

Questions and Answers – Overview and Scrutiny – 2 October 2023

Question 1 from Mr David Redgewell

In view of the big bus conversion meetings and passenger Group protest march against the ongoing cuts to bus service in some the Rural areas and working class estate area in the Greater Bristol and Bath city region area in South Gloucestershire Banes and North Somerset are left without bus services

In view of the request my secretary of state mark Harper MP and buses minster Richard Holden mp.

To Transfer money from the bus service improvement into support bus services similar the situation where money has been transferred by the mayor of west Midlands combined Transport Authority Andy street and mayor of west Yorkshire combined transport Authority mayor Tracy Brabin.

Where Bus service improvement plans money has been used with local authorities

Precept money in the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council Transport levy .

And with over 75 passengers and groups on line meeting many older people and disabled people and rural people can not travel to bus service meeting without public bus services in the Evening.

What progress is being made on restoring or rerouting bus services

In south Bristol.

505 Southmead hospital bus station to Ashton vale Long Ashton park and ride and long Ashton estate.

Service 5 47 being restored from Bristol city centre to St Paul's St werburges Eastville park Stapleton Broomhill Fishponds oidbury court Downend Bromley Heath Emerson green puckchurch westerleight yate bus station and yate North .

On Southmead hospital to Uwe Bus and coach station Bristol parkway railway station Bradley stoke ,Aztec west Hortham ,Alverston, Thornbury.

10 11 .

36, Bristol city centre st Anne's park Brislington Hungerford road knowle Hengrove hospital imperial park Hartcliffe.

Service 1, 1 a cribbs causeway Henbury westbury on Trym Clifton Down station Park street Bristol city centre Bristol cabot circus Bristol Temple meads station Arnos vale, Bristlington sandy park,Wick Road Guildford Road Broomhill Brislington Trading estate Hungerford road Bristlington village School Road, Bristlington ,st Anne's park Wick Road, sandy park road shopping centre Bath Road circle .

Service 52 Bishopsworth South Bristol hospital and Bristol city centre.

Service 522 Bristol bus and coach station Bristol Temple meads station Arnos vale Bristlington keynsham marksbury Timsbury Paulton midsomer Norton Tesco rerouting via Timsbury Tunley Bath spa park and ride and Bath spa bus and coach station.

Service 414, 424 Frome Cork Street to Radstock and midsomer Norton extended to Paulton to replace service 82 .

672 Chew valley south Bristol to the city centre.

Service 126 Wells bus and coach station to Draycott Cheddar Axbridge winscombe ,Banwell, Locking,weston super mare Hospital and weston super mare railway station and bus and coach station.

What progress is being made on replacing these bus services and making the westlink service operating to the contract and serving railway station and Bus interchange at Bristol Temple meads Eastgate centre Bristol parkway station Aztec west cribbs causeway bus station Patchway station Filton Abbey wood station uwe bus and coach station,Southmead hospital bus station.

In the south.

Long Ashton park and ride site

Bristolington park and ride.

Voters and Taxpayer of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council want to see progress on restoration of vital bus routes and services urgent.

Answer to question 1:

The Combined Authority has recently conducted a review of redirecting BSIP funding. We are aware that the change of guidance has impacted on other Transport Authorities nationally. As you highlight in your comments, one large Combined Authority has transferred a significant amount of their budget to funding supported services, for which DfT approval was required. It also required them to commit to using local funding to continue those services once BSIP funding ends.

In considering whether to redirect BSIP funding, the DfT has clearly stated that Local Transport Authorities need to consider; whether the routes under consideration for support would provide better value for money compared to previous plans; and whether the routes under consideration for support are likely to become sustainable in the longer term. Following a review, the option to redirect BSIP funding was disregarded as it would create financial risks for all partners across the region.

We continue to support bus routes that are not commercially viable, but that have the highest social need. We also continue to access which support provides the best value for taxpayers' money for the wider region. Unfortunately, we do not have a budget to continue to support those services that have previously been assessed as less value for money.

WESTlink was not intended to be for a replacement for local subsidised bus services cut by our local councils, the services were instead intended to take people to main line routes to increase the overall use of buses. As the service has been operating for several months, we will now be taking the opportunity to review how WESTlink operates, in response to data collected to date and feedback from users. This will include:

- Potential changes to how the service operates
- Changes to the zones to improve efficiencies
- Improve linkages with the wider bus network
- A wider promotional campaign

The detail of this will be worked up in partnership with stakeholders over the Autumn.

The Combined Authority are also exercising their right to issue contract deductions where there has been an avoidable failure to meet the terms of the contract.

Question 2 from Mr David Redgewell

What progress is being made on planning a light rail system for the Greater Bristol and Bath city region

With the light rail Route Bristol city centre to Bristol Temple meads station Arnos vale Bristlington Callington road corridor Keynsham saltford Newbridge Weston Bath spa bus and coach station.

Using the North Somerset railway line

Which Could be used as a bus service rapid transit route and walking cycle route First.

Link Bristol city centre Bristol Temple meads station st Philips marsh ,Arnos vale, Bristlington Callington road corridor Hengrove park whitchurch estate Hengrove hospital imperial park Hartcliffe Bristol Airport.

Bristol city centre to to Bristol Temple meads station Lawrence Hill Fishponds Staple Hill ,Kingswood ,Cadbury Heath

Oidland Common Bitton Kelson Weston Bath spa bus and coach station.

Bristol city centre to North Bristol link

To the Henbury loop line and cribbs causeway shopping centre.

This system need segregated tracks

And stations With interchange with local ferry service's bus services

And metro west Railway services.

Some of the network with need to be in

Cut and cover tunnels and flyovers

Like the midland metro in Birmingham and the west Midlands and The Tyne and Wear metro in Newcastle upon Tyne.

With the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council as joint transport Authorities progress this project.

Answer to question 2:

Progress relating to the Future 4 West proposals looking at the feasibility of providing a mass transit system for each of the four corridors in the region is subject to the committee report being provided at the October Joint Committee.

A separate consultation, running from 21st August to the 1st October, has been undertaken for improvements to bus, walking and cycling improvements on the A4 Bristol to Bath corridor, as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) package of transport improvements in the region.

Question 3 from Sue Mullins:

What assessment has been undertaken of the impact of the removal of unprofitable bus routes e.g.52, 23/24, 672 etc. on the local communities, bearing in mind the authorities statutory duty to consider whether those communities still retain access to key amenities, jobs, training, health treatment, education and to avoid isolation where individuals do not have access to personal vehicles without a bus service in place.

Answer to question 3:

Buses are a complicated funding jigsaw and can be split several ways.

1. Commercial buses. These are run by a private operator to make a profit like service 23/24. The bus operators can amend or withdraw services by giving notice to the Traffic Commission. Bus operators do not need to assess or consult before making changes to their own routes.

2. Supported bus services are buses that don't make a profit but where there is a social need. Rules also say they can't compete with commercial services. They are paid for by money raised by local councils through council tax. Councils then pay a sum of money of their choosing known as the transport levy to the West of England Combined Authority to buy these services. Earlier this year local Councils decided on a real term cut to such expenditure at a time when bus costs for fuel and staff are going up. We are still seeing the consequences of this feeding through.

3. Finally there is the Bus Service Improvement Plan money where the second highest amount of government funding in the country was secured. It needs to be for new and innovative services and until very recently specifically could not be spent on maintaining council-supported services. Work is continuing to identify potential flexibility within the budget and how we can prioritise any flexibility to ensure that it meets the aims of the BSIP. Any new supported routes would need provide better value for money compared to previous plans within the BSIP and would need to become sustainable in the longer term.

Question 4 from Sue Mullins:

Westlink is the new hybrid bus service to counter rural isolation.

The South Bristol Community Hospital and the Imperial Shopping centre are both within the zone. Knowle is also in the zone as is the rural area south of Bristol.

My own home in Bishopsworth is not in the zone and I am now unable to get to the Imperial Shopping or the SBCH by public transport since the loss of the 52 bus service.

Why then are Bishopsworth, Highridge, Withywood and Hartcliffe, (particularly Bishopsworth and Highridge which now have no bus service) not in the South Zone when buses picking up South of Bristol will mostly have to travel through those areas to reach both the Imperial Shopping and SBCH.

Answer to question 4:

WESTlink is not a replacement for local subsidised bus services cut by our local councils, the services were instead intended to take people to main line routes to increase the overall use of buses. As the service has been operating for a number of months, we will now be taking the opportunity to review how WESTlink operates, in response to data collected to date and feedback from users. This will include:

- Potential changes to how the service operates
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The detail of this will be worked up in partnership with stakeholders over the Autumn.

Community transport does provide an alternative transport in South Bristol, CATT Community transport serves Bishopsworth and facilitate trips to SBCH as well as Imperial Park shopping Centre. If you do not have success with CATT due to the high demand, the Sprint may offer Door-to-Door transport in your area.

Also serving the area is The Big Lemon. They provide door to door services, regular daily trips and group transport.

We would advise that you call them in the first instance, and they would be able to confirm with you, by reference to your address and available services what they can do for you.

Question 5 from Mandy Parry:

WECA say on their website that it is 'bringing partners together to improve transport across the region, to provide sustainable, long-term solutions to help people move around the region more easily, reducing congestion and improving the environment we live in.'

Why then are bus routes then being cut across Bristol?

Answer to question 5:

The West of England Combined Authority has been investing in several transport projects across the region to improve wider connectivity. This includes:

Metrowest, which has seen rail service frequency increased on local train services, and the opening of Portway Park and Ride, and construction taking place of the new station at Ashley Down. Works on future phases to Portishead and Henbury lines is progressing.

Bus service enhancements to several services across the region, as part of the Bus Service improvement Plan (BISP) including the 'Birthday Buses' ticket offering of free bus travel during your birth month within the West of England.

The majority of bus services that operate in the West of England region are commercially operated by private bus companies. The bus operators can amend or withdraw services by giving notice to the Traffic Commission. Bus operators do not need to assess or consult before making changes to their own routes.

Supported buses are buses that don't make a profit but where there is a social need. Rules also say they can't compete with commercial services. These are paid for by money raised by local councils through council tax.

Question 6 from Mandy Parry:

What representations are being made by WECA to nationalise buses, so bus routes are based on need and not on profit?

Answer to question 6:

The Metro Mayor of the West of the West of England Combined authority has regular contact with ministers in Central Government, and alongside other combined authorities, has been asking for additional support and powers regarding bus services.

However, the combined authority also must operate within the current legal framework and powers provided to it by central government regarding how bus services operate. Bus services outside of London were de-regulated in 1985, meaning that private bus operators would operate bus services, if they can do so at a profit. Transport legislation to date has not supported local authorities from operating bus services directly.

Question 7 from Ian Quaife:

With the provision of Public transport hubs and provision for scooters and E Bikes E charging points more seats

Bristol city council has requested money to provide a new bus gate facilities at Portway park and ride bus and Rail interchange so buses can Operator by first group plc to service 3 and 4 to cribs causeway bus station via Avonmouth Dock and or Lawrence weston.

stagecoach west bus service 10 11 being rerouted into via the bus rail Interchange.

Avonmouth and sevenside .

and bus services to Lawrence weston Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus station uwe bus station ,Bristol parkway station, Bradley stoke, Aztec west Hortham Alverston Thornbury.

West link to buses to Portishead.

Services 13 to Sea Mills Shirehampton Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus station Gloucester Road and Bristol BRI city centre .

Especially also with future metro west railway Network service over the Henbury loop line for the arena

What design brief is the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council

Working for Transport hubs for important transport interchanges for waiting room, accessible toilets cafe or Drinks machine so while we welcome the bus gate and interchange facilities we like to know when the portacabin terminal building is to be replaced.

(Bristol older people forum)

Answer to question 7:

The funding request and design work for the junction at Portway Park and Ride is being undertaken by Bristol City Council, with the facilities at the park and ride site also being under the management of Bristol City Council. The Combined Authority does not operate any facilities at any of the Park and Ride sites.

Question 8 from Ian Quaife:

In view of Deep hardships caused to older people and disabled people in the Bristol city Region with the withdrawn by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council of vital bus services

Due to the lack of the extra payments of the Transport levy by Bristol city council Banes South Gloucestershire county council and North Somerset council.

To restore vital bus service So older and disabled people can get to work shopping centre Heath care and hospital appointment and leisure facilities.

I view of the mayor Dan Norris Big conversion meetings on buses with the community that mainly still have bus services will the mayor Dan Norris and the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council meet with Bristol older people forum and Bristol disability equities forum via a daytime and Hybrid meeting.

Answer to question 8:

This is a question for the Mayor's Office and is not within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide an answer.

Question 9 from John Isaacs:

What (if any) proposals are currently being proposed to re-connect Ashton Vale (and in particular Langley Crescent) to the bus network

Answer to question 9:

Buses are a complicated funding jigsaw and can be split several ways.

1. Commercial buses. These are run by a private operator to make a profit like service 23/24. The bus operators can amend or withdraw services by giving notice to the Traffic Commission. Bus operators do not need to assess or consult before making changes to their own routes.

2. Supported bus services are buses that don't make a profit but where there is a social need. Rules also say they can't compete with commercial services. They are paid for by money raised by local councils through council tax. Councils then pay a sum of money of their choosing known as the transport levy to the West of England Combined Authority to buy these services. Earlier this year local Councils decided on a real term cut to such expenditure at a time when bus costs for fuel and staff are going up. We are still seeing the consequences of this feeding through.

3. Finally there is the Bus Service Improvement Plan money where the second highest amount of government funding in the country was secured. It needs to be for new and innovative services and until very recently specifically could not be spent on maintaining council-supported services. Work is continuing to identify potential flexibility within the budget and how we can prioritise any flexibility to ensure that it meets the aims of the BSIP. Any new supported routes would need provide better value for money compared to previous plans within the BSIP and would need to become sustainable in the longer term.

Question 10 from John Isaacs:

Are any reviews being considered/ undertaken to establish the feasibility of re-routing the 24 bus service (in whole or part)to Langley Crescent now that access for double decker's can be provided via South Liberty Lane (since the removal of the railway bridge)?

Answer to question 10:

Service 24 is privately operated by First Bus who are able to amend or withdraw services by giving notice to the Traffic Commission. Bus operators do not need to review or consult before making changes to their own commercial routes.