

Statement to the CTE Policy and Scrutiny Committee 16th January 2017

By Mike Parr on behalf of the Save the 6&7 Bus Campaign.

The petition signed by 2,400 local residents calls for the reinstatement of the subsidy that supported First Bus to run the 6&7 routes serving the Larkhall and Fairfield Park areas of Bath.

These routes provided links between these two areas and between Fairfield Park and the local shopping and community centres in Larkhall.

Four buses were used requiring revenue support from the Council. The routes had run successfully and reliably since they were introduced in 2011. The bus usage in the area had increases during this time.

The Council took the decision to remove the subsidy in July 2016 and this resulted in First devising new routes which separated Fairfield Park from Larkhall and the London Road.

The new service now uses three buses. Since its introduction in September the reliability has been atrocious and after three months James Freeman the Managing Director of First has finally acknowledged that there is a ‘problem with resilience’.

It is our contention that this area of Bath faces a real problem with its bus service that is a direct result of the Council’s decision to remove the revenue support.

We have had a letter from Cllr Clarke following the submission of our petition.

This is our response:

The council took the initiative to approach First with the intention to withdraw the subsidy.

Cllr Clarke states that ‘the new route pattern maintains the same level of service for the majority of user’. This is not the case.

The two routes used to provide a 15 minute service to both Fairfield Park and Larkhall in both directions. It is now 30 minutes. The only area now to benefit from a 15minute frequency is Camden which services the least number of passengers.

Fairfield Park residents now have to to change buses to get to their local shops. This is not acceptable. Fairfield Park is now the only area in Bath that is served by buses that does not have a direct 2-way connection to its local centre.

First are failing to operate the new routes as a viable commercial service.

We are experiencing major reliability problems with missing and late running buses being the norm. This is leading to a reduction in bus usage.

There were no reliability issues with the old routes when 4 buses were used.

The current poor bus service offered by First is having a huge detrimental impact and is not a viable or an acceptable replacement for the old routes.

The Council must accept responsibility for this as they removed the subsidy without appreciating or recognising the special circumstances in this area and the impact it would have.

The Lambridge area of Bath poses problems for commercial bus operations. The nature of the road system with narrow roads and one-way systems means that efficient routing is not possible. That is why council support is required to provide a decent service that meets the needs of local people.