

## **Harden Parish Council**

### **Response to bus strategy**

#### **Question 1 Strategic Challenges**

Harden Parish Council agrees with the Strategic Challenges set out in the Full Technical Report (Chapter 2 53 – 2.55). We note that ‘existing users are characterised as being drawn predominantly from those with concessionary passes’ reflects bus usage by Harden residents and that a reasonably frequent service during the day has failed to encourage residents to leave their cars at home or commute by bus. Dependency upon concessionary pass users is not a recipe for growth. Encouraging bus use by young people is.

Greater devolution of power over local transport in the Region is key to improving bus services.

#### **Question 2 Customer focused problems**

Harden Parish Council agrees with the customer focused problems which have been identified (Chapter 4.4.11). The headline problems have been accurately set-out . In particular we would draw attention to the factors which influence bus use – or lack of it – by our residents.

Occasional fares are seen to be too high when compared with the marginal costs of using a car especially for more than one passenger. In some cases, two people in a taxi is barely more expensive than two bus fares and a great deal more convenient. Simple payment options for regular travellers like the M Cards are welcome but increasing fares are not.

Buses are perceived to be dirty and uncomfortable. Investment is needed in new vehicles with WiFi, charging points and information about stops displayed inside the bus as happens in London and on some Flying Tiger routes.

Conditions at bus stops can also be dirty and level access is not always available. This is especially true for the stop outside the Congregational Church in Harden.

A thirty-minute frequency is insufficient for ‘turn up and go’ passengers and the hourly evening frequency even more so.

Connectivity to Bingley Station is reasonable but poor to Cullingworth. This means that access to GP facilities in Cullingworth by bus is impractical. Failure to create an even gap between 616 and 727/9 service into Bingley is unhelpful.

Real time information at Harden bus stops is completely lacking except by using mobile apps. The First Bus app works well, but not all residents use mobile phones. Some ‘real time’ information appears to relate to the timetable rather than what is actually happening on the ground. Information when buses are seriously disrupted – by snow for example – is absent.

The network overall is difficult to understand for new or infrequent users. Timetable variations designed to more accurately reflect peak time road conditions or the transition from half hourly to hourly services can cause confusion.

A one-stop shop for complaints should be developed.

Driver training should be improved. The role of the driver in a modern system is complex and about more than just driving the bus.

Safety at bus stops and in the bus, especially for young people and in the evenings is a concern. Bradford Interchange is perceived as unpleasant especially after dark. Keighley Bus station less so.

### **Question 3 Vision, objectives and critical success factor**

Harden Parish Council agrees with the vision, objectives and critical success factors set out in Chapter 5. Village residents complain about heavy traffic running through the centre and therefore would support opportunities for modal shift and to attract new passengers.

Objective three - Supporting local communities by providing access health services, education, employment and leisure and retail destinations is welcome. In particular Harden residents have problems with public transport access to GPs at Cullingworth (see above ). Visits to either local hospital, where parking is a problem, requires at least two buses and some serious advanced planning but is possible.

It is quite clear that without investment the bus network will not grow and generate further income. If West Yorkshire is serious about buses, finding this investment must be a priority.

### **Question 4 Bus Strategy Policies**

Harden Parish Council supports the vision of creating 'the best bus system in Europe', notes the content of Appendix E which sets out evidence for delivering bus passenger growth and supports the proposals in 6.6 and 6.7 for improving the passenger experience.

Because routes through Harden are not likely to generate sufficient passengers to increase frequency, matters such as driver training, quality of vehicles, easy access, regularity and reliability, reasonable fares, evening services, cashless payments, easy journey planning and real time information are important.

### **Other comments**

Although there are initiatives which require relatively little resources to improve the bus service (appendix J), the new Bus Services Bill has the potential to improve bus services in West Yorkshire through franchising and the break-up of monopoly of providers. The resolution of the ongoing debate about devolution to the region will also help bring in funding to improve transport systems.