

HENLEY ON THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF BUS WORKING
GROUP HELD ON
MONDAY 16 JANUARY 2017
AT 7PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
TOWN HALL, HENLEY ON THAMES.

Present: The Chairman, Councillor D Nimmo Smith – Oxfordshire
County Council
Councillor D Eggleton – Henley Town Council (HTC)
Councillor S Gawrysiak - HTC
Mr B Brown
Ms D Crook
Mr M Hayter
Mr P Fleming - Henley in Transition
Mr D McEwen – Henley in Transition
Mr N Bland – Whites Coaches
The Mayor, Councillor Julian Brookes - HTC

In Attendance: Mrs J Wheeler - Town Clerk
Ms C Adams – Committee Administrator / Minute Taker

Also Present: 2 Members of the Public
1 Member of the Press

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received for lateness from the Mayor, Councillor Julian Brookes, and for absence from Councillor Miss L M Hillier and Mrs G Dodds.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

28. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No member of the public wished to speak.

29. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Bus Working Group held on 5 December 2016 were received, approved and signed by the Chairman, Councillor D Nimmo Smith, as a true record.

30. MEETING WITH WHITES COACHES

Mr P Fleming and Mr D McEwen updated the working group on the constructive meeting they had had with Mr N Bland of Whites Coaches. The following points were covered:

- The town service is tied in with the school services morning and afternoon. The high volume of students during term time subsidise the quieter holiday times. Going forward, a new service will need to fit with the school run.
- 5 extra passengers per bus would make the current service pay for itself, this equates to 75 extra passengers per day. There are currently around 120 passengers per day.
- The Tesco route is most popular, then the Blandy Road route, the Valley Road route and the Abrahams Estate route. The latter route has only 1 or 2 passengers per day.
- Whites need to give 56 days' notice of their intentions to OCC.
- The consultant from Reading Buses had suggested adding a route along St Andrews or St Marks Roads. This, together with adding a stop at the Railway Station, the hospital and going into the Tesco car park, could be investigated and advertised in the press if it is feasible to add to the existing routes.
- The need to keep the existing service going rather than let it lapse was emphasised. It is far harder to restart a service once stopped.
- The suggestion from the consultant was to keep the service as is for the meantime, possibly with some small improvements, then introduce change incrementally, possibly working up to running 2 buses in a year's time.
- There is a need to keep the future developments such as Highlands Farm in mind.
- In the short term, we need to publicise the existing service to increase passenger numbers.
- A second bus could be suitable for accessing the hospital site. It is possible to find a low floor minibus. This could be a capital purchase to help the elderly and disabled access the hospital etc.
- It is possible to retrofit equipment to reduce emissions on older vehicles. This costs around £10,000 and is a consideration. There may be grants available to purchase a low emission vehicle. Other funding possibilities had been mentioned, but needed further investigation.

The Mayor, Councillor Julian Brookes, joined the meeting at 7.33pm.

31. DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN

Quotations had been received from 3 consultants, but further quotations were being sought. It was agreed to form a sub group to review all quotations once received and to make a recommendation back to the whole group for consideration for funding at Full Council on 14 February. The sub group is to consist of The Chairman, Councillor David Nimmo Smith, Councillor S Gawrysiak and the Mayor, Councillor Julian Brookes, together with Mr P Fleming.

Further discussion revolved around the following points:

- The need to take a long term view of 4-5 years was stressed. People tend to change their habits when there is a life change, such as moving house or job. If a bus service exists, then use of that will be built in to their calculations.
- As well as adding the station and hospital to the route, extended hours for commuters should be considered.
- Funding should be part of the business plan investigation.
- Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 funding as a result of new developments should be investigated.
- The business plan should cover 2 or 3 stages. An immediate plan for July is needed, plus a longer term plan.
- Identification of potential pools of people needing transport, together with additional desirable destinations was needed.
- The existing service could run longer if the driver took an hour break early afternoon and then carried on later. The existing service is provided at low cost because of the school run. A trial on longer service hours could be run in the summer holidays.

32. PROMOTION OF EXISTING BUS SERVICE

Ideas for promotion of the existing bus service were discussed. An idea for a leaflet was circulated and various points considered:

- The Henley Standard are to report on this meeting and stress the need to keep using the service.
- An article and map of the bus routes will appear in the Henley Magazine.
- A free week will be funded. This would cost Whites around £120 and will take place week commencing 6th March 2017.
- Questionnaires will be given to those using the buses during the free week to ask what they did and didn't like and what would make them come back.
- The need for a follow up to the free week to continue the momentum was stressed. This could entail vouchers from shops or a prize draw on tickets.
- The Henley Standard could print the bus map and offer of free rides the week before 6th March.

Action: *Henley Standard and Henley Herald to be briefed prior to free week by the Chairman, Councillor D Nimmo Smith.*

Action: *Questionnaire to be prepared for distribution by officers for review at meeting post Full Council in February.*

33. **DATE & TIMING OF NEXT MEETING**

Initially the sub group to review quotations from bus consultants will meet. Another full Working Group meeting will be arranged for after Full Council on 14 February 2017.

The bus map will be put on the Town Council website following amendment by Mr Fleming.

Action: *Committee Administrator to put amended map on Town Council website.*

Minor enhancements to the route to be investigated.

Action: *Mr Fleming to contact Great Western regarding access for the bus to the station.*

Action: *Councillor Eggleton to contact Tesco regarding access for the bus to Tesco.*

Action: *Mr Bland to review access to the hospital grounds.*

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

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Chairman