

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting 13 October 2022

Liberal Democrat Motion on Bus Service Cuts

Amendment from Cllr Joanna Wright

Council:

1. Notes with dismay the cuts to essential, local bus routes in B&NES, including First bus service numbers 11, 12, 20, 42, and 171, and the timetable and route changes affecting many other local bus services, including the 178.
2. Notes that some mitigations to cuts have been announced, including re-routing some services, the new 379 route, and new operators stepping in on some routes.
3. Notes that the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is the regional transport authority responsible for planning bus services, in cooperation with local bus operators.
4. Notes B&NES Council's Transport Levy contribution to WECA is £5,194,000 in 2022-23, of which £780,000 is a contribution to supported bus services.
5. Notes that bus operating companies have been affected by falling passenger journeys, rising costs and driver shortages, and notes government financial support to bus companies was recently extended to March 2023.
6. Welcomes the recently announced investment in bus stop facilities and reduced fares on many services. Notes however that reduced fares do not apply to all routes and have led to some popular ticketing options being discontinued and others increasing in price.
7. Notes with disappointment that communication and consultation by the West of England Combined Authority around the future of local bus services with local authorities (who know their local area best) has been inadequate and would welcome clarity in terms to the profitability or loss making of certain routes and the sharing of data to improve the general provision.
8. Believes that a reliable, comprehensive and affordable bus service is essential to all B&NES residents to access shops, services, leisure, employment and education, and to help tackle air pollution, congestion and the Climate Emergency.
9. Believes that bus service cuts will have an enormously negative impact on B&NES communities, particularly affecting rural and disadvantaged communities, residents who have no access to private transport, and anyone trying to reach key sites such as schools and the RUH.

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- *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*

10. Believes that any gap in service provision will drive residents away from public transport permanently.
11. Believes that the whole bus system is fundamentally broken and requires radical reform to make it fit for the future.

Council therefore:

12. Opposes cuts to essential bus services in B&NES.
13. Calls on the WECA Mayor to:
 - a. Continue negotiations with bus providers to retain and reinstate as many routes as possible and to prevent a gap in service provision.
 - b. Urgently bring forward new and innovative solutions, such as demand-responsive services, to supplement core routes.
 - c. Develop a co-ordinated, imaginative, long-term approach to public transport in our area, through bus franchising or equivalent across the West of England area.
 - d. Produce a detailed strategic bus network map for the west of England, in consultation with unitary authorities, this bus network map will allow unitary authorities within the region to implement this network map in their Local Plans and bid for appropriate funding
14. Calls on the government to:
 - a. Overhaul public transport funding models and provide a sustainable, long-term funding deal to provide certainty and stability.
 - b. Take action to address the driver shortage with a national effort to recruit and train more drivers and measures to improve retention.
 - c. Restore transport authorities' ability to directly intervene in the public transport market and bring bus services back under public control.
15. Asks the Leader to communicate Council's views to the WECA Mayor, government and local MPs.

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