PTR MEETING 06/07/21 via Teams Report from Mary Stiles

As the Chair, Chris Robbins (CR), had connection problems, Phillip Earnshaw (PE) chaired the start of the meeting. CR was re-elected Chair and once connected, took over from PE. It was agreed that nominations for Deputy Chair to be emailed to CR or John Charlton (JC) and voting will take place at the next meeting.

There were no matters arising from the notes of the previous meeting.

OXTRAG – David Deriaz (DD)

DD explained that Oxfordshire Transport and Access Group's purpose is to improve public transport, highways and pavement access for disabled people - people with mobility problems or with sight/hearing impairment.

The group advises government on policy and practice and advises transport companies on development. It also challenges bad practice (e.g. lack of suitable toilets) and supports individuals in campaigns. All local bus drivers and train staff are trained in disability awareness .

In 2013 OXTRAG, OCC and the Oxford Bus Company won an award for lowering bus floors – a campaign which had begun in 1995!!

Will meet soon with the 2 newly appointed county council portfolio holders Councillors Duncan Enright and Tim Bearder.

QUESTIONS –1 request for contact details – oxtrag@gmail.com and website and

2 how one can involve OXTRAG in consultations – next meeting is AGM on 15/09/21, hopefully in person.

PE proposed that DD become a permanent member of PTR group. All agreed it was a good idea.

BUS BACK BETTER (National government strategy) – Dave Harrison (DH)

Firstly DH gave a general update. He reported that bus use is still only 70% of normal (pre-Covid) in rural areas and less than 50% in Oxford city. Government support for rural services is due to continue until April 2022, but some companies are nervous, because of low numbers.

The ZEBRA (Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas) electric bus bid has been submitted.

DD then proceeded to the main item of his presentation **– the national bus strategy**. This was launched in March of this year.

Stage 1 Enhanced Partnership Development – almost all companies have agreed in principle (NB including Arriva and Red Line/Rose – I asked specifically). Cabinet approval was secured on 22/06/21 and a notice of intent was sent to the Dept for Transport (DfT) on 28/06/21. This was vital, because otherwise OCC would not be eligible for any more government funding.

Stage 2 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – the project officer has just been appointed – David Taylor; the consultation and engagement plan is in development and approval by cabinet is expected 19/10/21. The government requires "ambitious" proposals from local transport authorities (LTAs) for bus service coverage and frequency; fares and ticketing; infrastructure and bus priority measures in a bid for a share of government funding of £3 billion.

PTR role – READ THE DOCUMENT. Sensible proposals for improvement are welcome – where to? how often? who for? what method of delivery – fixed route or demand responsive? Ticketing and bus priority suggestions, justified by local community. An email will be sent to all PTRs requesting this information.

WARNING –
1 the funding situation up to April 2022 is uncertain – services might get worse before they get better, if government do not keep funding.
2 The £3billion has already been top sliced and there are 81 LTAs to share what remains
3 Funding is for the life of this parliament, so 3 years max, which means an exit strategy is needed in case the services are not commercial. DH's email is dave.harrison@oxfordshire.gov.uk

There were lots of questions, but the main points I noted were -
1 DH will have to feed people's views into the document by the end of August, so, as is so often the case, the timescale is not brilliant. There is no time for a formal consultation – therefore input of PTRs is vital. A questionnaire will be sent to parishes over the summer. As the officer is new in post, this will probably be in about 2 weeks time (i.e. 20/07/21)
2 Although we need to be ambitious, the fear is there won't be enough funding; that we'll ask for more than we'll receive and priorities will have to be made.
3 If bus services are shared by more than one parish, joint proposals can be sent.
4 OCC will need to show that they have spoken to neighbouring authorities.
5 The average amount of funding received will be £30 million. OCC will be very lucky to receive that amount. Some believe it will be £5 million
6 There is a template to do a survey of residents. It will be circulated to parish councils.
7 The BSIP will evolve over time, but the funding has to be used this financial year!!

Community Transport Update from Emily Lewis (EL)
All services are back on but limited. There has been a fall in numbers of volunteers in some areas, but an increase in others.
D1 on people's driving licences means they can drive a minibus, but numbers are dwindling. For over 70s, the D1 is automatically carried over when applying for a licence at 73, but there is a cut off at 75.
At the Community Minibus Scheme meeting on 22/06/21 it was reported that 6 schemes were down on patronage, but concessionary fares have helped.
EL has the template from before for Transport Need Surveys, which can help do a survey. It was delivered to every house in Deddington and proved very helpful

Supported Transport Update from PE
School transport – there have been changes week to week, due to Covid, but 85% of operators' costs have been net by OCC and only one company went out of business.
OCC keen to use school transport money to prop up local services whenever possible. PE happy to hear from PTRs with any proposals.
The latest project is that all school buses and taxis are tracked. A record is kept of who is actually travelling, whereas previously it was only those entitled to travel. This provides very useful data, to maximise opportunities to share transport. Data is also provided on carbon footprints – speeds, mileage etc. At present the mileage is very high – 50,000 miles a day. the aim is to have carbon neutral vehicles by 2031.

Community Transport Grants and Concessionary Fares
JC reported that there have been 12 applications for Community Support Grants; 10 offered and legal agreements sent out. Money will be paid (£66,000 in total) when agreements returned.

Bus use is being monitored.
Pre-Covid rates for concessionary fares will be paid up to March, if the mileage is the same.
The PTR Handbook is being reviewed and updated and will accompany the minutes of this meeting for consultation.

AOB

I reported that the new bus service in Thame has been well received by local residents and, as far as I can tell, is working well, apart from some problems with badly parked cars in some streets.

Date of next meeting

12/10/21 usual time, but too early to say whether in person or on -line