

NOTES OF MEETING

FIRST BRISTOL, SOMERSET & AVON CUSTOMER PANEL

HELD AT: LAWRENCE HILL DEPOT

DATE: MONDAY 18 JULY 2011

TIME: 1800 – 2000

Present: Tony McNiff (Service Delivery Director FBSAC), Jimmy Sommerville (Depot Operations Manager), Karan Suri (Revenue and Marketing Manager), Matthew Parker (Reliability and Punctuality Manager)

Ed Shorney, Redvers Skillicorn, Sheila Ottewell, Mac, Jo Curtis (all panel members), Barclay Davies (Officer for Wales - Bus Users UK), Dave Cox (University of the West of Engalnd)

An update on complaints was given by Bus Users UK

3 complaints: 2 related to Bristol bus station at night, third was incorrect sale of first day ticket from Parkway to Yate. KS had written to customer and refunded £5. Two related to customers at Bristol Bus station - Customer was going from Bristol to Bath. TMc stated we were having issues with traffic and not enough supervisory coverage at 2100. We were solving this issue however we did not communicate it as well as we could to our customers. The next bus was at 2200 however many passengers left by that time. We have agreed to refund taxi fare for 2 passengers. We are looking at a revised rota for supervisory coverage after 2100. We understand the issue and this is being addressed to get cover until 2230.

Mac – Asked whether RTI in Bristol Bus station cannot be updated from somewhere else as it leads to a lot of problems, like in Cymru.

TMc – The RTI was not working at that time, in Cymru it is done by local authorities.

MP – Stated at present RTI is not working, however First are working with Bristol City Council (BCC) to resolve this. BCC do not want operators to have access to messaging as they think it might be used for competitive advantage. The RTI system is operational however its operation is not as good as it should be. We have had issues with council RTI suppliers when they were taken over by another company who did not transfer correctly. The weak links are the displays on the bus stops – the version on the phones are more accurate than the bus. All Bristol services are fitted with RTI. The Bath buses are not fitted at present. X39, 339 and 179 will have these fitted.

TMc - stated that First are a customer of this service and we have a Service Level Agreement with the council and when things go wrong we do complain to them. Also requested all panel members to email Penny or Matthew about any specific RTI bus stops not working.

Mac – Asked if a bus is on the RTI and does not come whose mistake?

MP – Informed everyone that last week we tracked 91% of all journeys. It can be a multitude of reasons for not showing. We have had an agreement with the council to display tracked services only. In other parts of UK, if the tracked time is not available, they would show the scheduled time.

JC- Informed about personal Neighbourhood forum – People were asking why there were no buses from Church Road, Whitehall to St Pauls.

TMc – Informed everyone that we could provide only services which are commercially viable. We would refer this to our commercial department to see whether this is viable. Stated that there are costs associated with every vehicle on a route which include driver, engineering, vehicle costs, depreciation etc.

Mac – Stated that there flyers on Clifton buses to find out feedback, and whether First could do that on all Bristol services.

TMc – Informed that First will look at that

JC – Driver leaving buses at Lawrence Hill Bridge. Had to get off bus after waiting for 10 minutes without a driver.

JS – Explained that we were aware of this issue and had put in steps to address this. Where we have spare inspectors we put them to control the issue. We have had an issue where staff are less, lots of sickness which may have caused this issue to increase.

Mac – Asked if First could make it a policy that the driver should call when he makes a swap.

TMc – Stated that a relieving driver should not leave a bus until the other driver comes. We are trying to establish this as this is quite a new policy. Where that does not happen and where we know this is happening, we will take it individually with the drivers. There are some issues we are looking at how our buses are scheduled – this is what we are changing and we are aware that this will cost us however we do understand this and we are getting to change this – in the centre and Lawrence hill bridge. This involves regulations, the mindset and the schedules.

JC – Stated that upon asking a driver, he did not even look back. Over 50% of driver did not care about the customers and customer service is poor.

TMc – Informed the panel that our driver's union in Bristol and Bath were very concerned and would be horrified to hear this. There are a number of drivers who let us down however we do deal with them individually.

Ed – Stated that they were told drivers are trained on social skills however this did not shown on road

TMc – Gave the panel an example of how it works – When we get a reference from the public about a driver (poor driving, rude), we put mystery shoppers on Bus and in fact in Wales we do this along with Bus Users UK. In Bristol when we do mystery shoppers, 9x out of 10 they are fine however 1x of out 10 they are not. Where the observation of the customer is found to be correct along with mystery shopper reports we take them through the disciplinary process.

Ed – Stated that there should be more mystery shoppers so drivers are aware they are being watched.

TMc – Informed the panel that when drivers come out of the training school they are sent with buddy drivers. Drivers were doing a job which was very difficult - they do lots of things at one time.

Ed – Stated that First needed to improve their customer service team.

UWE – Stated that he never had any response from customer service.

TMc – Informed the panel that we had issues with emails not reaching customer services.

However we improved that although there was an issue in the past which caused a lot of people to be put off by our customer services.

Mac – Stated that it was 35p/min to call customer services.

Ed – Asked why this was a premium rate number.

TMc – Informed everyone that we will be looking at this.

MP – Gave presentation on punctuality of services in Bristol. Informed the panel that when we started RTI our punctuality was 65% however we have improved this to 92% buses that start on time. The previous Traffic Commissioner has stated that 88% of services running on time in BRS is acceptable however the current Traffic Commissioner does not accept it. There are certain junctions in Bristol that are running at full capacity. Our buses lose time on the journey.

TMc – Stated that when we get feeds from the punctuality meetings, we look at the distribution of running times across the day and how they may be affected by changing conditions.

MP – Gave information on the upcoming September service changes and on the Greater Bristol Bus Network

JS – Informed the panel that the excess time at Horsefair will be rectified in Sept 2011 service changes. The 48/49 timetable at Penn Street C has an inadequate timetable display which is being created into a bus stop shelter by December 2011 and is being funded by Cabot Circus. By September, coaches will not be able to stop at Broad Quay. Also gave an overview of complaints in period 3 at Lawrence Hill depot.

BD: Asked if First got many complaints about frequency?

JS – Answered that not many as the frequency on average is quite good in Bristol for most routes.

Mac – Stated that the 43 and 44 should have regular clock face times.

MP – Informed the panel that First Bristol's network planer was aware of this and looking at a solution. The only issue is that although they have common sections of route, they then split into different routes, which is difficult to adjust for clock face times.

UWE – Informed the panel that he was creating a website to work with bus operators. This would have a complaint section and a suggestions section. By doing this he would be liaising with depot managers and if no response was received, the complaint would be posted online. There will be a section for offers and timetables.

TMc – Informed the panel that although First would always ensure that people go to our customer services, he could see a lot of merit in seeing public views through Dave's website to provide an interface between the public and the bus operators. The key would be not to confuse people.

Mac – Asked if this was a blogging site?

UWE – Confirmed this as no and stated that he would be moderating it. He wanted drivers to know that were being watched.

TMc – Informed the panel that customers could email customer services through email which is free. Also stated that he would like the panel to work with Dave to give their feedback. Informed the panel that he saw this as a positive and wished Dave well in doing it.

TMc – Updated the panel on Smartcards – First were talking about a bank card technology and would be discussing with other operators about multi operator agreements. The key to this is what it costs. First are looking forward to moving ahead very quickly and to be the leaders in this area.

TMc – Informed the panel that he was looking at introducing a customer panel in Bath. Stated that we need to be transparent on how we get panel membership and informed everyone that he would send across an email to all members about Dave’s joining the panel.

DONM –

Location: Meeting Room 1 Enterprise House, Lawrence Hill
