

NOTES OF MEETING

FIRST BRISTOL, SOMERSET & AVON CUSTOMER PANEL

HELD AT: MARLBOROUGH STREET BUS STATION

DATE: WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 2011

TIME: 1800 – 1930

Present: Simon Cursio (Commercial Director FBSA),

Ed Shorney, Redvers Skillicorn, Sheila Ottewell, Mac, Stefan Di finizio (all panel members),

Joe Lynch, Gavin Smith - Passenger Focus,

Julian Osborne (Bus Users UK)

Apologies: Jo Curtis, Amber Weston

- 1. Future of the Panel** - Gavin regretfully informed everyone that as a result of changes to Passenger Focus, following on from the government's review of quangos announced in October 2010, this would be the last meeting attended by Passenger Focus representatives. Although Passenger Focus will continue to exist, making a difference for bus and rail passengers, it is now going through a change process, having experienced a substantial reduction in budget. The "new" Passenger Focus will not have the staffing resources to cover local meetings of this type in future. Hence the Bristol panel will require a new chair and minute taker.

This led on to some discussion about how the panel might work after this meeting. It was agreed that more members were needed. One suggestion was that Tony McNiff might be interviewed by the Bristol Evening Post in a general feature that would also invite more participation in the customer panel. Also, students might be targeted through one or both universities. Other possible organisations to approach might include Age UK. Alternatively, or as well, some sort of public event, involving panel members, might be arranged.

Another possibility might be to contact the people who attended the bus users surgery held in Bristol on 26 November 2010 and left their details, or to write to people in the First database of those who hold season tickets.

Stefan asked about the Bath Bus Users Group. Simon explained that this was not a group organised by First, but he welcomed it as another form of representation, which panel members should feel free to get involved with. (N.B. Full details on this group can be found at:- <http://bath-bus-users.org.uk/>)

Sheila regretted a lack of complaints submitted via the Customer Panel website.

A theme that has cropped up previously, and was mentioned again, related to feedback to encourage people to contribute, so that they feel that there is a positive benefit (e.g. the £1 three stop ticket.) To this end Ed suggested that the company supply the panel with details of the top three complaints areas, about three or four weeks prior to a meeting, so that panel members could then talk through the resulting issues (e.g. punctuality, driver behaviour) to understand what plans the company will put in place to improve matters.

Simon suggested that individual meetings might be extended to say 2½ hours (although possibly slightly less frequent), with the first hour an open forum, followed by an in depth panel session looking at issues raised in the first hour.

ACTIONS – Simon to check out BEP possibility and look at feasibility of using surgery and season ticket contact lists to invite new membership.

2. **Notes of last meeting (18 January 2011) and matters arising** – Agreed as a true record. The Bristol City Council tendering process has been delayed. Tenders must now be submitted by 26 April 2011. This includes the Park & Ride contracts. All contracts will last for at least five years. There is a strong likelihood that bendy buses might be deployed on the Brislington / Portway corridor.

Capital expenditure approval by the First Group board for the purchase of new ITSO compliant Electronic Ticket Machines (ETMs) for FBSA is thought to be near. Likely to see a roll out programme of the new ETMs in May 2011.

3. **Bus Users UK presentation** – Julian Osborne was attending this panel for the first time. He explained that BU UK (see: - <http://www.bususers.org/>) has existed for about 25 years and is a non statutory, campaigning group. It organises surgeries (such as the one held in Bristol in November) and currently plans to hold an average of one a week somewhere in the UK to get grass roots views from users on their bus services. These are then fed back to the bus operators and local authorities concerned for consideration and response. BU UK is also involved in complaints handling and resolution, both as initial complaints and at the appeal stage, through the Bus Appeals Body (see: - <http://www.busappealsbody.co.uk/index.html>).

Julian welcomed the publication of the minutes of this panel on First's website and advised the panel that this is how he became aware of their existence and which in turn led to his presence at this meeting. He saw publication of such notes as an example of good practice, which he hoped would be replicated elsewhere.

4. **Other issues**

4.1 Mac asked whether a cash machine (ATM) could be installed at Marlborough Street bus station for passenger use, as currently the nearest one is some distance away.

ACTION – This was not a request that Simon had encountered before. He will speak with First Group properties to find out if this is possible and if so what needs to be done.

4.2 There was a discussion about punctuality data.

ACTION - Simon agreed that a version of the punctuality data previously supplied to the panel might be suitable for posting on the website.

4.3 Redvers raised the question of the buses on layover on routes 41/2/3 blocking access to the stop for buses on routes 75/6 at Broad Quay.

ACTION - Simon was unaware of this problem but undertook to check out the situation and report back with any changes that might be required.

4.4 Sheila asked about the use of older buses on services 48/9 in the recent past.

ACTION - Simon was unaware of this problem but undertook to check out the situation, make allocation changes, if required, and report back.

4.5 Finally, a suggestion was made that despite the lack of a Passenger Focus representative at future meetings, a link be maintained with the organisation (contact details can be found on Passenger Focus website: - <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/>)

DONM – Wednesday 18 May 2011 at 1800 and then as below:-

Dates of subsequent meetings (all Wednesdays at Marlborough Street 1800 – 2000):

13 July 2011

7 September 2011

Joe Lynch / 8 April 2011