

CLLR SHAUN STEPHENSON-MCGALL – STATEMENT TO CABINET

BUS SERVICES THROUGH TIMSBURY

Tonight I want to speak to you all about bus services through the village of Timsbury where I have lived this last nine years and where I am an active member of the Parish Council and a volunteer with the Community Speed Watch.

The bus services through the village have always been precarious in recent years, with both the 178 and 179 having their schedules reduced and cut, initially by First Bus. More recently, these two routes have been taken over by CT Coach's, Abus and Citistar with subsidy from WECA.

These two routes, the 178 and 179, are real lifelines to many in the village for issues ranging from getting to and from their place of work, to attend School or College, and to enable residents of nearby community's and villages to access St Mary's Doctors Surgery in Timsbury where they are registered.

Rural isolation growing and rural bus services are vital to combat this and to tackle the climate emergency which we all face. Many elderly residents are really worried about their future in the village and how they will be about to access shops and services as well as the RUH.

Over the last couple of months I have knocked on the door of every household in the village with a Community Survey asking residents what their local priorities are. Over 270 households returned the questionnaire. Unsurprisingly concerns about the bus services came out top, with speeding traffic and the use of the village as a rat run coming 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Post covid and with the Conservative Government's decision to remove the national Bus Recovery Grant this spring, nationally bus services are under threat regardless of the colour of the local council or regional mayor. Both National and local action is needed to support and save rural bus services to connect communities like Timsbury.

The recent decision of WECA on 18th January to remove the subsidies across the region is a massive blow to Timsbury but the proposed new Bus Service Improvement Plan 522 service from Brislington Park and Ride to Odd Down Park and Ride, gives the Parish Council, local residents, public transport campaigners like Damian Valentine and myself hope!

As a bus user myself, local resident, and member of the Parish Council, I would urge B&NES to work as closely as possible with WECA to ensure Timsbury has a proper formal timetabled bus service connecting the village to Keynsham and Bristol to the North, Paulton and Midsomer North to the South and to Bath to the East.

We must all ensure that the proposed demand responsive transport scheme is a success but Timsbury and other North East Somerset villages and communities still need the 522 service and the other spinal routes through the Chew Valley to be funded by WECA from its multi million pound Bus Service Improvement Plan funds; this is lifeline for our village, Timsbury!