

STATEMENT TO CABINET MEETING 01-02-17 BY PAT MASON FOR THE SAVE OUR 6/7 BUS CAMPAIGN

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Cabinet.

I am here to speak about the withdrawal of the subsidy for the 6/7 Bus Route. The basis for its withdrawal was a Survey conducted by the Council, which has been proved to be flawed, and created the impression that the subsidy was not value for money.

The withdrawal of the subsidy has resulted in First Bus having to abandon the circular route which connected Fairfield Park with Larkhall and the London Road and cutting the number of buses from 4 to 3. It has also resulted in a reduced service for Fairfield Park where it is most needed. First Bus has struggled to run the new route and have, in an e-mail, admitted that the routes 'lack resilience'.

Within a month of the new route coming into operation 2400 plus local residents had signed a Petition, available in the shops in Larkhall and on the buses, and attended a 'standing room only' Public Meeting. Councillor Clarke, and James Freeman from First Bus Company, will have witnessed the strength of feeling at this Meeting. We believe that the Petition and Meeting are better evidence of the demand for the subsidised service than the flawed Survey. A member of our Campaign, well versed in such matters, can provide facts and figures of why the Survey is flawed. We feel it is vital that erroneous facts are not carried forward which damage funding and resources in the future.

We believe the Council has made a hasty and mistaken decision, not based on proper facts, which has resulted in hardship and distress for a large number of local residents. The two months during which the new service has operated has been long enough for this to become apparent, and for us to ask for the urgent reinstatement of the subsidy. The original decision was viewed by Cabinet as a minimal amount and matter and the subsidy withdrawn under delegated powers. Surely the subsidy could be reinstated under the same powers? This would give time for further investigation and consultation, and give a proper service until new powers over transport are available under Devolution. Reinstating the Subsidy would form a valuable bridge to the future.

Pat Mason