

BANFF & BUCHAN AREA BUS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING ON THURSDAY 21ST NOVEMBER 2019

ROOM 2, DALRYMPLE HALL, FRASERBURGH

In Attendance

Councillor A. Kille (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)

Councillor D. Mair (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 (Rosehearty Community Council)

Doug Irvine (Bus User)

May Barclay (Bus User)

Fraser McBirnie (Assistant Operations Manager, Stagecoach Bluebird)

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

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

Apologies

Councillor B.A. Topping (Aberdeenshire Council)

Bruce Taylor (Enable - Scotland)

B Wiseman (Bus User)

1. Welcome and Introduction

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

2. Minutes of Meeting on 24th April 2019

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

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

- 3.1 In regard to the vandalised electronic Real-Time screen at Broad Street (Fraserburgh), he confirmed that, despite it being repaired in June 2019, it continues to be subject to vandalism. Funding for the proposed Real Time screen within the shelter is still to be confirmed.
- 3.2 In response to Councillor Buchan's request for CCTV to be installed at the bus shelter on Strichen Road (Fraserburgh) opposite Buchan Road, he confirmed that the matter is still being progressed.
- 3.3 The complaint regarding the kerb on Victoria Street (Fraserburgh), between the fire station and West Church, being too low for mobility impaired passengers to board and alight, is also being progressed.

- 3.4 In response to the query regarding Fraserburgh A2B dial-a-bus services, he confirmed that passengers can travel to Crimond Medical Centre on Tuesdays and Wednesdays but trips have to fit in with the service that departs Fraserburgh at 0930 hours and returns from Crimond at approximately 1215 hours. He advised that there are a couple of passengers who travel to/from the Medical Centre.
- 3.5 In response to the 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), he advised that there little, if any, flexibility with regard to the Service 49 journey, so the only option is for Stagecoach to advance the 0655 hrs ex Fraserburgh by 5 minutes, so the operator has been informed.

Fraser McBirnie provided the following update on behalf of Stagecoach Bluebird:

- 3.6 In response to the 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, he confirmed that the marketing team will look at this prior to the next service change.
- 3.7 In response to the complaint regarding the increase in journey time between Fraserburgh and Peterhead (Service 69), since the majority of journeys were rerouted via Inverallochy and St. Combs, coupled with a request for the 2145 hours from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Monday to Friday) to be retarded to depart at 2200 hours, he confirmed that the route reflects the volume of passengers and their travel movements, and that the retiming would be considered at the next service review.
- 3.8 In response to the claim regarding the frequent non-operation of the 1304 hours ex Rosehearty - Fraserburgh (Service 74), with particular reference to 3 April and 17 April 2019, he confirmed that investigations showed the journey to have operated late on both dates and apologised. He advised that no further complaints have been received since then.

4. Stagecoach Bluebird Update

Fraser McBirnie provided the following update:

- 4.1 Aberdeenshire Council's review of supported Local Bus services earlier this year, coupled with the tendering of such services in South Aberdeenshire, have had a knock-on impact on the company's network resulting, in some areas, in the withdrawal of commercial journeys.
- 4.2 All the company's main operational corridors, including the Buchan corridor, are currently being monitored, following a lengthy period of operation after the completion of the A90 dual carriageway and the AWPR. Longer term, this monitoring will help the operator address reliability, speed up journeys, retain local links, and consider vehicle types/allocations.

5. Aberdeenshire Council Update

Neil Stewart provided the following update:

- 5.1 Transport Scotland are trialling a free bus travel scheme for Modern Apprentices in Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen and Shetland from 25 November 2019.

- 5.2 Council supported Local Bus services in South Aberdeenshire were offered for tender earlier in this year and the new contracts were implemented on 19 August 2019.

Tenders are scheduled to be invited for North Aberdeenshire contracts in 2020, including Services 51 (Fraserburgh/New Pitsligo – Ellon), 270 (New Pitsligo – Fraserburgh), 271 (Banff – Fraserburgh (North East Scotland College) and 272 (Fraserburgh - Banff via Strichen). Also being tendered are parts of Services 69 (Peterhead – Fraserburgh via St Combs), 74 (Rosehearty – Fraserburgh) and 273 (Fraserburgh/Gardenstown – Banff). The timing of the process depends on the timescales associated with the Council's supported Local Bus service review.

6. Aberdeenshire Review of Supported Passenger Transport Services

Neil Stewart confirmed the following:

The Council is undertaking what it is calling a 'clean-sheet' review of the local bus, and dial-a-bus, services that it financially supports. This is not as a result of reduced funding, but it is aimed at influencing decisions on how to prioritise spend.

A survey questionnaire has been launched on the Council's web site. It focuses on ascertaining views on how best to provide supported bus services and can be completed as individuals or on behalf of an organisation. It will run until 9th December 2019.

He urged those who hadn't completed the questionnaire yet to do so via the link on the Council's web site.

[\(https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/public-transport/policies-strategies-and-contracts/\)](https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/public-transport/policies-strategies-and-contracts/)

He advised that those who can't access the internet will soon be able to pick up printed copies in local libraries and Aberdeenshire Council offices.

He explained that the questionnaire includes questions regarding the following:

- Preferred trip purpose
- Preferences for types of services e.g. mainline to/from Aberdeen; between Aberdeenshire towns, rural areas to nearest town; town services
- Preferred times of day/day(s) of week for travel
- Fixed route or Demand Responsive
- Views on Community Transport
- Reasons for not travelling by bus

7. Public Transport Infrastructure / Information

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

- 7.1 Request for provision of 2 bus shelters on Buchan Road (Fraserburgh), near Lewis Road, on both sides of the road.

Neil Stewart confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 7.2 Query as to why Service 452 (Fraserburgh – Inverurie) is still not included in the Buchan Timetable guide.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that there was insufficient space, but consideration would be given to its inclusion in the future. He confirmed that the service is incorporated within the Inverurie area booklet.

8. Services 67 / 68 (Fraserburgh – Aberdeen)

- 8.1 Request for additional seats downstairs on the Buchan Express (restricted to only two seats).

Fraser McBirnie explained that this had previously been investigated with the manufacturers and, unfortunately due to the layout downstairs, it is not possible to alter the seating area.

- 8.2 Councillor Mair queried whether other types of buses with additional seating downstairs could be investigated.

Fraser McBirnie advised that various vehicle types will be considered in the future, as long as each journey has sufficient seats to cater for passenger demand on the corridor.

- 8.3 Request for the provision of a departure at around 2230 hours from Aberdeen - Fraserburgh to allow passengers attending His Majesty Theatre to travel home.

Neil Stewart explained that as a result of the Council's supported service review earlier this year, the subsidised 2305 hours ex Aberdeen - Fraserburgh was scheduled for withdrawal, but the Council agreed to a request from Stagecoach Bluebird to retain the 2305 hours departure and advance the 2205 hours departure to 2135 hours instead. It was felt that it was better to retain a later journey, which could still cater for theatre goers.

- 8.4 Claim regarding an occasion on which the external storage compartment doors on the Buchan Xpress vehicles could not be opened, resulting in one passenger with a buggy having to struggle to take it on board.

Fraser McBirnie apologised for this and confirmed that all vehicles are inspected daily and undergo thorough maintenance procedures every 28 days, but unforeseen situations like this can occur and may need to be looked at later in the day. He requested that situations where it appears that no repairs have been undertaken, be reported to the company.

- 8.5 Claim that the 0902 hours and 1002 hours ex Fraserburgh – Aberdeen both broke down at Memsie on 24 October 2019.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that these claims would be investigated.

- 8.6 Claim that drivers waiting to depart from Union Square Bus Station often do not allow passengers to board the vehicle until very near the actual scheduled departure time, highlighting that it can be very cold in the bus station.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that occasionally drivers can be a bit late, due to the requirement to take legally required breaks, but this should not be a common occurrence, and asked that times and dates be provided in the future.

- 8.7 Claim regarding the large signs "do not use stairs while vehicle in motion" are still not displayed on some of the Buchan Xpress vehicles (e.g. 1315 hours ex Aberdeen on 14 November 2019).

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 8.8 Claim regarding faulty heating systems on some of the buses with specific reference to an issue with cold air coming through the vents on the 0900 hours ex Fraserburgh - Aberdeen on Tuesday 19 November 2019.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that this would be investigated.

9. Service 69/69B (Fraserburgh – St Combs/Lonmay/Peterhead)

Claim regarding frequent breakdowns and late running on the corridor, in particular on Saturday 16 November 2019 when the bus broke down at St Fergus.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that late running was likely due to various events, such as Christmas lights switch on, etc., but the breakdown would be investigated.

10. Service 74 (Fraserburgh - Rosehearty)

- 10.1 Request for additional journeys on the corridor, in particular, serving New Aberdour.

Neil Stewart advised that there are 5 return journeys between New Aberdour and Fraserburgh on Service 74 and 1 journey on Service 270 (Fraserburgh - New Pitsligo Circular). He conceded that evening journeys were withdrawn in April 2019 following the Council's supported bus service review but confirmed that it is not currently possible to fund more journeys on this route.

- 10.2 Claim regarding frequent late running of journeys due to drivers dropping off 'documents' at Fraserburgh Bus Station prior to passengers being allowed to board.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that this sort of thing is required from time to time but should not result in the bus departure being late. He asked for times and dates to be provided in such cases.

11. Service 76/77/78/79 (Fraserburgh Town Services)

- 11.1 Neil Stewart raised a request from Councillor Topping for the provision of a service via the new developments in Fraserburgh (off Boothby Road), i.e. Saltire/Greenbank/Pitblae areas.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that this was not commercially viable at the moment but would be revisited in the future.

- 11.2 Request for the service to be re-routed via the beach (Harbour Road, Fraserburgh) during the summer months.

Neil Stewart confirmed that this had been previously discussed with Stagecoach but was ruled out, whilst Fraser McBirnie confirmed that the request would be reconsidered.

- 11.3 Request for the service to be re-routed via Denmark Street (Fraserburgh) to serve the Lighthouse museum.

Neil Stewart confirmed that this area was previously served but was withdrawn by Stagecoach as it was not commercially viable.

12. A.O.B

- 12.1 It was raised that the Fraserburgh A2B service was welcomed by users but there were insufficient spare resources available in the case of breakdowns, resulting in trips being cancelled.

Neil Stewart confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 12.2 It was raised that the road closure on North Street (Peterhead) had created reliability issues for various services within Peterhead.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that the works originally involved a temporary one-way system, however due to some vehicles operating in the wrong direction, the contractor decided to close the road for safety reasons, and this led to delays.

- 12.3 Request for Fraserburgh Bus Station to be open on a Saturday for passengers.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the facility was closed on a Saturday due to repeated vandalism.

- 12.4 It was raised from the floor that on one occasion a man had been approaching passengers at Union Square Bus Station asking for money. After passengers raised the matter with Stagecoach Bluebird staff, the man had been escorted away by Police. It was queried what action Stagecoach Bluebird can undertake regarding such security matters at the Bus Station.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that if such issues can't be rectified by Stagecoach staff, then Police Scotland will be contacted.

- 12.5 Request for an update on the works at Ellon Park and Ride site.

Neil Stewart confirmed that tenders will be issued over the coming weeks for Phase 2, these works being delayed due to various land issues. He also confirmed that damage to the entrance and the barriers had been rectified.

- 12.6 Request for Stagecoach Bluebird to attend the Information Day event on 6th October 2020 at St Andrew's Hall, Fraserburgh, organised by Fraserburgh and District Older People's Forum.

Fraser McBirnie confirmed that he would report this request to senior management and hopefully someone will attend from the company.

13. Next Meeting

Councillor Kille confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum will take place in Fraserburgh in Spring 2020.