

Dear All,

Regarding [REDACTED] desire to re-invite [REDACTED] back to the TC, there is little point or mileage in doing this and would be counterproductive.

First are in the same boat as all the other bus operators in that they have lost drivers to higher paying HGV jobs, retirements of older staff alongside Covid and other general staffing issues.

It has been highlighted that there are cancellations within the local network due to no available staff. I have been working with WYCA and LCC who have in turn held service provision meetings with First and Rosso bus to address this and try and reach a point where staff deployment can be spread across those areas that urgently need to be covered.

One area that was being severely impacted was the AM and PM bus service that accommodated Todmorden High pupils alongside transporting other senior school pupils into town to catch connecting schools service to Halifax schools. The senior leadership team at Tod high highlighted the impact of missing or late buses upon pupil attendance and punctuality which I fed back to WYCA.

What we now have is a commitment to prioritise certain elements of the network, mainly, early AM journeys for commuters, journeys that carry school children to and from school, teatime journeys for commuters returning home and late evening service. Having said that, given the staffing challenges, there will be gaps and so off-peak mid-day/early afternoon and late teatime/early evening service is where the service provision gaps now tend to fall, as these have the least impact. It's not perfect but given the staffing issues it covers the majority of priority needs.

In addition to the above, First have been pro-active in trying to retain staff as well as recruit new staff. Staff wages have been restructured with the skinny contract now leading to progression to the old A rate pay grade, which is £3.50 per hour more, £165.00 per week on an average week. Progression to A rate was curtailed in 2015 in order to save money on base costs, but this quickly led to problems with recruitment and the retention of new staff.

First have also restructured their fare's structure, which has led to a fare's reduction of 17%. Some tickets have gone, (local day ticket), but new more user-friendly tickets are now in place, contactless tap in tap out, flexi tickets, dedicated return tickets on all routes and a single trip ticket on journeys post 19.00hrs of £1.00.

First have published the new fare's structure via on bus advertising, social media and there has been a piece in the Courier, but many people are still unaware of the fare's structure and so more work needs to be done to highlight this.

Regarding Rosso bus, the service 7 that serves Todmorden High now has the ST designation, denoting schools transport, which must run.

We have a relationship with First via [REDACTED] where he is willing to engage with the TC, to get the most out of this we should be careful as to when we ask him to attend TC, much of what we need to cover can be done via email. In doing this, on those rare occasions when we do need to invite, we'll get more value for money and better engagement.

Hope the above is useful going forward.

[REDACTED]

