

Item 8
Development Committee
December 2025

TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Todmorden Town Hall
Bridge Street
Todmorden
OL14 5AQ
Tel: 0770 632 2037
www.todmorden-tc.gov.uk



Mr A Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester,
Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Tootal Buildings
56 Oxford St,
Manchester
M1 6EU

1st October 2025

Dear Mayor,

The Proposed Franchising of Bus Services in West Yorkshire

On behalf of the Todmorden Town Council Development Committee, I am writing to seek some understanding of the operation of the Bee Network bus franchise, as the Committee are keen to see the West Yorkshire Combined Authority take note from the Greater Manchester model.

In particular, the committee would be grateful if you could advise:

1. How the Bee Network operates across franchise borders. West Yorkshire is similar in the sense that it has communities that are located near the borders of other counties. The Bee Network has services that operate across the Greater Manchester Border, are these services fully part of the franchise network, or do they operate as standalone commercial/licensed services within the franchise area?
2. At the time of the franchise's establishment, were any senior directors of the Greater Manchester bus operators appointed to the board, and in particular, those of operators who opposed the franchising in Greater Manchester?

We believe your experience will be invaluable in providing insight about how such a system could work successfully in West Yorkshire. Any information you can provide will be greatly appreciated.

With thanks for your time and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Crewe

Naomi Crewe
Town Clerk

Todmorden Town Council

Jess Norcliffe
Todmorden Town Council
admin@todmorden-tc.gov.uk

21 November 2025

Ref: AB/KB

Hi Jess

Re: The Proposed Franchising of Bus Services in West Yorkshire

Thank you for your letter and for your interest in the Bee Network and Greater Manchester's approach to bus franchising. I welcome the opportunity to share our experience and to support your exploration of a similar model in West Yorkshire.

Please find below my responses to the two points you raised:

Operation of the Bee Network Across Franchise Borders

One of the key challenges we anticipated in designing the Bee Network was ensuring that communities near our boundary remained well connected – both within Greater Manchester and to neighbouring areas. To address this, we introduced a Service Permit Scheme.

This scheme allows operators from outside Greater Manchester to apply for permission to run services into or through the franchised area. These applications are assessed against two statutory tests:

- The service must benefit passengers making local journeys within Greater Manchester.



- It must not undermine the effectiveness of the franchised network.

This approach has enabled us to maintain vital cross-boundary services, particularly those linking to the Regional Centre and Manchester Airport, while protecting the integrity of the Bee Network. A small number of franchised services also extend beyond our boundary but these are managed within existing franchise agreements. We believe this model strikes the right balance between regional connectivity and local accountability.

Board Appointments at the Time of Franchise Establishment

In respect of governance arrangements, I can confirm that no senior directors from Greater Manchester bus operators were appointed to the Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) governance board positions at the time of the franchise's establishment.

I hope this information proves helpful as you consider the future of bus services in West Yorkshire. We are proud of the progress we are making in Greater Manchester and are always keen to share our learning with colleagues across the country.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

Kind regards



On behalf of Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester