

(Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the Board scheduled to be held on 13 September 2016.)

Economic Prosperity Sub-Committee

13 July 2016

Present: Councillor Janet Hunter (Chair)
Councillors J Cassidy, S L Cox, P Earley
D McMeekan, A McMullen, A Percy, J Walker
and F Weetman.

EP07/07/16 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Lee.

EP08/07/16 Substitute Members

There were no Substitute Members.

EP09/07/16 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no Declarations of Interest or Dispensations reported.

EP10/07/16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 15 June 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

EP11/07/16 Nexus Review of Local Transport Services

In 2016/17 Nexus had an approved budget deficit of £3.7m but in agreeing that services could be protected in this way, the North East Combined Authority (NECA) had asked that Nexus review service provision during 2016, for implementation in 2017/18. As part of the review, Nexus were currently undertaking a public consultation to collect views from a wide variety of stakeholders in order to help understand how people access public transport and what is important to them. This would help shape the future of public transport services that Nexus will provide

Nexus could not make changes to the basic element of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme because Nexus had a statutory duty to reimburse bus operators for carrying anyone with the bus pass. Nexus was also not currently considering any plans to cut the Metro timetable, for financial reasons, because Metro received most of its money from the fares that passengers paid, along with a grant from the Department for Transport.

Over the summer Nexus would analyse the results of the consultation and make recommendations. The NECA would then consider the recommendations and there would be a further round of consultation later in the year.

The sub-committee gave consideration to the consultation documentation. The sub-committee were advised that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport had delegated authority to approve the Authority's response to government consultation papers. In view of this the sub-committee agreed to refer its comments to the Cabinet member so that they may be taken into account in the formulation of any response to the consultation from the Authority.

The sub-committee were provided with copies of a printed booklet setting out the background to the consultation and the consultation questions. The booklet was accompanied by a postage paid envelope for the return of completed questionnaires. Members expressed concern at the likely cost of the consultation material at a time when Nexus was reporting a deficit within its budget of £3.7m and when it was about to formulate spending reduction plans.

The scope of the review was limited to how the money Nexus' receives from the NECA was spent. In 2016/17 Nexus received £62.5m from the NECA and £36.5m of this would be spent in accordance with Nexus' statutory obligations under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. This significant proportion of Nexus' expenditure was therefore not part of the review. Despite this the sub-committee challenged this area of expenditure and queried whether there was scope for Nexus to undertake further work with bus companies to ensure that the calculations of payments accurately reflects the costs of the service and represents value for money.

The following paragraphs are referenced to the questionnaire set out in the consultation booklet 'have your say'.

Section 2

9. Please indicate the order of importance you would give to each of our service areas.

The sub-committee ranked the services as follows:

- 1st – Bus services, group travel and ferry services
- 2nd – Local, voluntary concessions
- 3rd – Bus waiting facilities
- 4th – Public transport information
- 5th – Major projects

The sub-committee ranked secured bus services, group travel and ferry services as the most important service area. This was because if there were not bus and ferry services in the first instance the other services, which were considered to be supplementary, would be of little value.

Section 3

10. Please indicate the order of importance that you would give to the various local voluntary concessions currently available in Tyne & Wear.

The sub-committee ranked the child concessionary fare as the most important in view of its impact on enabling young people to travel to school and in enabling families to access public transport.

The sub-committee grouped the concessions for disabled people, namely Companion Card, All Day Disabled Pass and Taxi Card, together and ranked them all equally as 2nd most important. Members believed that these concessions would become more important and valuable at a time when other disability benefits were being reformed.

The Metro Gold card was ranked 3rd most important. Members commented that the £12 charge represented incredible value for money and suggested that the charge could be increased by a small amount, perhaps to £15. Members also challenged the £25 charge for residents living outside the Tyne & Wear area and queried why the NECA levy was in effect subsidising travel by people from outside the area.

The time extensions to the bus pass were considered to be of lesser importance together with the 50p single fare on Northern Rail Services which was less likely to be used by residents of North Tyneside given that the routes in question do not pass through the borough.

Section 4

14. Please read the following statements and indicate the order of importance that you think Nexus should follow when looking at its secured bus/ferry services criteria.

The sub-committee ranked the statements as follows:

- 1st – links to where people work
- 2nd – links to schools/college
- 3rd – allowing people to take an active part in society
- 4th – where otherwise the journey could not be made by public transport

The sub-committee considered that Nexus should prioritise links to where people work to help create an economy which generates employment and also create sustainable transport networks that will safeguard the environment and reduce carbon emissions.

15. Which types of bus services are most important?

The sub-committee ranked the statements in the following order:

- Joint 1st – Links with other public transport services
- Joint 1st – Services which are close to where I live
- 2nd – High frequency services
- 3rd – High quality vehicles
- 4th – Direct door to door services

Links with other public transport services and services which are close to where I live were jointly ranked first because they are both concerned with the fundamental principle of accessibility. Bus services need to be near where people live and they must also provide users with access to the wider network. Services need not be door to door, but within reasonable walking distance. Without the ability to access a bus service in the first place the frequency of the service was considered to be irrelevant.

With reference to the quality of the vehicles members considered that there should be a consistent set of minimum standards on all vehicles in terms of accessibility, safety, cleanliness, information and sustainability.

Section 5

16. Please indicate the order of importance that you would give to the following methods of finding out travel information.

The sub-committee ranked the methods in the following order:

- 1st – Information at bus stops
- Joint 2nd – Information online at www.nexus.uk

Joint 2nd – Information on smartphones and/or tablets

The remaining methods were all ranked together as being of lesser importance.

The sub-committee expect that older people will be more likely to rely on information available at bus stops while younger people with access to information technology will be more inclined to use information on-line and through their smartphones. It was hoped that the real time information which was now available at locations such as North Shields town centre could be rolled out to other areas.

The sub-committee did not feel they had sufficient knowledge of the services to answer question 17.

Section 6

18. Please indicate the order of importance that you would give to how our bus waiting facilities are presented.

The sub-committee ranked the question in the following order:

1st – Security

2nd – Provision of travel information

3rd – Cleanliness

4th – Staffing

From their own experiences of feeling vulnerable whilst standing alone at bus stops the sub-committee ranked security as most important. Reference was also made to requests made by constituents to ward councillors for the installation or re-instatement of shelters at bus stops, to protect bus users from inclement weather. This is clearly an additional priority among users.

Section 7

19. Please indicate the order of importance that you would give to different ways for our Major Projects budget to be used in the future.

The sub-committee considered that priority should be given to any investment in technology which may result in savings in the longer term. For example an investment in smart ticketing and on-line sales may reduce administrative costs.

The redirection of resources into supporting Nexus' services was also considered to be of greater importance as these were viewed by the sub-committee as Nexus' core services and the other projects were seen to be as supplementary.

It was **agreed** that the sub-committee's conclusions and comments as set out above be referred to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Transport, Councillor J Harrison, together with a request that they be taken into account in the formulation of any response from the Authority to the consultation.

EP12/07/16 Port of Tyne

Members of the sub-committee had visited the Port of Tyne Passenger Terminal on 6 July 2016. The purpose of the visit had been to learn more about the operation of the Port in North Shields, its impact in terms of attracting visitors and trade to North Tyneside and whether this could be enhanced.

The sub-committee had been particularly interested to learn more about:-

- a) the numbers of visitors passing through the passenger terminal in North Shields from ferries and cruise ships and the extent to which North Tyneside is promoted as a destination;
- b) how much freight passes through North Shields, how this is supported by our transport networks and how it supports the economy of North Tyneside; and
- c) the operation of the North Shields car terminal.

A note highlighting the main points to emerge from the visit was circulated at the meeting and those members who had visited the Port reported their findings and made the following comments:-

- a) the Port was complemented on how responsive it was to new demands in the market. For example it had acted quickly to develop new facilities to cater for a transition from coal powered power stations to Biomass materials imported from North America.
- b) members had been surprised that the Port of Tyne had trust status and had been impressed by its commitment to supporting local communities. This had been demonstrated through the operation of its Community Action Fund and apprenticeships programme.
- c) with reference to the apprenticeships programme members hoped the Port could strengthen its relationship with TyneMet College
- d) members had been struck by the significance of the Port securing industrial land on the riverside that might otherwise be lost to residential development.
- e) the Port had expressed a desire to establish a rail link to the north bank of the Port but to member's knowledge no provision had been made within the emerging local plan. (Officers subsequently clarified that the Port had indicated that they did not have sufficiently firm plans for this to be included in plan. Therefore the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan did not provide explicit support in policy but includes reference at Paragraph 10.25 to the future potential for the link.)

It was **agreed** that (1) the findings to emerge from the visit to the Port of Tyne Passenger Terminal be noted; and

(2) the Port of Tyne be sent a letter of thanks for the opportunity to visit and to learn so much about the operation of the Port and its impact on the economy of North Tyneside.