

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 8 December 2016 at 5pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Stuart Potter (in the Chair)
Steve Hastings
Lee Hunt
Ian Lyon
Darren Sanders.

30. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)

Councillors Frank Jonas and Tom Wood sent their apologies for absence. Councillor Darren Sanders deputised for the latter.

31. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 November 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

33. A review of general parking issues in Portsmouth with a view to considering alternative strategies - specifically in regard to buses, taxis and hackney carriages (AI 4)

Anna Koor made a deputation in which she expressed her concerns about the apparent lack of enforcement of the 20 mph speed restrictions and the free parking in some areas.

Mike Dobson made a deputation on behalf of Friends of Old Portsmouth and explained that he was concerned about people expecting to drive throughout the city, the city's consistently low rating for air quality and high levels of obesity.

Councillor Lee Hunt joined the meeting.

Tony Jefferson, Manager Citywide Taxis included the following points in his representation:

- There is no magical solution to the problem.
- The lack of parking also affects taxi-drivers.
- The existing parking facilities could be used more efficiently. Some council owned car parks for permit-holders only are two-thirds empty. He gave the example of the one in Lord Street, Landport.
- The use of Park & Ride could be expanded. It currently closes at 7 or 8pm; the 600 places that could be used at night for private or commercial vehicles.

Viv Young, representing the hackney carriage trade included the following points in his representation:

- He has been a trade representative for more than 40 years.
- The entire city's road space should be reviewed to ensure it is being used efficiently to permit as much as parking as possible, with safety being the priority. He suggested two or three roads where extra parking spaces could be fitted by removing yellow lines or shortening zig zag road markings: Copnor Road, Derby Road and Knox Road.
- Sometimes taxis are forced to stop in the middle of the road to pick up a customer.

Edward Hodgson, Managing Director, Stagecoach South explained that:

- His company shares the council's vision for the city.
- The predicted traffic levels increase that had been reported at the previous meeting (41% by 2026) would place an intolerable strain on the infrastructure.
- Given the nature of the city, it cannot accommodate unrestricted access by car.
- The solution is to make public transport network more attractive.
- Stagecoach is a fully commercial company which covers a large area including Emsworth, Chichester and Portsmouth. In the city there are buses every 10 minutes or better.
- There has been considerable investment in the fleet over recent years.
- Free-flowing roads would ensure reliable journey times. Journey times have increased by 10% in the last decade in many cities. In Portsmouth, over the last 25 years there has been a 31% increase on a number of their routes and a 20% increase over the last decade on the 21 service. This has meant that more buses have been introduced to maintain the same level of service.
- Studies have shown that £1 invested into giving buses priority results in a £7 benefit to the economy.
- The company works very closely with the council and values the relationship.
- Priority given to traffic going in and out of Gunwharf Quays has a detrimental impact on the buses.
- The high turnover, short term parking in district centres tends to produce localised congestion.
- Park & Ride in context can provide a very effective solution.
- He does not understand the reason for free parking being available in the city.
- There is a need to balance the differing uses of land and invest in alternative sustainable transport options.

Marc Reddy, Managing Director and Dervla McKay, General Manager, First Group explained that:

- In the UK 3.5m people travel to work by bus.
- Bus drivers regularly encounter inconsiderate parking which can be a serious safety issue.
- There is a downward cycle with increased traffic levels leading to more congestion, less reliable bus services and more private car use.

- Ms McKay manages the bus services in Fareham, Gosport and Solent area. Overall, the buses' average speed is 11.2mph. In Portsmouth it is about 9mph.
- Last year approximately £0.5m was invested in their bus network in Portsmouth. Also in the last three years they have invested in 100 new buses and the refurbishment of some others and also new lighting, audio and visual announcements and free wifi. Mobile, multi area and group tickets have also been introduced recently.
- This investment helps to make the bus attractive to try and entice people from their cars.
- Congestion has a significant detrimental impact on bus services.
- The company is very focussed on minimising the impact of exhaust emissions. Their driver performance monitoring scheme gives drivers real-time feedback on their driving including braking frequency and time spent idling. The engines of many new buses turn off after two to three minutes in traffic. They are also looking into the use of electronic or gas vehicles which are used in some cities.
- The average fleet vehicle is 5.2 years old. Government guidelines is 8 years.
- One bus can take 30-37 passengers.
- It is important to look at traffic solutions that meet everyone's needs including cyclists and pedestrians.
- More parking is not the solution.
- 20% of passengers on the Bus Rapid Transport from Fareham to Gosport used to make that journey by car.
- A lot of work is being carried out to make the bus service more attractive.

In response to questions, Marc Reddy and Dervla McKay informed the panel that:

- Before the BRT there were approximately 1million journeys to Gosport per year, now there are estimated to be 2 million.
- The introduction of the congestion charge in London helped fund improvements to the transport system.
- It would not be a good idea to transfer responsibility for the bus service to the local authority as the council has many competing demands on funds. Maintaining buses in the private sector helps secure continued investment without competing for this investment from areas such as social care and education etc. It also helps drive innovation as can be seen on the BRT between Fareham and Gosport.
- Approximately 50% of their fleet is stored overnight in the depot in Fareham because there is insufficient space in their depot in Portsmouth. They would like to move to an alternative site in the city if one could be identified.
- There is competition between the two companies. City to Cosham via North End is a good example. Taking the bus works out cheaper than travelling by taxi if a customer is making more than one journey in a day. A day pass costs £4.20 and from the city centre to Gunwharf Quays costs £1.
- The perception is that having bus lanes would increase congestion but this is not the case.

- In some other cities, there are no bus laybys; buses simply stop in the road to collect and drop off passengers.
- On Gladys Avenue the bus route was in place for some time before parking places were introduced.
- Double decker buses are the same width as single ones: 2.55m.
- After the peak times, there are periods when the buses are operating at half capacity. It would not be economically viable to purchase smaller buses for use during the quieter times.

In response to questions, Edward Hodgson explained that:

- Fast-flowing traffic leads to reliable journey times, more customers and better prices. In order to achieve that there needs to be fewer private vehicles on the roads.
- Everyone wants to see the city grow and prosper and the bus companies are committed to providing as good a service as possible.
- Enforcement of parking regulations is essential in maintaining clear roads. He suggested that perhaps arrangements could be made for the council to view the CCTV footage taken from the front of the bus.

As far as the Bus operators were aware, there has been no comprehensive pricing comparison into taxis and buses for the city.

The panel discussed the following points:

- The significant investment made in public transport in London, which was funded by significant subsidy, including the congestion charge. Bus fares are now £1.20 to the end of any route.
- The possible use of the council's minibuses by the bus companies.

Alan Cufley, Director of Transport, Environment & Business Support explained that

- The council will always respond to concerns or ideas about how to improve the road network.
- Minibuses are hired out to schools. They are not registered for public transport.
- The bus companies have high regard to the council's expectations regarding emissions.
- Both the parking service and a private company enforce the car parks managed by the Housing portfolio.. Several departments manage car parks with various pricing structures.

Actions

The panel requested that details on the following issues be brought to a future meeting:

1. The use of the council's community fleet.
2. The rules regarding zig zags road markings.
3. Automatic number plate recognition.
4. Echelon parking.

It also asked if a full inventory of dropped kerbs that are not in front of drives and council-owned car parks could be provided.

The meeting concluded at 6:35pm.

Councillor Stuart Potter
Chair