

Meon Valley Community Bus Association (MVCBA)

Annual Public Meeting (APM) 2019. Minutes of Meeting.

Date: Wednesday 17th July 2019

Venue: Soberton Village Hall

Time: 8pm

Fifteen people including committee members, drivers and passengers attended.

Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from: Corhampton and Meonstoke PC, Droxford PC, Richard Blackburn and John Shorrocks.

1. Minutes of the 2018 APM.

These were adopted without amendment and signed by the Chairman.

2. Matters Arising.

It was at last year's APM that David Cruden, a regular passenger living in West Meon, thanked all involved with MVCBA for the service provided. Sadly, within two weeks of the APM, the Trustees learnt of David's sudden demise.

3. Chairman's Report: David Williams

On behalf of the Trustees of the Meon Valley Community Bus Association, it is my pleasure as Chairman to welcome you all to the fourth Annual Public Meeting (APM) of the Meon Valley Community Bus Association. As I said last year, because we serve the whole Meon Valley Community we move our annual meetings around the villages. This year it is the turn of Soberton to host the APM.

The past year has been marked by further consolidation of our financial position and the continuation of routine business. As our Treasurer David Erskine will tell you in a moment, our financial position remains sound. The good news is that we have sufficient reserves to purchase our next bus when this becomes necessary, which should reassure all our regular passengers that the bus service is secure for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, we are not complacent. We recognise the continuing financial pressure under which Hampshire County Council operates and this is an important consideration for us, because we are dependent on the reimbursement that we receive from the bus-pass scheme. This far exceeds the income from fare paying passengers and, notwithstanding our healthy income from private hires, we are absolutely dependent on this income stream. As I pointed out last year, Winchester City Council has argued strongly for community transport services to be protected, because of our value to the communities we serve, but we continue to monitor the situation closely and will respond as necessary.

Overall our passenger numbers are virtually identical to those I reported last year. However, there are some interesting variations in the numbers who ride the various routes on different days. Since we overhauled our schedules in 2015, both the twice-monthly Winchester service and the once monthly Petersfield service have been popular, with numbers over the last year averaging 7.5 and 8.0 respectively. In contrast to what I reported last year, it is also encouraging to see that the monthly Waterlooville service has gained in popularity, with an average of 7.0 passengers on this route. Last year this was consistently the least heavily used route.

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On the other hand, the average number of passengers traveling to Fareham is somewhat lower at 6.3 – down from 6.9 last year, and it may be that we are traveling there too often – especially since M&S have left the precinct. We will keep the situation under review and explore alternative options, such as perhaps reinstating Hedge End as a destination. However, I can assure you that in any event we will not make any decision without first consulting regular passengers.

We continue to receive requests from organisations in or community for private hires at a level that we can accommodate and our income from this activity has held up well. Last year I reported that Richard Blackburn was standing down from his duties as the private hire coordinator and I'm delighted to say that Ken Giles has now taken over this role. I am most grateful to him for taking this on.

I am pleased to say that we continue to receive praise for the service we provide. One example of this is a letter received very recently from Janet Melson in her capacity as Chair of Droxford Parish Council. In this she said: "Please could the gratitude of Droxford Parish Council to the MVCBA for continuing to provide this service to our community and in particular our elderly residents be placed on record. The flexibility with which requests for minor changes to pick-ups and drop-offs [are met] enables a number of our residents to maintain independence and social connections, without which the limitations imposed by increasing age and lack of mobility would be more apparent, [and] is very much appreciated."

Without doubt, however, the highlight of the year was the award to the Association of a Mayor of Winchester's Community Award for service to the people of the Winchester District. The citation states that these awards recognise the many individuals and groups who - year in and year out - undertake tremendous work across the whole district on behalf of their fellow citizens, making their lives brighter, happier and more enriched. The Award Ceremony took place on Wednesday 27 March, when I was joined by a group of fellow Trustees to accept the Award on behalf of all of those who contribute to the delivery of the Community Bus Service. We greatly appreciated our nomination by Councillor Vicki Weston.

I will end my report by noting with pleasure that it has been another busy year for us and that the Association goes forward in a sound, sustainable position. For this I must thank our really excellent Trustees for their efforts on your behalf. They have all made great contributions to the organisation over the past year. It is always invidious to single out individuals from among such a group, but I would like to pay particular tribute to Mike Vogado, who has been an exemplary Honorary Secretary. David Erskine has done an outstanding job as Treasurer and the Association's accounts are in excellent shape thanks to his efforts. As ever, John Shorrocks continues to do an immaculate job of organising the monthly rota of drivers, without whom the service wouldn't run. But I particularly want to single out Pete Woodacre, who has made a major contribution in his role as MIDAS trainer. He has indicated that he now wishes to stand down from this role, but I want personally to acknowledge his extraordinary level of commitment to the Association in discharging this duty.

The purpose of the Association is to provide a safe, reliable and friendly service - in that order. This service is delivered by our cadre of outstanding volunteer drivers, who turn out in all weathers. It is their commitment that keeps this essential service going throughout the Meon Valley and I will close by thanking them on your behalf for all that they do. Please tell all your friends about the service and encourage them to make use of it. We are always pleased to

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welcome new passengers, who we hope will enjoy the happy community of users and become regulars themselves.

On behalf of my fellow Trustees I would also like to thank you for coming along this evening. And at the end of this meeting I invite you to join us for refreshments and the chance to buttonhole us to discuss any issue that you may want to raise.

4. Treasurer's Report: David Erskine

- As in the previous two years our accounts for the Charity Commission are based on cash receipts and payments during the year, and therefore don't include any outstanding bills or amounts owed to us over the end of the year. As in previous years they have been checked and signed off by a qualified Independent Examiner, this role kindly being carried out for us Francis ("Fra") Wells, a Chartered Accountant.
- This year I am starting my report with a reminder of the Association's reserve policy which was adopted in May 2017. The trustees agreed that to maintain a reliable and cost-effective service we should aim to replace the bus on a five year cycle, but that we can no longer rely on central or local government grants to fund this and should therefore accumulate any operating surpluses to build up our reserve. Based on financial results over the preceding 5 years we forecast an average annual surplus of a little over £2,000 which, taken with the starting balance, would fund the purchase of the next two replacement buses in 2021 and 2026. After that we would again become dependent on the availability of grants although we agreed that we would obviously monitor the situation as it developed.
- The reason for this reminder is that during the ensuing two years we achieved operating surpluses significantly higher than our assumption. In 2017 the surplus was a little over £4,000 and in 2018 it was more than £4,300. So, it might have appeared that we had been unduly pessimistic in our assumptions. However, the headline number for this year's accounts, while still very satisfactory, is a smaller surplus of £2,757 – which demonstrates our exposure to relatively small changes in factors outside our control.
- On the basis of cash receipts and payments our receipts compared to the previous year rose by £317 while our outgoings rose by nearly £1,900.
- However, one distorting element of the cash accounting is that there is lag of one or two months in receiving reimbursement from HCC for the bus-pass scheme. Our cash income in 2018 only included 11 months of reimbursements whereas this year it includes 12 months. This makes it appear that our income from this source has increased significantly, which it has not. Allowing for this distortion the true year-on-year fall in our surplus would be around £400 greater.
- Fare paying passengers fell by approximately £300 year on year from £720 to £423 while income from chartering held up well, with just a slight drop from £3,052 to £2,939. After a quiet year last time, the main difference was in our outgoings where there were higher running costs on the bus as several tyres needed to be replaced and we had two minor accidents.
- Passenger numbers were again slightly down on the previous year, with a total of 2,560 (single) passenger journeys versus 2,670. This works out at an average per journey of 6.6 passengers versus 6.8 last year (and 7.0 the year before that).
- Interestingly, the number of passengers using the HCC bus-pass scheme was fractionally higher (by 9 passenger journeys!) than the previous year. The decline in overall passenger numbers is entirely accounted for by fare-paying passengers.

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- **PASSENGER NUMBERS** (single journeys) for the 12 months to end May 2019:

Route	Journeys	Passengers	Average
Fareham	296	1853	6.3
Winchester	46	346	7.5
Waterlooville	24	167	7.0
Petersfield	24	194	8.1
Total	390	2560	6.6

- Within the passenger total, the Fareham service saw a fairly marked decline, from an average of 6.9 to only 6.3. Overall numbers were helped by the Friday services to Winchester, Waterlooville and Petersfield, which had averages of 7.5, 7.0 and 8.1 respectively.
- In summary therefore, after a couple of outstanding years in 2017 and 2018 the financial performance for the year fell back towards the longer term average. However, this is by no means out of line with our expectations. The year has produced a meaningful surplus and thereby contributed to our accumulated reserve, in line with our reserve policy.
- The Association ended the year with cash assets of £43,567.

A printed copy of the Accounts was made available to the APM.

5. Any Other Business

Destinations, Routes and Timetable: Regular passenger Jill gave her thanks to all the drivers and also raised concerns over the low number of passengers using the bus on Thursdays to Fareham. Driver Tony Coates wondered if we could introduce stops in Swanmore and Bishops Waltham. Destinations and concerns about routes and timings had been discussed in the Trustee meeting held just before the APM. The Trustees were able to inform the APM that a sub-committee has been formed to look into these matters. Regular passengers will be consulted in the near future.

Bus stops: Regular passenger Nancy thanked MVCBA for introducing a new request stop at St Mary's Close in Droxford.

Suggestions: Regular passenger Clare emailed some suggestions for consideration. Although not raised at the APM, the suggestions in Clare's email will be discussed at the next Trustee meeting.

Retirements: During this last year Stuart Attrill retired from driving the bus, but will continue as a Trustee. The Committee and passengers thanked Stuart wholeheartedly for his many years of service bus driving.

6. Date and Time of Next Year's APM

To be confirmed, but it will be about the same time next year. There being no further business, the meeting was closed by the Chairman at 8.45pm.

Mike Vogado Hon Secretary, MVCBA.