

Councillor's Statement to Full Council on the RUH bus service

Madam Chair

As it is getting late, and one can fall asleep in the council chamber just as easily as one can on a bus, I will just draw your attention to the most important points following my Question to Cabinet on 13 November and the responses concerning

A Proposed Hospital Flyer bus service. I asked

Are the cabinet members aware that access to the Royal United Hospital is very difficult even for seasoned patients familiar with parking arrangements in the vicinity?

Are they prepared to work in partnership with WECA to change this with the introduction of enhanced bus services from the Odd Down Park and Ride direct to the RUH and back, and from Keynsham/the Newbridge Park and Ride?

And I pointed out that there would also need to be work with Wiltshire and other authorities, as well as the hospital trust, because approximately 40% of patients are from other regions. Yet there is nothing at the railway station to indicate the stop for the 20C direct service to the RUH via the University. This is especially relevant for Keynsham patients arriving by train.

The RUH has become a national centre of excellence in many disciplines, but access is dire, especially if one uses the hcrq contracted 'home to hospital' transport.

The reason is that there is no dedicated direct service, and such buses as there are, are timetabled to send three through the RUH and then nothing for 30 minutes.

\Part of the problem is double parking in Weston village and on Bloomfield Road Odd Down, so that buses cannot get through, but that is a separate matter. The hospital flyer would leave the Park and Ride, turn at the Red Lion on Midford Road, and then cut through Southdown direct to the RUH, which is different to the old heavily used 42 route. It should therefore be eligible for funding as a community service.

I received a vague reply full of good intent, but little awareness of the scale of the problem, especially for the staff and volunteers. So I asked as a follow up question

Do you have a specific timeline, and can you give me a more practical and realistic answer as to how it is going to be paid for, when it will be paid for and what the service will generally look like?

Response

We are in the very early stages of discussions with the Royal United Hospital (RUH) on this important opportunity. As the largest daily trip generator in B&NES and a key anchor institution, the hospital is central to improving sustainable travel. Over the next year, we aim to strengthen engagement with the RUH and other anchor institutions to explore collaborative solutions and funding options. While there is currently no confirmed timeline, service specification, costings, or funding mechanism, we are committed to working together to shape a viable and impactful approach.

Just as when two buses come at once, two answers covering the same ground, but little specific. It is as bad as the so called real time bus timetable which rolls over automatically regardless of where the bus actually is. There might be a long wait ahead.

Yesterday was typical. I had to have some blood tests done. This took about 20 minutes, but I waited longer than that for a 3 to the bus station and missed the connecting bus to Radstock I was anticipating catching. The twenty or so cold and wet passengers were unanimous about the problem and would use a Hospital Flyer. I could have organised a petition – but was not well enough to. Please just take my word.

Note : At present letters with clinic appointments go out without any mention at all of public transport, only of the car parks available, and even then, nothing about free parking for radiotherapy patients. This makes a mockery of the Administration's environmental policies.