



WOLVERHAMPTON OVER 50s FORUM

Secretary: Mr. Roy Girdler

25 Clarence Road

Bilston

Wolverhampton

WV14 6NZ

Tel:01902 651656

www.wolverhamptonover50sforum.com

Minutes of Over 50s Forum Wednesday
21st November 2007, Civic Centre

Apologies: Mr Rai, Reg Jones, Brian Davies, Trevor & Joan Russell, Eddie Grizzle, Gina Parker, Jen Purshouse

Present: 34 members, Rose Powell

Chairperson: Brad Purshouse

Item		Action
1.	<p>Brad welcomed Centro representatives to meeting.</p> <p>Speakers: Councillor Gary Clarke, Chair of Centro Pete Bond, Strategy Implementation Manager</p> <p>Pete Bond thanked forum for their invite. He presented an overview of Centro which is the co-operative name of West Midland Passenger Transport. They also fund the Ring & Ride service which carries out 1½ million journeys per year. They are a key partner in Network West Midlands, and are responsible for bus, tram and train travel, they have also taken over bus stops and provide joined up network travel. They are not directly responsible for private bus services in the West Midlands but subsidise over 250 bus services. They also provide park and ride services,</p> <p>Rail – Growth of over 25% in the last 6 years one fifth of all journeys are peak time which is a big issue for track and rolling stock. New Street station is a hub for the UK network and they are working to get extra funding to get the station upgraded. They provide 6000 park and ride spaces and have taken 2.75 million car journeys off the road annually.</p> <p>Metro – Responsible for design, build, operation and maintenance, recently carried out a survey which shows 37% of customers had a car and 15% previously travelled by car. Metro stage 1 extension –they are hoping to extend into Wolverhampton City Centre, Brierley Hill and Birmingham, massive planning and preparatory work is needed.</p> <p>There is a Safe Travel Police Team which was set-up in 2005, and is funded</p>	

by the Police and Birmingham Council but reports to West Midlands Police. This has brought a reduction of incidents/crime on public transport and therefore increased passenger confidence. There is also an up-to-date bus stop information, hotline/call centre which receives approximately 1.6 million calls yearly. Some of the buses are also fitted with a computer system which keeps track of their whereabouts.

Pete stated that the free travel scheme which operates between 9:30 to 3:30, Mondays to Fridays runs at a cost of £67 million pounds. New passes (countrywide - bus only) will be issued in April 2008.

Marjorie Wedge - pointed out that she cannot use the bus service because she feels the standard of driving is unsafe, drivers move off before passengers are seated and stop suddenly, buses sometimes also go through red lights.

Councillor Clarke pointed out that bus drivers are well trained and complaints are taken very seriously, any complaints need to be reported straightaway for them to be dealt with effectively, Unfortunately since 1986 deregulation means that they no longer control independent bus operators, though they do work in partnership with them. They regularly lobby the government for more power over bus operators, more inspectors are needed on the buses and control over highways

Sandra Ullah – stated that bus drivers do not always lower the platform and tend to pull off too quickly, which make it very difficult for disabled users. Again Pete pointed out that these issues must be reported promptly though most bus drivers are very good and polite it's the few that cause the problems

There are 37 private operators in the West Midlands, 85% are operated by one company; therefore they are not always able to tackle all of the problems when they arise. He reassured forum that when complaints are received regarding the drivers inappropriate handling of the vehicle, the drivers concerned are given further training.

Every two months the transport users forum is held at the Civic Centre at 7pm and it suggested that operators be invited to these so that they can made aware of any issues passengers have. **(The next meeting scheduled for 26th February 2008 at 7pm in the Civic Centre.)**

Silbert Griffiths commented that people are being encouraged to leave their cars at home and use public transport more, however he and his wife waited over an hour for a bus in Stowlawn, then three came together, If we are to depend on public transport it must be reliable.

Councillor Clarke – We need to encourage people to use public transport and it is the bus operators responsibility to make sure buses are on time but the public do need to take traffic congestion into consideration. Centro are working towards real time information, in 2 years time 90% of bus shelters will have real time information.

Pat O'Dowd has been asking for a bus shelter for the last 12 months and still nothing has been done, Centro said they have to get agreement for them

and then they have to be approved by the planning department at the Council.

Jean Girdler – it is good that buses take pushchairs and wheelchairs but there are some issues around large pushchairs and shopping trolleys which make it difficult for passengers to get past.

Pete Bond - these are difficult issues for the drivers to control, but they're working closely with operators to improve the situation.

Mike Nicholls – research is currently being carried out by the transport users forum about the size of buggies etc. We have been told that bus shelter requests are graded as to the level of importance is that correct? Although West Midlands transport drivers are excellent they should approach bus stops more cautiously as recently an older lady rang the bell and remained seated but the driver went straight past the stop. Mike also related a story regarding a family who walk children to and from school each day because they are not able to afford the bus fares. Councillor Clarke stated that they would like to see **free** public transport for children under the age of 14 and that the government should support this.

Councillor Clarke said that they were unable to comment on these issues but will follow them up.

Gerald Gabb - it was also mentioned that at times several buses are parked at the same stand at the same time which makes it difficult for people to get the bus they need and that some drivers drive around the station several times.

Pete said that the safety of the public is of paramount concern, buses are timed as to when to leave the stands, therefore that is why they wait as they do. Need to liaise with operators to resolve problems.

Pat O'Dowd asked about CCTV screens on the buses, most times these are switched off, how can drivers see what's happening? Pete stated that the driver uses other cameras, the CCTV is still in operation even when switched off. Pat also said that there should be more inspectors and the ones at the bus station should be more readily available.

Brad thanked Councillor Clarke and Pete Bond for attending. Councillor Clarke said how heartened he was to attend a forum which was so enthusiastic and knowledgeable on older peoples issues.

Minutes of the last Meeting

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record. Roy Girdler and Marjorie Wedge.

Matters Arising

Marjorie Item 1 page 1 stated that she was not happy with Brian O'Learys answers she does not think he answered satisfactorily need more details on some of the issues. It was suggested that a small group should form to

continue to check on FACS issues. She asked members to give specific details of any problems older people are having and will then ask Brian O'Leary to attend a future meeting to address these.

Need to send invite letters with a list of meeting dates to MPs inviting them to one of the meetings. Rose and Roy will get letters sent out.

Carer staff timesheets – it was suggested that if anyone receives care services, they should make sure that what they're signing (time spent) is correct.

Rose stated that the Council are looking at the possibility of using swipe cards to record time of service by carers. Marjorie said that standards of care need to continue to be looked at.

There is scam taking place where calls are giving out call cards to people saying an attempt to deliver a parcel had been made. It asks them to call the number on card and then they're charged £15 for a few minutes – **beware.**

Roy Girdler suggested writing letter to Chronicle regarding the issues relating to pushchairs/wheelchairs. It was also suggested that the Express and Star could be invited to future meetings.

Treasurer's Report

No report.

Correspondence

Roy read a report to the members about a project in the North East of England called a Bridge card which older and disabled people can show to bus drivers saying that they may need a little more time or assistance during travel. Rose gave a copy to Centro and asked if they could consider a similar scheme.

Sub-Committee Reports

A Housing Sub Group meeting will take place on Friday 23rd November 2007 at 10:30 in Briefing Room 2, First Floor, Civic Centre.

Any Other Business

Delivering Care Closer to Home newsletters were handed out by Rose.

Please note there will be no December Forum.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 16th January 2008, committee Room 3, Third Floor, Civic Centre.