

Council 11 July, 2019

The Future of First Bus

Labour Group to move:

Council notes that:

- 1 FirstGroup, which operates First Bus along with GWR, is considering a sale of its UK businesses.
- 2 FirstGroup has confirmed that intends to divest itself of First Bus.
- 3 The completion of the Bus Strategy by the WECA Mayor is progressing slowly and he does not appear to be pursuing the opportunity to franchise bus services.

This Council believes that:

- 4 Bus services are a vital component of our transport system. Excellent bus services help to encourage sustainable growth, reduce social isolation and support people to get out of their cars. This in turn has a positive impact on pollution, congestion and climate change.
- 5 First operates 90% of the bus services in Bath and North East Somerset, and any change to the management of First Bus must not be at the expense of local bus services.
- 6 First Bus is a significant local employer and uncertainty about the future of the company must be resolved in the interests of its employees.

In light of the above, Council resolves therefore:

- 7 To ask the Leader of the Council, as the Council's representative on the West of England Combined Authority, to call upon the WECA Mayor to:
 - a) Identify and pursue the opportunities presented by the potential sale of First Bus. This could potentially achieve integrated ticketing and low emission buses and allow the West of England Combined Authority to gain control over:
 - (i) bus routes so that the profit-making routes cross-subsidise those with social value;
 - (ii) fare levels (including extending the 50% discount on full fares to all under-19 year olds);
 - (iii) frequency; and
 - (iv) vehicle accessibility.
 - b) Identify the potential for either the West of England Combined Authority or a new co-operative not-for-profit bus company to take over the running of bus services in this area in pursuit of the above.