

**BLACKWATER VALLEY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT
12 OCTOBER 2022
2.00 - 2.30 PM**



Present:

Cllr Rod Cooper, Hampshire County Council
David Daniels, Southeast Communities Rail Partnership
Cllr Steve Forster, Hart District Council (and HCC)
Edward Goose, Great Western Railway
Mike Griffin-Thorn, Hampshire County Council
Cllr Mike Roberts, Rushmoor Borough Council
Councillor Chris Turrell, Bracknell Forest Council (Chair)
Cllr Valerie White, Surrey Heath Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr David Beaman
Lisa Cook
Richard Davies
Phil Dominey
Paul Millin
Cllr Adrian Newell
Cllr Alan Oliver
Cllr Maurice Sheehan
David Wilby
Cllr Bill Withers

7. Minutes - 20 July 2022

The minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 20 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

Arising on the minutes, it was understood that the TfSE Strategic Plan consultation had been completed but the results were awaited. The Chair indicated that he would circulate any information that emerged.

8. Train Operators' Updates

The Advisory Committee received the following updates from train operators:

Great Western Railway:

The Advisory Committee was advised by Edward Goose that there had been more strikes during the last week. The dispute, which was national, remained ongoing, but there seemed to be hints that the negotiations were moving in the right direction. The company hoped to have a full service sooner rather than later.

The death of Her late Majesty the Queen had generated an increase in rail travel but, unfortunately, there had been a major infrastructure failure preventing travel between Reading and London on the day of her funeral. Inquiries into what had happened were underway. It had happened on the worst possible day.

It was noted that the December timetable was now in online trackers. There would be no changes to the service frequency on the North Downs Line. The tri-mode Class 769s were to be rolled out during the December timetable on the Gatwick fast services offering more comfort than existing units.

Some concerns were expressed about there being only an hourly service to Alton from London Waterloo after 7.30pm. Buses and trains did not connect at Farnborough, nor did alternative trains at Guildford. Mr Goose agreed that it was frustrating. The company was trying to do more work with bus companies to improve bus and rail integration.

9. **Bus Operators' Updates**

There were no bus company representatives present.

It was reported that only Stagecoach was now operating the main services in the Blackwater Valley. More information was requested on how this was settling down and whether it was a sustainable operation. Given the current state of the fleet, it was suggested that it would be good to know whether there was to be any upgrade of the bus fleet.

The Advisory Committee also touched on financial support to the bus companies. With the councils preparing their 2023/24 budgets, members were keen to hear what impact the limited finances may have on ongoing support to bus services. At this stage no-one could say, but it was acknowledged that the upper tier authorities were facing significant financial challenges.

10. **Local Authorities' Updates**

Following on from the previous item, it was noted that all authorities' budgets were under pressure. Hart District Council was reported to be discussing how to deliver the most effective services. One of the areas of opportunity being explored was demand-responsive public transport services. There was already a "Go To" service in Kent. It was, however, suggested that many of the bus passengers may not be comfortable using mobile phone apps.

11. **Other Matters**

There was disappointment that so many key members of the Advisory Committee had not been able to join the meeting. The Chair hoped that there would be a more worthwhile turnout at the next meeting, as the Advisory Committee provided all members with an excellent opportunity to engage with one another about issues that mattered to all.

It was also suggested that it would be useful to have Network Rail along to a future meeting. In their absence, it was reported that:

- The bridge development at Farnborough North was likely to be compromised by there being a Fawley to Heathrow pipeline close to the proposed works.
- There was no news on replacing the Ash level crossing with a bridge.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Advisory Committee would be held at 2pm on 18 January 2023.