

Questions and responses attached

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Questions and Answers – Overview and Scrutiny – 22 January 2024

Question 1 from Rosa Kell, Somerset bus partnership And Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign. Wells and District Bus Users

What discussion are taking place with Somerset Council, North Somerset council, and Banes to protect the Somerset bus network in the Mendip region of the Bristol and Bath Travel network for travel to work area and as part of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plan,

On the Bus services 376 Street Glastonbury Wells bus and coach station, Chewton Mendip, Farrington Gurney, Clutton, Pensford, Whitchurch, Hengrove, Knowle, Totterdown, Bristol Temple meads station and Bristol bus and coach station.
172 to Bristol bus and coach station,
Bristol Temple meads station, Knowle Hengrove, Whitchurch, Pensford Clutton, Paulton, Midsomer Norton Westfield, Radstock, Peasdown St John, Bath spa bus and coach station.
172 ,173 ,174 Bath Spa Bus and Coach station to Peasdown St John, Radstock, Westfield, Midsomer Norton, Chilcompton and down wards to Wells and 174 Bath via Shepton mallet (the Shepton Mallet Bus interchange) and Wells bus and coach station,
126 Wells bus and coach station to Draycott ,Cheddar, Axbridge, Winscombe, Banwell, Hutton, Weston super mare Hospital, Weston super mare bus and coach station interchange,Railway station bus interchange
The D2, D2 to/from Bath Spa bus and coach station to Midford, Norton St Philips ,Rode, Beckington and Frome.
522 Bristol bus and coach station, Bristol Temple meads station, Arnos Vale, Bristlington, Keynsham, Marksbury, Timsbury, Paulton, Midsomer Norton, Westfield, Radstock, Peasdown st John, and Bath spa bus and coach station
But also to rerouting this service via midsomer Norton Tesco, Timsbury, Tunley, and Bath spa bus and coach station, interchange,
414 ,424 Frome Cork Street coach station to Mells, Radstock, Westfield, Midsomer Norton and extend the service to Paulton to replace bus service 82,
And to the provide a bus service from Axbridge, Cheddar or Wells bus and coach station through the Chew valley and Blagdon through Chew Magna to South Bristol and Bristol city centre.

Including look at fixed route WestLink Demand Responsive Bus Services in the Chew valley and south Bristol with Demand responsive sections

Q1 response

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is developing a bus network for the region that will include partners such as adjacent local authorities. This includes the commercial network and will be worked up with bus operators.

Question 2 from Rosa Kell, Somerset bus Partnership And Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign. Wells and District Bus Users

Wells is a major Bus operating centre for the west of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority and North Somerset Council bus services ,
With a first Group plc Wales and West buses Division Depot,
Providing bus service 376 to Street Glastonbury via the Wells bus and coach station to Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol bus and coach station,

172, 173, 174 Wells bus and coach station to Shepton Mallet interchange, to Chilcompton, Paulton Midsomer Norton Westfield Radstock Peasdown St John Bath Spa bus and coach, interchange

126 Wells bus and coach station to Draycott, Cheddar, Axbridge, Winscombe Banwell Hutton Weston Super Mare Hospital and Weston Super Mare bus and coach station Railway station

Upgrading improvements at Wells bus and coach station is outstanding for Depot facilities. Somerset Council is proposing to turn off the CCTV cameras in the city of Wells and all other bus and coach stations in Somerset, including the bus and coach station and close public toilets at the station. Wells is an important interchange point for bus services to Yeovil bus and coach station, service 77 in need of larger Double Decker buses as current early morning and afternoon passenger numbers are high,

Service 75 Wells bus and coach station to Bridgwater bus and coach station

Service 29 Wells bus and coach station to Taunton should start in Wells to assist Musgrove bound passengers,

There is great demand at this Bus interchange to prevent the CCTV cameras being switched off and the same for lighting. If facilities are removed how is staff to relieve themselves and how are elder and young passengers remain safe. How will the interchange by passengers travelling in the Evening and day time to Bristol Bath and Weston Super Mare be kept safe.

What will be the effects on buses stored in the bus and coach station overnight without CCTV to prevent vandalism and tagging, especially now that it's been widely publicised that it's intended to be removed.

What discussions have the West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority and Mayor Dan Norris, North Somerset Council had with Somerset Council Transport Department and Cll Richard Wilkins, the Executive Member for Transport and the Chief Constable Sarah Crew and Police and Police Crime Commissioner Mark Shelford, and Doug Claringbold MD of First Group Plc Wales and West Buses Division and Thomas Hughes of First Group Plc Wales and West Buses Division Area manager for Bath and Wells Bus Depots and Bus and Coach Stations and City of Wells Council.

Q2 response:

Wells Bus Station does not come under the Mayoral Combined Authority remit, so we are unable to provide comment on the changes being made to the bus station.

Question 3 from David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

What is the progress being made

In discussion with Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council and North Somerset Council in joint arrangements as Transport Authority over payment of the Transport Levy to run support bus community Transport ferry and Rail services

Including passport the clean Air zone review in Bristol and Bath city centres

Before the Budget setting by the West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority Councils and North Somerset Council,

Q 3 response:

As part of the Mayoral Combined Authority's budget setting process, the Transport Levy is discussed with the Unitary Authorities. The Transport Levy is set to cover specific items which were included in the Combined Authority establishment Order in 2017. The Levy figure for the next municipal year is discussed in the budget report papers published on Jan 18th 2024.

Rail services are franchised and not subject to the Transport Levy.

Question 4 from David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

In view of need to fund Public transport Network services and bus services community Transport, westlink Demand responsive bus services,
What discussion is the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority officers and mayor Dan Norris having with Gloucestershire county council Somerset council Wiltshire Council Swindon Borough Council about funding cross boundary bus services
And parish and Town Council about funding public Transport service before the budget setting process at these councils
For such services,
Such the 84 85 Wotton under Edge to Charfield Wickwar chipping Sodbury Yate bus station Yate railway station Park and Ride,
60 Thornbury to Falifeld Charfield Wotton under Edge and cam , Dursley bus and coach station
62 Thornbury to sharpness Berkeley and Dursley bus and coach station
Or the D 2 from Bath spa bus and coach station to Midford, Rode, Beckington and Frome,
172, 173 ,174 Bath spa bus and coach station to peasdown st john, Radstock Westfield midsomer Norton paulton Shepton mallet 174 or Chilcompton 173 to Wells bus and coach station
414 ,424 Frome Cork Street coach station Mells to Radstock midsomer Norton,
376 Bristol bus and coach station Bristol Temple meads station, whitchurch, Pensford, Clutton Farringdon Gurney, Chewton Mendip Wells bus and coach station Glastonbury and street
D1 D1 x Bath spa bus and coach station to Winsley ,Bradford on Avon Trowbridge,
Westbury, warminster connection to Salisbury,
West link Demand responsive bus services into Somerset and Gloucestershire
As examples.

Q 4 response:

As part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the Mayoral Combined Authority is working hard to ensure that our residents have access to better services across the region. We have recently launched WestLocal where local communities can work together to submit a bid to us to operate a new transport service in their area.

Question 5 from Ian Beckey, Living Easton

What is progress on reopening the Bristol Temple meads station to Portishead and Pill Railway line
With North Somerset council Department for transport, Network Rail Western route and First Group plc Great Western Railway company
Including reopening Ashton Gate station in the near future,
Bristol Temple meads station to Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton road Ashley Down, Filton Abbey wood, Filton North for the Arena ,Henbury for cribbs causeway and Bristol zoo,
and Charfield station on the Bristol Temple meads station to Gloucester central and Worcester Forgate Street Line,

Q5 response:

Regarding the specific question relating to the MetroWest Phase 1 (Portishead Line). This project is currently in the detailed design phase. The project Full Business Case is currently

scheduled to be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) by the end of March 2024. This submission will be reviewed by the DfT and a decision will then be made by DfT on whether they will approve the business case and whether the project will proceed into the construction phase.

With regards to the other matters raised in this question, the Mayoral Combined Authority are proposing to undertake a 'New Stations Study' which will look at potential new station opportunities in our region, Ashton Gate could form an element of this study along with many other locations across our region. A request for funding to support this study will be considered by Members of the West of England Combined Authority Committee, taking place on the 26th January 2024.

MetroWest Phase 2 (Henbury Line) project has seen significant activity with planning applications for both Henbury and North Filton new stations progressing, enabling detailed designs to be developed. The construction of Ashley Down Station is on schedule and we remain on target to open the station later this year. Charfield new station project, in common with Henbury and North Filton new stations, will shortly move into a detailed design phase. This design work will support updated Full Business Case submissions in 2025. If the cases for investment are approved, these projects will move into construction.

Question 6 from Ian Beckey, Living Easton

With the Bristol Temple meads station, Filton Abbey wood, Bristol parkway station, Yate, Charfield new station Cam and the Dursley proposed station stonehouse Bristol Road Gloucester central, Cheltenham spa Ashchurch for Tewkesbury Worcester Shrub Hill and Worcester Forgeate Street,

On the £35 million pounds metro west railway Network, operated by First group plc Great Western Railway company

On this route instead of providing trains designed for the metro west railway Network 165 166 or 158 units

First Group plc Great Western Railway company is operating Inter city Express trains 5 car units designed for the Intercity train Network where if the train is the wrong way round first class end can platform at Yate cam and Dursley and Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station,

So wheelchair users and passengers with reduced mobility have the train at the second Class end the access toilets by no wheelchair accessible space

Passengers have to park in coach vestibule until the passengers can be transferred to the wheelchair space at Bristol parkway Gloucester central Cheltenham spa or Worcester Shrub Hill, What representation are being made by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council and mayor Dan Norris to get the Department for transport and First group plc Great Western Railway company to provide trains designed for the metro west railway Network.

Q6 response:

Mayoral Combined Authority officers have spoken directly to Great Western Railways (GWR) on this subject and have received the following feedback.

Inter City Express Trains (IETs) operating on this route are in their opinion better than the older 'High Speed Trains' (HSTs) that they have replaced.

- **When the current IETs stop at Yate and Cam & Dursley stations, GWR can open 4 carriages of a 5-carriage train. On old HSTs they could only open 2 carriages of four.**

- On IETs, the train automatically announces on approach to the station if the doors won't open – and only in the affected carriage, alongside an instruction of where to move to alight. On old HSTs this needed to be done manually by the Guard.

If a customer is travelling with a wheelchair, then GWR's station team or the guard will have helped them onto the train, therefore they are able to make sure that passengers are in the right place. GWR have provided assurances that there is always a member of the station team on the platform at Bristol Temple Meads station before the train can leave. All GWR's services around Bristol have a Train Manager on board.

All of the GWR trains in use comply with rail industry accessibility standards as set by the Department for Transport.

In addition to direct engagement with GWR, Mayoral Combined Authority officers are using connections in the Rail Safety Standards Board (RSSB) and Great British Railways transition team to better understand the national allocation of new / higher standard rolling stock. These conversations will be used to better understand how the train operators in our region may be prioritised.

Question 7 from Dan Ackroyd

The 'contact us' page for WECA lists the email address info@westofengland-ca.gov.uk as the appropriate email address for people to send emails to.

I've sent several emails to this address, but have never received a response.

Chair, do you think it is acceptable for members of the public to be ignored like this?

Q7 response

info@westofengland-ca.gov.uk is a gateway email address from which incoming correspondence is directed to the relevant officers. Our records show that your recent emails on the matter of the Extraordinary Committee meeting in December 2023 have received responses, from IG@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Question 8 from Dan Ackroyd

The Mayor of Bristol has apparently refused to attend several West of England meetings, and has also refused to send a substitute in his place.

I feel that this has resulted in the people of Bristol not being represented at the West of England government level, which has harmed them.

Chair, is there a legal requirement for the Mayor to attend West of England meetings, and any 'punishment' for him failing to do so?

For the record, I had hoped to put this question privately to the Monitoring Officer for the West of England. Please see my question one for why I am asking here instead.

Q8 response

There is no legal requirement for the Mayor of Bristol City Council to be present at every West of England Combined Authority Committee meeting and, therefore, no sanction in legislation for non-attendance in this instance. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that

'...If a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.'

END