

# **BANFF & BUCHAN AREA BUS FORUM**

**MINUTES OF MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2019**

**ROOM 2, DALRYMPLE HALL, FRASERBURGH**

## **In Attendance**

### **Councillor A. Kille (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)**

Councillor B.A. Topping (Aberdeenshire Council)

Councillor C. Buchan (Aberdeenshire Council)

Alison A. Wymes (Fraserburgh Community Council & Bus User)

Judith Taylor (Fraserburgh and District Older People's Forum)

Mary Regan (Fraserburgh and District Older People's Forum)

Therine Henderson (Fraserburgh and District Older People's Forum)

Bruce Taylor (Enable - Scotland)

Doug Irvine (Bus User)

Nan Williamson (Bus User)

Daniel Laird (Commercial Director, Stagecoach North Scotland)

Neil Stewart (Principal Officer, Passenger Transport Unit, Aberdeenshire Council)

Susan Watt (Senior Transport Officer, Passenger Transport Unit, Aberdeenshire Council)

## **Apologies**

Councillor D. Mair (Aberdeenshire Council)

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

Councillor Kille welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given.

### **2. Minutes of Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

The minutes were approved.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Neil Stewart provided the following update on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council:

- 3.1 In regards to the vandalised electronic Real-Time screen at Broad Street (Fraserburgh), he confirmed that the display was vandalised again on 18 April 2019, and the Council is considering removal of the on-street unit and replacing it with a 28' Real Time Information screen inside the shelter.
- 3.2 In response to the request for timetable information to be displayed in Lonmay, he confirmed that this has been fulfilled at the southbound bus stop.
- 3.3 Real Time Passenger Information has been re-instated in the recently installed bus shelter at Market Street Interchange (Ellon) northbound.

Daniel Laird provided the following update on behalf of Stagecoach Bluebird:

- 3.4 In response to the complaints regarding reliability/punctuality and insufficient seating capacity during peak hours between Fraserburgh and Aberdeen, he confirmed that that the corridor has been monitored and reliability has improved since the last meeting. He also confirmed that there has been a reduction in low floor buses operating on the corridor.
- 3.5 In response to the request for Service 452 (Fraserburgh - Inverurie) to be included in Stagecoach Bluebird's Buchan Travel Guide, he confirmed that there was insufficient space in the 15 April 2019 edition but the situation will be kept under review.

(For information, the service is included in the Inverurie Travel Guide)

- 3.6 Services will continue to serve the bus stops on the slip roads at Blackdog.

Neil Stewart confirmed that no matter how many buses stop on the slip roads, Blackdog residents face a considerable walk to access them. If funding become available, the Council will consider the possibility of providing a service to/from the village.

- 3.7 In response to requests, the 1605 hours, 1635 hours and 1710 hours departures ex Aberdeen - Fraserburgh have been re-timed to depart at 1620 hours, 1655 hours and 1715 hours respectively.
- 3.8 In response to the complaint that 3 buses depart Fraserburgh between 0650 hours and 0700 hours and by the time Service X67 reaches Mintlaw, it can't access the bus stop on Mintlaw roundabout, he confirmed that that there are now only 2 buses involved and the situation appears to have improved.
- 3.9 A 'Sprinter' minibus has been allocated to Service 273 (Banff - Gardenstown/Fraserburgh) meaning the 'bottom' end of Gardenstown can be served on a more consistent basis and this has been welcomed by the village.

#### **4. Stagecoach Bluebird Update**

Daniel Laird provided the following update:

- 4.1 Aberdeenshire Council has undertaken a review of supported Local Bus services (see 5. below), which resulted in subsidised journeys/services operated by Stagecoach being withdrawn. As a consequence of this, there had been minor revisions to the commercial bus network on 15 April 2019, as follows:
- Withdrawal of a Monday to Saturday evening return journey between Aberdeen and Fraserburgh (Services 67/68) (see 5. below)
  - Additional inter-peak weekday journey on Service 272 from New Pitsligo to Macduff connecting with a Service 51 journey from Ellon to New Pitsligo.

Councillor Buchan thanked Stagecoach Bluebird for retaining the last bus from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh (2305 hrs).

- 4.2 Following a petition by residents in Gardenstown, the Saturday service on Service 273 (Banff – Gardenstown/Fraserburgh) has been re-instated.

## 5. Aberdeenshire Council Update

Neil Stewart confirmed that the Council had to undertake a review of supported Local Bus services to contain spending within the approved Revenue Budget for 2019/2020, resulting in savings of £560,000 across Aberdeenshire. Services in the Fraserburgh area were as below:

Service	Route	Revisions & Comments
253	Turriff - Mintlaw - Fraserburgh	0903 hrs from Turriff to Fraserburgh (Tue & Fri) and 1320 hrs from Fraserburgh to Turriff (Tue & Fri) withdrawn; Alternative services available, for all intermediate settlements affected, to their nearest market towns.
69	St Combs - Fraserburgh	1940 hrs, 2100 hrs and 2205 hrs from Fraserburgh to St. Combs (Mon - Fri) withdrawn but 1910 hrs and 2145 hrs from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Mon - Fri) rerouted via Inverallochy and St. Combs to provide some alternatives.
74	Rosehearty - Fraserburgh	Monday to Friday evening service after 1900 hrs withdrawn. 1840 hrs from Fraserburgh retarded to depart at 1850 hrs to maintain a connection with bus from Aberdeen.
69B	Peterhead - St Fergus - Fraserburgh	0645 hrs from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Saturday) withdrawn; No alternatives. Stagecoach have withdrawn the positional journey at 0600 hrs from Peterhead to Fraserburgh (Saturday). 1910 hrs and 2145 hrs from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Mon - Fri) will no longer serve Lonmay (see above).
76 / 77	Fraserburgh Town Service (Broad Street Circular)	1805 hrs, 1835 hrs and 2115 hrs from Broad Street (Saturday) return journeys withdrawn.
51	Fraserburgh - New Pitsligo - Ellon	Saturday service withdrawn. Alternative services provided to and from Fraserburgh (Stagecoach Service 270) or to/from Ellon via Mintlaw (Central Buchan A2B Dial-A-Bus).
273	Banff - Gardenstown/Fraserburgh	Saturday service reprieved until at least the end of financial year 2019-2020.
272	Banff - Fraserburgh	0720 hrs from Fraserburgh to Banff (Mon - Fri) and 1705 hrs from Banff to Fraserburgh (Monday to Friday) withdrawn.
67 / 68	Aberdeen - Fraserburgh	1910 hrs and 2010 hrs from Fraserburgh to Aberdeen via Ellon (Mon - Fri) replaced by one departure at 1940 hrs. 2105 hrs and 2205 hrs from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh via Ellon (Mon - Fri) replaced by one departure at 2135 hrs.

Councillor Topping expressed his thanks to the Passenger Transport Unit for the work undertaken throughout this difficult process in order to realise the service revisions/withdrawals required to meet the £560,000 savings.

## **6. Public Transport Infrastructure / Information**

Neil Stewart welcomed any infrastructure or information requests/comments from the floor:

- 6.1 Complaint that the new timetables for the 15 April 2019 revisions were not available to passengers until 17/18 April 2019.

Daniel Laird apologised for the delay confirming that this was due to a miscommunication with the printers. He advised that timetables were available on-line prior to 15 April 2019.

- 6.2 Query as to whether the photograph on the front cover of the Buchan Travel Guide could be changed when a new version is produced, in order to minimise confusion for passengers.

Daniel Laird confirmed that this would be considered.

- 6.3 Councillor Buchan requested an update on the bus shelter located on Strichen Road (Fraserburgh) opposite Buchan Road, with regard to funding for CCTV to be installed.

Neil Stewart confirmed that he was aware of the vandalism at this location and he would ask his colleagues to respond direct on the matter.

- 6.4 Complaint that the kerb on Victoria Street (Fraserburgh), between the fire station and West Church, is too low for mobility impaired passengers to board and alight.

Neil Stewart confirmed that this would be investigated.

## **7. Service 69/69B (Fraserburgh – St Combs/Lonmay/Peterhead)**

- 7.1 Requests for the Monday to Friday evening journeys to be re-instated from St. Combs to Fraserburgh, in particular at 2225 hours, highlighting that a passenger finishes a shift in St. Combs at 2200 hours and has to cycle home to Fraserburgh.

(This journey was withdrawn following the Council's review and regrettably will not be reinstated)

- 7.2 Query as to whether the Fraserburgh A2B dial-a-bus services have increased to accommodate demand for travel to/from Crimond Medical Centre.

Susan Watt confirmed that the service is very well used but has not been increased, but she would relay the comment to colleagues who deal with such services.

- 7.3 Councillor Buchan pointed out that a number of his constituents are not happy at the increase in journey time between Fraserburgh and Peterhead since the majority of journeys were rerouted via Inverallochy and St. Combs and asked that the situation be monitored. He also requested that the 2145 hours from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Monday to Friday) be retarded to depart at 2200 hours.

Daniel Laird confirmed that both matters would be considered.

## **8. Services 67/68 (Fraserburgh - Aberdeen)**

- 8.1 Query as to the manufacturer of the Buchan Xpress coaches, the life span of the vehicles, and the maintenance regime.

Daniel Laird confirmed that the engine is manufactured by Volvo and the vehicle body by Plaxton, the life span being around 10-12 years. He added that drivers undertake daily vehicle checks and a full inspection is carried out every 28 days. There are between 5 and 6 services per annum plus a MOT.

- 8.2 Claim that the 0640 hours ex Fraserburgh – Aberdeen broke down at Fetterangus (no date and time provided) due to an issue with the outside bodywork and query as to why this was not noticed before the bus departed from the depot.

Daniel Laird confirmed that drivers are issued with torches for bodywork inspection, however the damage may have occurred after the bus left the depot.

- 8.3 Request for the 0655 hours ex Fraserburgh - Aberdeen (Monday to Saturday), arriving at Ellon Park and Ride 0746 hours, to connect with the Service 49 (Ellon – Inverurie) departure at 0747 hours ex Ellon (Monday to Friday).

Neil Stewart confirmed that, whilst re-timing of the Service 49 departure can be considered, the journey carries passengers to/from work and schoolchildren to Meldrum Academy, so this may not be possible.

## **9. Service 74 (Fraserburgh - Rosehearty)**

- 9.1 Request for consideration to be given to the re-instatement of the Monday to Friday evening service after 1850 hours, highlighting that the Rosehearty and Sandhaven communities feel abandoned, with people unable to get home from work or from evening activities.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the evening journeys had been subsidised for over 20 years, but due to extremely limited usage of around 2 passengers per journey, they have been withdrawn. He also advised that journeys on a Sunday were at risk of being withdrawn.

Daniel Laird confirmed that the evening service is not commercially viable, but the retiming of the 1840 hours from Fraserburgh to Rosehearty, to depart at 1850 hours, ensured a connection with the 1715 hours ex Aberdeen - Fraserburgh (Monday to Friday) to allow passengers to travel home to Rosehearty.

Councillor Kille advised that passengers must use these services or they will be withdrawn, highlighting that a further review of supported Local Bus services is required next year.

- 9.2 Claim regarding the frequent non-operation of the 1304 hours ex Rosehearty – Fraserburgh with particular reference to 3 April 2019 and 17 April 2019.

Daniel Laird confirmed that this would be investigated.

**10. Service 747 (Peterhead/Ellon - Dyce - Stonehaven/Montrose)**

- 10.1 Query as to why the service operates via Dyce Industrial Estate, rather than direct to/from Aberdeen Airport.

Daniel Laird confirmed that a small number of peak hour journeys operate via Dyce Industrial Estate as they carry workers to/from various businesses in the area.

**11. A.O.B**

- 11.1 Query as to whether there is an issue recruiting drivers, coupled with a complaint that some drivers do not provide sufficient customer service.

Daniel Laird confirmed that it can be a challenge to recruit drivers but, once in place, all drivers have to undertake 5 days of customer care and disability awareness training every 5 years.

- 11.2 Query as to whether local bus drivers wear identification badges, so a complaint regarding customer service can be referred accordingly.

Daniel Laird confirmed that whilst the drivers don't have name badges, the bus ticket issued has the driver's unique number on it.

- 11.3 Request for the re-instatement of a Stagecoach employee at Ellon Park and Ride to issue tickets 'off-bus' prior to travel, particular in the morning peak period, to minimise delays.

Daniel Laird confirmed that this would be difficult as handheld machines were used in the past and the company has progressed to contactless ticketing, which has reduced boarding times across the company's operating area.

**12. Next Meeting**

Councillor Kille confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum will take place in Fraserburgh in October/November 2019.

Councillor Topping expressed his thanks to the Chair.