

Joint Authority Questions and Responses

1 **“What steps are being taken by TfGM to address First Bus' cavalier attitude to its customers, with its higher fares and reduced bus routes?” - Cllr S Walmsley**

Due to the current nature of the bus market and the fact that approximately 80% of bus mileage in Greater Manchester is operated by bus operators commercially and without control by TfGM or any other local authority, TfGM's role is currently one of influence and the practical use of network performance monitoring to highlight where it is believed that improvements could be made to the network or to levels of service delivery. Routes, timetables and fares are ultimately decided by operators providing they give the required period of notice to the Traffic Commissioner.

Only where services are financially supported by TfGM – the remaining 20% of the market – is TfGM able to exert a greater level of control regarding routes and timetables and also make appropriate financial deductions from operator payments if the required standards are not achieved.

In terms of ensuring that TfGM's influence is maximised, regular contract performance meetings are held during which both commercial and supported service punctuality and reliability are discussed, and actions agreed where performance requires improvement in the case of contracted mileage. Whilst a number of recent concerns have been in relation to First's commercial network, TfGM officers have nonetheless pressed for improvements in service delivery. Furthermore, meetings with senior representatives from both organisations are held on a quarterly basis where an overview of performance is provided but also more strategic issues can be covered. In recent months this has included the maximum level of scrutiny possible of issues which have affected service delivery since the closure of the depot in Bury in April 2017.

The Chair of TfGMC's Bus Networks and TfGM Services sub-committee, and TfGM's Interim Head of Bus Services, have also recently met with senior representatives from First Manchester following the concerns raised, and senior representatives from the operator also attended and spoke to members at the last Bus Networks and TfGM Services sub-committee meeting in March.

Whilst recent service withdrawals are disappointing as they amount to a notable withdrawal from the commercial market, First has advised that by making these changes they can significantly improve the service performance across the network which has under-performed in recent months partly due to a shortage of drivers and engineering capacity.

TfGM will maintain this focus at both scheduled and senior level meetings in the expectation that similar problems will not arise again in the future.

- 2 “Could we be informed of the up to date position on the long absent Escalator facility at the Bury Metrolink terminus (which has causing much distress for several months) as on the 1st January I was informed by TfGM that no repairs could be effected because no spare parts were now available for what was an out of date escalator and as a result we would have to await a new escalator. Three months later there is still no escalator but a notice has appeared on the station platform saying parts are expected in June. Can we be advised just what is happening and when this real inconvenience for many regular passengers will finally end?” - Cllr R Walker**

The Operator (KAM) has had to order a replacement step chain, this is due to be delivered in June. It is a bespoke item that is being specifically manufactured hence the reason for the part taking so long to be delivered. In the meantime KAM have begun erecting a hoarding around the escalator to allow a section of the damaged step chain to be removed for testing. It is hoped this will lead to a temporary repair to the escalator however is not guaranteed to work. We recognise the inconvenience this is causing and offer our sincerest apologies for the lengthy delay.

- 3 Could the Authority’s representative on TfGMC inform members what the expected northern terminus of Trafford Centre trams will be when this line opens in a couple of years’ time, and if there are any proposals to extend the northern terminus of Manchester Airport trams beyond Manchester Victoria? – Cllr Pickstone**

The Trafford Park Line intended northern terminus is currently Crumpsall on the Bury line. There are no current proposals to extend the Manchester Airport trams beyond Manchester Victoria however if there was demand in the future, especially after the Trafford Park Line opens then this could be reviewed.

- 4. Members will be aware of campaigns to improve the rights of women in Saudi Arabia, and in particular whether any pressure can be put on the Saudi Government by public bodies refusing to invest in its main oil company Aramco. Could the Council’s representative to the Greater Manchester Pension Fund inform members if GMPF is investing in Aramco, and if there are any other measures the Pension Fund can take to use its investment power to address this issue? Cllr Pickstone**

Thank you Cllr Pickstone for your question.

As you will be aware the GM Pension Fund has an exceptional investment track record. The Fund may apply ethical or environmental criteria on a case by case basis if considered relevant or appropriate, for example for many years we chose not to invest in South Africa.

The fund has been contacted by "Support Saudi Women" a campaign group, fighting to improve the legal status of women in Saudi Arabia asking that the GM Fund does not invest in Saudi Armco Shares.

In this instance, the Fund believes that it would be inappropriate and possibly challengeable to target a company before it has been listed and thus becomes an investable proposition.

I wholeheartedly agree, that the Pension Fund should consider genuine and substantiated concerns about adverse human rights. As Saudi Armco is not yet listed and therefore not an investment that can be properly assessed or considered in light of the guidance. It has a process yet to go through overseen by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

Recent advice from Sandra Stewart, Director and Solicitor to the GM Pension Fund recommended that any representations should call upon the FCA not to adopt a proposed change in the rules that would enable Armco shares to be listed on the London stock exchange in the first place.

The Fund has itself responded to an FCA consultation seeking to maintain corporate governance standards in the UK, which would prevent Saudi Armco being listed in the UK.