

Notes of West Berkshire Enhanced Partnership Forum

Monday 10 October 2022. Forum No. 2

Present were representatives of:

- Bus Companies (Go Ahead, Reading Buses, Stagecoach)
- Community Transport Providers (Volunteer Centre West Berkshire)
- Neighbouring local authorities (Hampshire)
- West Berkshire Council (Network Management, Transport Services, Service Director)

The Transport & Parking Manager at West Berkshire Council chaired the meeting.

Notes from Forum No. 1 in April 2022 agreed.

The indicative funding of £2.6 million allocated to West Berkshire Council has not yet been confirmed by the Department for Transport.

The following motions were discussed. The decisions relating to each motion are as follows. All necessary changes will be made to the Enhanced Partnership Scheme:

- **Motion 1** – revisions to the EP Scheme to release DfT funding (ratifying earlier email decision) – agreed.
- Motion 1a – to make further amendments bringing measures 3b (infrastructure) and 6a (community transport) in line with measure 1b (bus services) that was agreed at the last Forum – agreed.
- **Motion 2** – approval of the West Berkshire Passenger Charter – a few amendments were suggested. The final document will be approved by email exchange with the bus operators.
- **Motion 3a** – Early Bird tickets – agreed subject to the following caveats:
 - Stagecoach South will only offer these for travel wholly within West Berkshire.
 - Operators will trial the scheme from 1 January to 31 March 2023, and may review their position from this date.

Communications will be issued by the Council and Bus Operators.

- **Motion 3b** – Youth tickets – the following aspects were agreed:
 - Youth fares will be clear on each operator's website, as well as the Council's, by 1 January 2023.
 - Travel for under-5s will be free up to a maximum number to be set by operators.
 - Operators to retain existing policies of reduced fares at least up to 17th birthday.
 - Operators that do not currently do so will give consideration to raising this to 19th birthday at a future date.
- **Motion 4a** – calculation of journey time target – not agreed. Instead operators agreed to provide point-to-point timing data for two four week periods each year, with each four week period commencing in February and September.
- **Motion 4b** – future passenger satisfaction targets – agreed following a detailed discussion.
- **Motion 4c** – remove target for access to bus services – agreed.

Other issues that were discussed at the Forum:

- The 2022 revision to the Bus Service Improvement Plan, which will be submitted to the DfT at the end of October.
- Measure to boost passenger numbers. This included the Government's proposed £2 fare cap from January to March 2023; free bus travel in West Berkshire in November and December 2022; and if we could promote the effectiveness of Google Maps for giving real-time bus information.
- A request for the re-introduction of late evening buses between Newbury and Thatcham. One operator agreed to look into this, at least for Friday and Saturday evenings.

Next Forum proposed for 1.30pm on Thursday 2 February 2023 at Shaw House, Church Road, Newbury, RG14 2DR.