

Doing Buses Differently

gmbusconsultation@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Mike Glover

Tameside One
Market Place
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 6BH

Email: mike.glover@tameside.gov.uk
Phone: 0161 342 2199
Ask for: Paul Radcliffe
Date: 8 January 2020

To whom it may concern,

Doing Buses Differently

I write on behalf of Tameside Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. The Panel seeks to submit a formal response to the consultation on Doing Buses Differently, which closes on 8 January 2020. This letter therefore aims to provide a summary of collective points and to express any areas of issue and concern. I would be extremely grateful if on receiving this letter you are able to take the appropriate action to ensure the collective response is suitably recorded and submitted to the consultation.

Tameside, as a place, continues to face significant challenges with an ongoing need to address social, economic and health inequalities. There is also a growing need to ensure that the local and regional bus network supports a wider ambition to connect people and places in Greater Manchester.

The borough continues to benefit from recent investment to improve transport links and connectivity, with examples of the Metrolink extension and current development of a new interchange in Ashton-under-Lyne. The Scrutiny Panel is supportive of plans to deliver a regulated and more integrated bus network across all of Greater Manchester.

With continued efforts being taken to improve air quality across Greater Manchester, this can be further complemented by developing a more joined-up and controlled approach to deliver a new model for bus services that becomes more outcomes focused for residents and communities.

This response letter further supports a motion put forward by Councillor David Mills, at a meeting of Full Council on 23 July 2019. Detail focused on the campaign Better Buses for Greater Manchester and called for improved services and regulation. This also included the future ability of local partnerships to set bus routes, timetables, fares and standards.

The feasibility of delivering a system-wide public transport system will require a significant amount of research and planning. The removal of vital bus routes in Tameside has shown first-hand how challenging some journeys have become for residents of all ages. While there is a justifiable need to ensure popular and more economically viable routes are maintained, there is also a need to review past and present routes that provide access to basic amenities and help to prevent social isolation for some of our most vulnerable residents.

Having familiarised myself with the consultation document, I have listed some of the main points below, which are to be viewed under the collective of Tameside's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel.

- That Tameside becomes part of a simplified integrated public transport system for Greater Manchester which concentrates more on the needs of an individual journey rather than the service operator or transport type.
- Current challenges suggest that Tameside, as part of a Greater Manchester public transport network, is in need of a renewed and regulated bus network that becomes increasingly fit for purpose, accessible, reliable, affordable and customer focused.
- There is a future requirement to ensure income generated from financially sustainable parts of the network are used to support expansion into areas of need where a bus service would be essential for social reasons, but not necessarily profitable.
- Residents continue to face significant challenges associated with the complexity of routes, multiple operators and a geographical separation of services between national bus operators.
- Local topography can present a number of challenges for residents, with a need to develop sustainable connections to people living in semi-rural communities.
- There is a possible requirement to ensure a community needs assessment is undertaken for each authority area, with support of targeted engagement to draw insight from the voluntary and community sector and to inform a review of all bus routes.
- That the general affordability of bus travel is reviewed as part of the ongoing consultation, with a view to bring a more consistent approach to pricing that can be easily interpreted by residents and visitors to the region.
- That regulating the bus network in Greater Manchester can further support the work to improve air quality by better meeting the expectations of the public and creating a more consistent offer that can be considered as a genuine alternative to car use.

If further clarity is needed on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Mike Glover
Chair - Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel