

# Claims from unions dismissed by council's Transport committee members



When it came up on the agenda at the Transport and Environment committee last week, the item dealing with governance of the overarching body Transport for Edinburgh was misinterpreted by the unions. That is what the statement just released by all political groups represented on the council committee says.

The report dealt with the governance of Transport for Edinburgh and the proposal to enter into the first service level agreement with Edinburgh council who own the companies involved. At the recent media briefing the Chief Executive explained that governance forms one part of his key objectives for the company, and that until now the relationship between the council and TfE had been governed by the shareholder agreement which was no longer appropriate. He said: "What has become clear is that what The Scottish Government and Audit Scotland are telling us is that the city must define what it expects of TfE as an arms length external organisation. We need the city to clearly articulate its expectations are and capture those aspirations into one place, in a service level agreement. If you have lots of modes then you also have to look at the governance of that multi-modal group and we need to get on with what the organisational structure of that group will look like."

Unite the Union made a deputation to the Transport committee meeting on 30 August when they put forward their case about Lothian Buses. "We understand the need for alignment with TfE and for a strategy moving forward, but there is a clear

delineation between strategy and operational management and delivery. Lothian Buses has historically and continues to deliver year on year operational excellence and strong financial performance with no subsidy from the public purse or taxpayer to deliver a socially inclusive and class-leading bus service to the city. It also delivers a substantial dividend each year." The union rep then went on to explain that this is all down to the management of the company by transport professionals. He concluded: "To change any part of that recipe puts all of these deliverables at risk."

The statement from councillors on the Transport committee states :

*We are writing as a group to set the record straight following public speculation which has created unnecessary anxiety among employees of Lothian Buses and the travelling public.*

*The report agreed at last Tuesday's Transport & Environment committee was about the relationship between Transport for Edinburgh (TfE) and the Council, not about the ownership or day to day running of Lothian Buses. TfE has been the Shareholder for both Lothian Buses and Edinburgh Trams since October 2013, with the Chairs of Bus and Tram boards representing the companies on TfE's own board.*

*As a Council, our vision is to develop a truly integrated public transport system for the Capital. Lothian Buses is a much-valued and central part of that vision and we'll continue to ensure it keeps thriving and growing to meet the City's transport needs.*

*Lothian Buses is one of Edinburgh's best-loved local companies and every single political group on the City of Edinburgh Council remains fully committed to keeping it in public ownership. Day to day running of Lothian Buses is – and will continue to be – the responsibility of the Lothian*

*Buses Board and management team.*

*Signed:*

*Councillor Lesley Hinds (Transport Convener), Councillor Adam McVey (Transport Vice Convener), Councillor Nigel Bagshaw (Transport spokesperson – Scottish Green Party), Councillor Nick Cook (Transport spokesperson – Scottish Conservative and Unionist), Councillor Robert Aldridge (Transport spokesperson – Scottish Liberal Democrats)*

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