

Statement by Mike Parr: Save the 6-7 Bus Campaign Petition

BANES Council Meeting 13th July 2017

Good evening I am making a statement in support of the Save the 6-7 Bus Campaign petition.

I would like to start by quoting a promise Council Leader Tim Warren made after the 2015 local elections.

“There is an overriding theme running through everything we plan to do – and that is ensuring the interests of residents come first”. “Does this proposal truly serve the interests of local residents? That will be the litmus test we will apply to all decisions in the Council”.

As far as 2,400 local residents who signed the petition are concerned the council has not lived up to these values.

If the council is to truly serve our interests then it should engage with us **before** decisions are made.

In the case of the removal of the subsidy for the 6&7 bus service this did not happen.

The decision was made behind closed doors. It was an officer decision and no ward councillors in the area affected were notified and the decision was not officially registered until 4 months after the decision was made and 3 months after the new routes came into effect. No reports regarding the decision are on public record.

However we believe that the decision was unconstitutional and unlawful as it should have been treated as a “key” decision and be taken by a cabinet member or cabinet and therefore be subject to notification, consultation and scrutiny.

A “key decision” is defined in law as one which is likely to result in the local authority making significant savings **or** be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards. Those taking “key decisions” will do so in accordance with the requirements of the Access to Information and Executive Procedure Rules (Articles 13.4 and 13.5).

There were 'significant savings' according to the council (£39,000 per annum), and three wards were affected by the route changes (Lambridge, Walcot and Abbey).

The removal of the subsidy resulted in a significant change to the routing and scheduling of the bus routes which now no longer connect areas of Lambridge and Walcot wards.

Fairfield Park does not now have a direct two-way direct connection to its local centre unlike other areas in Bath that have a bus service.

These changes have had a significant and detrimental impact on the local community.

We ask the Council to live up to its promise to put resident’s interests first by addressing the public transport problem in the NE of Bath and reconsider its decision to remove the subsidy in an open and transparent way.