

## Statement to B&NES Cabinet 12 November 2014

Users of the Bus Route 768, this council subsidises, are concerned at the way changes to the timetable have been handled and the failure of both councillors and officers to communicate with them in trying to solve the issue.

No meaningful consultation took place prior to the new timetable being introduced on 1 September 2014, which is now inconveniencing the majority of passengers in their daily routines.

Offers made to officers to meet with the users affected by the changes to try to find sensible solutions were refused and the officer handling the issue was unsympathetic and at times short with members of the public. I myself have written to councillor Roberts on several occasions- the last time on 9 October and received no response.

The 768 starts in Bath and travels to Farrington Gurney-through Englishcombe, Priston, Timsbury, Camerton, Clandown, Radstock, Midsomer Norton, and used to stop at Paulton Hospital.

It allows people living in remote rural areas to attend to doctors, dental and hospital appointments, but also to shop in Radstock and Midsomer Norton in good time, adding to the viability of both highstreets. The same timetable has been in operation for over 15 years despite changes of providers and people had learned to organise their lives around it.

The majority of the users are elderly for whom the bus is a lifeline and an opportunity to keep fit and independent, and not rely on lifts from relatives.

There are also large number of young families, not very well off on route, for whom the bus means not having to push pushchairs and drag shopping up the hills.

The Paulton Hospital stop, also serving a doctor's surgery and a pharmacy, was dropped altogether.

The officer's argument for modifying the route and the timetable is that people could have access to more buses from the main roads from the main provider First.

On paper it is easy to say that there are frequent buses from the main road, but in practice it means walking 15 minutes downhill to get to it and over 20 back up hill, longer with shopping for relatively fit people.

Indeed a person in Clandown had to change surgery recently and is currently spending quite a long time out, away from home, trying to catch various buses to minimise the walking as his breathing does not allow for it.

I would like Cllr Roberts to consider reviewing the timetable currently in operation, bringing back the old one that has served us all so well, and reinstating the Paulton Hospital stop.

This service has so far provided community cohesion, a means for elderly people to lead an independent life in the community longer and has kept people out of cars and in public transport.

Radstock and the Somer Valley equally deserve a holistic transport strategy, as you are considering for Bath today and proposing for Keynsham, taking into account the geography of the area and the needs of its rural communities- in which the 768 bus route would have an adequate place connecting with other routes.

Cllr Anne Marie Jovcic-Sas  
Radstock Town Councillor