

STATEMENT TO CABINET 11th JULY 2012
ON BEHALF OF RADSTOCK PUBLIC TRANSPORT GROUP

We are pleased that we now have avenues of communication with Bath & North East Somerset and also the 'bus operators. Issues such as marketing of existing services, ticketing, when to approach an operator directly and other general matters can now be tackled. The Group will meeting approximately four times per annum. I understand that a 'bus board' is being considered for the Rapid Transit routes, but we believe it should include all 'buses. It should be co-ordinated by an over-arching body for all transport methods i.e. rail, tram, ferry and so on.

On Thursday 5th July, a paper was released by central government called Bristol City Region City Deal (see URL below*). These 'deals' have been allocated to several cities for specified purposes, including transport, regeneration, education, etc. The Transport aspect includes a 10-year funding allocation and new powers over rail planning and delivery. A High Level Steering Group will be created: it will ensure that neighbouring Authorities are included in an Executive Committee to manage the newly devolved powers. It will report to the West of England Joint Transport Executive Committee. It should be noted that that there are no Scrutiny officers, which has led to no suitable meetings being held: also there are no Stakeholder Relations managers.

The opportunity which this 'Deal' represents should not be wasted. At long last, there will be a single body which can control the development of the branch from Frome to Radstock. I therefore contend that the existing Halcrow report is not accepted, the Terms of Reference are updated to be more positive and the Report updated. This will enable those aspects currently not covered to be developed.

As an aside, I should add that a spokesperson for First recently said “We would be more than happy to work with local Authorities and Communities to discuss the feasibility of re-opening the line”.

There are several areas which could usefully be examined: additional train paths, e.g. via Westbury to Melksham and Swindon and easing the constraint of Radstock parking. Additionally, the full benefits of modal interchange have not been examined

Even so, the Frome / Radstock branch has not been ruled out, so I ask that the Report is not approved and further discussions held to examine the development potential before the formal meeting in September.

Thank you
George Bailey

*URL <http://www.westofenglandlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Bristol-and-West-of-England-City-Deal-FINAL.pdf>