

DENNISTOUN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING ABOUT BUS SERVICES
HELD AT WHITEHILL SCHOOL 11/10/11

Meeting chaired by Stephen Birrell (Dennistoun Community Council chair)

Also Present: Paul Martin MSP, John Mason MSP, Humza Yousaf MSP, Councillor Jennifer Dunn, Councillor Alison Thewliss, Kenny Hogg (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport)

Apologies: Councillors Frank Docherty and Elaine McDougall, MSPs Ruth Davidson, Patrick Harvie, George Redmond and Drew Smith, MP Willie Bain

Notes provided by Frank Plowright

Stephen Birrell introduced the meeting by requesting constructive comments regarding the bus service, and compliments if appropriate, and promised that all points raised would be taken up with First Bus. He also mentioned a considerable number of comments had already been sourced online and would also be taken up. Frank Plowright noted that First Bus had been invited to the meeting but responded that as they are invited to so many meetings they have devised a policy involving an individual Community Councillor meeting with them at their Victoria Road offices. There had been no response to subsequent requests to reconsider, nor a response to being asked how many invitations to public meetings arranged by Community Councils they'd received this year.

It should be noted that all comments provided by Kenny Hogg refer to bus services in general. He could not speak on behalf of any individual transport provider.

1. Kenny Hogg is an Assistant Network Planning Officer within the Network Planning Section of SPT. He said that 95% of bus services are commercial enterprises and SPT ensure socially necessary services are provided where there would otherwise be no service. It was noted that Dennistoun has buses running along two main corridors (Duke Street and Alexandra Parade) between 6am and 11pm providing a comprehensive service, with also access to services covering most main hospitals.
2. Helen McCarthy asked about buses to Stobhill Hospital as a lot of services are currently being transferred there from Lightburn. At present the only bus from Dennistoun, the number 8, drops off a considerable distance from Stobhill, and it doesn't run on a Sunday or later at night. SPT are past the initial stages of having the road network to Stobhill improved to allow the bus services access to the rear of Stobhill hospital. It is not anticipated there will be great problems in achieving this, although there is currently no timescale. Buses also run from the city centre to the front entrance of the hospital, and while a longer journey overall, this is a more frequent service. It was suggested the 89/90 could also divert to incorporate Stobhill, but this would be a matter to be discussed with First Bus who run that route. SPT subsidise service 8 on a Sunday which operates between Riddrie and Springburn Hospital, accessible by interchange from Cumbernauld Road.
3. Jenny Boyd noted the difficulty of returning from Lightburn Hospital at night as all buses back to Dennistoun stop at 7pm. The 213 does run later, but taking this bus involves a considerable uphill walk to Cranhill, which is difficult for the elderly. A note was taken of this problem and SPT will follow up on it and report back to the Community Council. SPT subsidised service 213 was recently revised to provide an evening service for residents of Cranhill, operating via Bellrock St subsequently removing this service from a section of Edinburgh Rd in the evening. Residual First

service 41 provides a 30min evening service between this section of Edinburgh Road and the Duke Street area of Dennistoun. SPT believes that this is currently the best use of subsidised services in this area.

4. Jim Squair brought up the lack of the number 8 service on Sunday, meaning people wishing to come to Dennistoun from the Gallowgate had to travel via Parkhead Forge. SPT's budget to provide bespoke services is extremely limited and needs to be spread over a large area. In this instance as there is a means of making the journey via interchange it's unlikely any direct service would be instituted.
5. Louise Williams noted that a constant request is for a bus running from Alexandra Parade to Parkhead Forge. Many elderly people are unable to struggle up from Duke Street with shopping, and some currently travel to Cumbernauld and shop there instead as a direct bus route is provided. Many years ago a bus ran up Armadale Street. There is now considerably more parking in Armadale Street and chicanes have long been present, so running a bus along there now wouldn't be feasible. There is a difficulty with the street configuration enabling a bus to be run from the Forge to the Parade and back. The My Bus service could take some elderly and disabled along with those in possession of a companion card. It was pointed out that a bus could run a circular route up Cumbernauld Road, along the Parade and down Wishart Street. This would have to be taken up with bus service providers. It was also suggested that the owners of the Forge could be approached directly to see if they would consider running a bus service of their own. Partly subsidised service 89/90 currently operates via Wishart Street, Duke Street and Parkhead can be accessed via interchange from Cumbernauld Road.
6. Councillor Alison Thewliss noted that many buses are not suitable for prams or the disabled, and some drivers prove inflexible. On occasion she has had to walk into the city centre with a pram due to not being able to take it on the bus. Kenny Hogg was unable to comment on specific instances regarding First Bus services, but noted that low floor buses are to be phased in throughout Glasgow in stages. By 2015 all mini-buses will have the facility and it will be rolled out to single deck buses by 2016 and double deckers by 2017.
7. Paul Martin MSP considered it entirely unacceptable that First Bus had refused to send a representative to the meeting, saying that they receive in the region of £150 million public subsidy and should be engaging with the community and answerable to them. Since his initial election as a local Councillor in 1993 he's been hearing the same problems and perhaps the time has now come to look at how effective the legislation governing bus services is. He noted that routes are cherry picked for profit, there is no competition, and part of the reason for First Bus announcing very little dissatisfaction with their services is the difficulty in making a complaint to them. The complaints logged are not representative of the public concerns. He suggested another public meeting making it clear that First Bus have a duty to attend and listen to the community. As they had ignored Dennistoun Community Council's request he would be willing to arrange another meeting in conjunction with the Community Council.
8. John Mason MSP noted he represented the community south of Duke Street. He commented that First Bus continually follow the money, and cited a problem accessing Glasgow Fort from Ballieston, when First did provide a service, failed to promote it adequately, and withdrew it rapidly. London Buses have a far more effective franchise system, but this is subsidised by the congestion charge.
9. It was noted that deregulation of the bus services and introducing competition hadn't worked well for the public, initially resulting in Duke Street being clogged with buses, then the service being consolidated under one profit-driven provider. The result is that

everything has been cut, including the cleaning. There had been comments about the standards of cleanliness online.

10. Councillor Jennifer Dunn voiced her concerns about anti-social behaviour on buses, and although First have said they'll tighten up, she feels they need to take greater responsibility. She also noted that fares have risen unacceptably. Ten years ago a single trip into the city centre cost 70p, and the price is now £1.80, and there seems to be no understanding as to how far the newly introduced 90p fare covers.
Kenny Hogg noted that bus companies and police identify trouble hotspots via drivers, and that road side staff report on incidents. Recently, Strathclyde Police working in partnership with GCC and SPT launched the Glasgow Alcohol Strategy which targeted antisocial behaviour on various public transport modes by setting up an "intelligence box" for frontline staff to report "hot spots" and incidents, Posters publicising this initiative are expected to be rolled out on to public service vehicles very soon.
It was noted that it's been raised online that some drivers can't be bothered dealing with anti-social behaviour. People are encouraged to report on this at every opportunity.
11. Petra O'Brien noted that buses with high steps are very difficult for the elderly, and it's not uncommon for folk to lose their balance and fall. Why is it that all buses running through Shawlands have lower steps, yet this isn't the case for Dennistoun.
Kenny Hogg reiterated the targets for low floor buses to be rolled out, but it Ms O'Brien felt it unreasonable that that some entire routes now have easier access while other entire routes lack it, and what are the elderly to do until 2017? It was noted that 2017 was a deadline, and most routes should have low floor buses in place before then.
12. Humza Yousaf MSP said he would raise the point about low floor buses with First Bus, and would enquire as to their policy of collecting data regarding bus use by the elderly. He felt it imperative that First Bus should attend public meetings such as this, and enquired what contingency plans there were for the buses should we experience another severe winter. Kenny Hogg was unable to comment on any specific plans First Bus might have, but noted that SPT did operate most of their services during last winter's freeze. He attributed this to the use of smaller vehicles more easily able to cope with poor conditions.
13. June Wright asked why journeys that were previously carried out by one bus now require two, citing the 41 and trips to the Royal Infirmary as examples.
Kenny Hogg replied that adjustments are made to routes in order to provide the most convenient overall service. Frank Plowright cited online comments noting the considerable number of routes broken up over the past year, and how this meant that First earned more money from a journey requiring two buses unless people used a form of travelcard.
14. Jim Squair considered bus shelter information was deficient, noting the electronic timetable was missing from a busy bus stop by the Lloyds bank on Duke Street, and the printed timetables don't always identify the journey time. Furthermore the streamed information on the buses themselves often bears little relation to location of the bus at the time. SPT are looking at improving overall information, but that specific to routes are the responsibility of each commercial bus operator.
Alison Thewliss noted the electronic streaming of information at stops is often unreliable. Kenny Hogg suggested the streamed information communication links are restricted to modern vehicles allocated to major corridors, and streaming on bus will probably be rolled out further as older stock is replaced.
15. Petra O'Brien asked why so many buses pass with a sign noting they're not in service. As they're driving along the routes anyway why can't they pick up passengers?
This is sometimes an issue to do with problems on the

vehicle rendering them unsuitable for service, and other reasons may be the driver having finished the route and returning to the depot, or the bus might be allocated elsewhere. Stopping along the route would be impractical in these instances.

16. Jim Squire asked if drivers were given specific instructions not to open the doors except at a stop. This is likely to be a health and safety issue. Most stops now have a raised kerb and are illuminated at night and are the identified alighting points..
17. Petra O'Brien was concerned about the hold-up along Duke Street in the morning and buses standing at the lights at Cumbernauld Road for a long period. She was further concerned about the level of traffic after football matches. Was told that the phasing of the traffic lights could be checked by the council. This had been carried out at the junction of Bellgrove Street and Duke Street and the timing had been found to be faulty. The traffic congestion after football matches was off topic, and a matter to be raised elsewhere.
18. Jim Squire asked whether CCTV cameras could be used to stop cars using the bus lanes. There are currently legal issues with regard to this, but SPT hope that it will soon be the case that cars can be identified by the cameras, and fines issued by post.
19. Janette Cochrane asked about SPT issuing fines to drivers for dropping off members of the public at places other than precisely at the stops. SPT can't fine for this, and if fines have been issue it would be due to the policies of bus companies. Bus compliance wardens do present reports to SPT management that are passed on to companies.
20. Kate Wood queried the timetabling by First Bus during rush hours. She can sometimes wait 15 -20 minutes in the morning after which several buses appear bunched together, all packed. This occurs most frequently during school terms, and isn't as much of a problem during school holidays. SPT are unable to comment on the timetabling methods of First Bus, but are surprised they don't schedule at regular intervals. They do employ roadside inspectors to report on such problems.
21. Frank Plowright passed on a comment sourced via Dennistoun online from a woman concerned about her safety waiting up to an hour at night on Duke Street. Would it be possible for bus shelters to be equipped with panic buttons. This isn't a matter for SPT, although Kenny Hogg was surprised that anyone would wait that long at night as regular bus services operated. Safety issues of this nature would be something that needs to be discussed with the local police as SPT wouldn't be directly involved. at First earned more money from a journey requiring two buses unless people used a form of travelcard, although would be willing to work in partnership with any initiatives that improves personal safety and promotes public transport use.
22. Stephen Birrell noted that the First Bus website highlights a route development plan where comments are welcomed and concerns are communicated. He suggested everyone present use that as alternative means of passing on information and asking questions. In the meantime Dennistoun Community Council will follow up on all issues raised at the meeting together with those already solicited online and feed back as soon as information becomes available. We will also arrange another public meeting with Paul Martin MSP and it's hoped First Bus will be present this time.