio cassette or in translation. This information may take time to produce and there may be a cost. Requests can be made by email at XXXXX or by post at YYYYY or by calling ZZZZZ (service available from/to XXXXX).

Timetable Information

We will provide timetable information through the following channels:

- A new travel portal hosted by SCC.
- Through Traveline SW telephone: 0871 200 22 33 or at <https://www.travelinesw.com/>
- On the relevant operators websites where available
- Updates to information will normally be made available at least two weeks in advance
- The driver of your bus can provide further timetable information for your journeys

Fares

Operators will provide fare information on their website, including details of discounted tickets and seasonal passes which can be used across the county.

[Requires Board level Discussion] On buses, please ask the driver for the best fare details for your journey(s) as there may be day tickets or other suitable options available.

Reliable Services

Locally registered bus and coach service operators will strive to provide enough buses and staff to run timetabled services as advertised under normal circumstances.

When factors beyond either SCC's and/or the operators' control result in it not being possible to run a full service, collectively we will do all we can to minimise inconvenience and keep you informed. All operators aim to provide their services to meet standards set by the Traffic Commissioners - 95% of journeys will operate within a window of one minute early to five minutes late. Please do consider this when planning/making a journey.

Clean Travel Environment

Operators are responsible for regularly cleaning and maintaining the interior and exterior of all their vehicles. SCC and partners to the EP Scheme will periodically undertake ad-hoc monitoring of bus stops and bus stations to ensure they are kept clean and tidy.

Comfort

Operators check their vehicles to make sure the heating, cooling, and lighting systems are working as intended. All drivers are professionally trained to operate their vehicle to provide passengers with a safe and comfortable ride. Where suitable, SCC and partners to the EP Scheme will maintain shelters, seating and adequate lighting at bus stops and other key waiting facilities.

Ways We Can Assist Travel For All

All locally registered bus and coach service operators aim to provide a welcoming travel environment and treat passengers with respect. SCC and operators of locally registered bus and coach services can make reasonable adjustments to meet the individual needs of customers upon request.

SCC works with locally registered bus and coach service operators to ensure that all staff providing registered bus and coach services have customer service and disability awareness skills by ensuring that staff receive initial and ongoing training in helping people with disabilities travel confidently and safely. **[Requires Board level discussion]**

SCC provides a dedicated helpline for people with disabilities. The contact number is XXXXXXXXX. Furthermore, SCC will issue Journey Assistance Cards that can help people with disabilities make staff operating locally registered bus and coach services aware of their needs. **[Requires BUS Group and Board level discussion]**

SCC will also work with affected passengers and operators of locally registered bus and coach services to enable where possible, use of certain "class 2" mobility scooters on buses and coaches following an assessment and the issuing of a permit for travel required before taking a mobility scooter on a bus or coach. **[Requires Board level discussion]**

Information relating to the carriage of wheelchairs, small prams and buggies are set out in each operator's individual 'Conditions of Carriage'. [Requires Board level discussion]

What to Expect When Things Go Wrong

[Section to be populated using consultation with BUS Group and Bus Operators – this needs to include buses later than an accepted threshold, buses that fail to arrive, buses that break-down en-route, passengers missing connections to other bus or rail services, passengers missing the last bus and/or last buses failing to operate (see reasons above). Should recompense be compensation, taxi journey, alternative travel etc?]

Code of Practice & Complaints Procedure

When you forward us comments, complaints, or suggestions regarding services, we will collectively use them to monitor performance and identify areas for improvement. We will respond in the following manner:

1. All complaints should be sent to the relevant operator in the first instance
2. For all complaints, an initial written reply will be sent within 10 working days;
3. If it appears that a reply cannot be sent in 10 working days, the complaint will be acknowledged within two working days and an expected timescale for a further response given;
4. Where either SCC or an operator fall short of the high standards set through this BPC, you will receive an apology and, where appropriate, relevant compensation will be sent
5. A copy of the full complaints and comments procedure is available from the individual operators. [Requires Board level discussion]
6. If you remain dissatisfied with how your comment has been dealt, you can contact the Bus Appeals Body, who will take an independent view of the matter. We agree to abide by any decision or finding.

If You Want To Contact Us

SCC and all operators welcome feedback on bus service performance – good or bad. You can contact us by email, by post or on by phone. We aim to give you a response within 10 working days. If we are unable to do so within that timescale, the relevant organisation will contact you to outline expected response time.

Independent Appeals

If you disagree with the response received to any complaint, you have the option of approaching Bus Users UK (www.bususers.org or 0300 111 0001) who will try to resolve the issue for you.

They may refer your complaint to the Bus Appeals Body (www.busappealsbody.co.uk). SCC and all operators agree to abide by the Bus Appeals Body's recommendations.

Your Rights

In addition to our commitments above, you have a right for your complaint to be dealt with if it concerns any of the matters covered by the sections headed "Your rights" in this charter, provided you submit it within three months. We must respond to these complaints within one month of you submitting them and give you a final reply, stating whether your complaint is substantiated or rejected, within three months. You have the right to appeal these complaints to Bus Users UK if you disagree with our response. Bus Users UK is subject to a three-month time limit for dealing with appeals and must refer unresolved complaints to a Traffic Commissioner. If they fail to refer your complaint promptly when the time limit expires, you have the right to refer it to the relevant Traffic Commissioner yourself.

Bus Users UK

The contact details for Bus Users UK are:

Bus Users UK, Terminal House, Shepperton, TW17 8AS.

Telephone: 0300 111 0001, Email: enquiries@bususers.org

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