

West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Extraordinary Committee meeting.

Date of meeting: 1st December 2023

Statements received from the public:

No.	Received from
<u>1</u>	Mrs Rosa Kell
<u>2</u>	David Redgewell
<u>3</u>	Barbara Lawrence
<u>4</u>	Dan Ackroyd
<u>5</u>	Ian Beckey

Statement 1

Mrs Rosa Kell (Wells Bus Users Group)

I am surprised that this Authority is even having this meeting given the financial pressures bus transport is under in this area and the neighbouring counties. I am here representing Wells Bus Users. Your buses are my buses.

I have seen the poster in question, I saw only an advertisement for bus drivers.

At the time of this poster Wells depot was working with about 40 drivers short. I repeat 40 drivers short.

Agency drivers were being brought in from every area where they could be got.

Our main bus from Bristol was reduced to hourly service at times and the access to Bath, Bridgewater, Yeovil, Taunton, Weston and most of the major work, education centres and hospitals were almost unreachable And many still aren't

this was happening all over Bristol, Bains, North Somerset, Somerset and Dorset

And here we are waisting public time and money arguing over a rediculourly amount of £10k.

But where is your alternative marketing? what are you doing to improve patronage of buses? Recruit more drivers?

What are you doing with your Bus marketing budget? You have one, I know you do. I don't see it. Why are you not advertising the £2 fare.

Why are you not helping us build confidence in bus transport across the whole region?

Do you actually have stratagy in place that joins up with your neighbouring authorities ?

What have you done to publicise the ailing under used buses. Getting to Christmas markets, Illuminations, access to special events, access to venues? I know Visit England, Visit Somerset, Somerset and in a smaller way First Bus West and South and Venues themselves are doing some marketting

BUT WHAT HAVE YOU DONE that is better, or equal to the presence of this particular item.

Statement 2

From David Redgewell

We are somewhat surprised at the reason for calling a special public committee meeting for the sum of £10 000 on a bus service improvement plan worth £ 105 million pounds between the Transport Authority's of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

£ 35 million pounds subsidies around

Metro west Railway Network

Operated by First group plc Great Western Railway company.

Why was this item not brought to the January 2024 West of England mayoral combined Authority committee.

And the mayor as to leave the room.

This single item agenda not a time of shortage of Taxpayer money once again put the Authority in the passenger and media attention for all the wrong reasons.

At the time of the proposed marketing bus we're as a transport Authorities short of bus and coach drivers, Engineers and cleaning staff at all the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council area bus Depots First group plc west of England buses now First group plc Wales and West Division.

At Bristol Lawrence hill, Depot, Bristol Hengrove bus Depot, Bath spa Western Island Depot and Wells Bus Depot

And at stagecoach west bus Depots at Bristol Patchway, Stroud and Gloucester.

All the Depot provide bus service into the city Region.

The metro Mayor Dan Norris Democratically Elected took decision to work with First group plc Wales and West buses Division and Stagecoach west and the smaller companies to recruit bus drivers community champions.

Bristol city council Transport Board become involved with a marketing campaign with a working party, with First group plc and stagecoach west we draw up a campaign of poster of all bus shelters in the city and county of Bristol.

and in North Somerset council west of England mayoral combined transport Authority are shelters in Banes, south Gloucestershire county council.

We work with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council, local Enterprise partnership..

The bus company's were running on Agency staff stay in hotels

And passenger number were at at 65% of pre covid levels at Wells Depot .

70 % at Bath spa Western Island

65% to 70 % at Bristol Hengrove Depot and 65 % to 70 % at Bristol Lawrence hill Depot .

Stagecoach west were also carrying passenger at 65% to 70 %

Of per covid levels at the time Hct group now closed down and part sold off

Was running at 65 % of pre covid levels and short of Drivers .

The small companies were in the same position.

The metro mayor Dan Norris Democratically Elected had to take action.

First Group plc Wales and West Division md Doug Claringbold reduce services to a Emergency timetable.

And stagecoach west run a daily service cancellation advertised

The metro started with first group plc and stagecoach west a media campaign to increase passengers numbers and recruit Bus drivers community champions Engineers and cleaning staff .

And to restore passengers numbers and try to restore passengers numbers on to the bus coach Regional and local railway network.

and to save bus routes with covid 19

Bus operators recovery grant .

provide bus driver and passenger number for the westlink Demand responsive bus services.

Voters and Tax payers and bus passengers were complaining. passenger and equities

representative As the representative on the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus advisory panel

I was getting phone calls emails from passengers, including those stuck at bus stops council Steve Bridger and Steve Hogg were very concerned leader and Transport Executive were very very concerned.

Council kye Dudd Bristol city council Transport executive councillor and then councillors Don Alexander, Sarah Warren and Steve Read were all in a passengers storm .

Action to restore the network move forward recruit bus and coach Drivers

Urgently restore the bus and coach Network and frequency and try to retain support bus services funded through the west of England act of Parliament by the west of England act jointly with North Somerset council as a Transport levy with Bristol city council, Banes South Gloucestershire county council.

Bus service improvement plan money could not be used by parliamentary regulations for bus services improvement plan on support services.

at this time .

This has. Changed by we still had agreed a ticket promotion plan with the Department for transport Birthday card scheme

Care leavers

And youth fare still

Being looked

And reduce ticket on the city Region bus network before the National £2 government fare scheme in England.

We had to run marketing campaigns

Lead by the Democracatly Elected metro mayor Dan Norris head of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority decided on bus marketing and posters on buses at bus station and railway station.

Any where we could get the need for bus and coach drivers message across

Equities groups Black South west

Lawrence hill ward residents.

Disability equities groups

Colleges job centres advertising on the back of buses and yest following First group plc South west buses .

Had big advertisements of Alex Carter

Md of the side of a bus in Somerset telling people to use bus services in Somerset.

We needed urgently action wrapping a bus with the mayor and has dog 🐶

Was a good way on getting the message over in the city Region.

In the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

Promotion bus driver community leaders and the Birthday card scheme

Free travel for one month in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

When the scheme got blocked I arranged a bus from Rapt Bath bus company for the mayor Dan Norris to launch the Birthday card scheme.

In Bath Somerset.

To support the Democracatly Elected metro mayor Dan Norris to market the Birthday card scheme and bus driver recruitment.

We also look at jointly funding Bus service with South Gloucestershire county council, Banes and Bristol city council and North Somerset council.
50 % some of the support bus services.

Somerset council have followed with first group plc South buses Division

On marketing bus service at risk

Service 54 Taunton to Yeovil bus and coach station via Langport and Somerton.

Service 58 Yeovil bus and coach station to Wincanton bus and coach via Yeovil pen mill station, Sherborne Town Sherborne Railway station Templecombe.

With Dorset Council.

Service 28 Taunton Town centre Taunton Railway station Bishop Lydeard Station Watchet and Minehead Town Centre Bank Street Minehead railway station and Butlins.

25 Taunton Town centre Dulverton via Bampton and Withycombe

With Devon County Council and Exmoor National park.

And service 1 Shepton Mallet interchange Evercreech Castle cary station and Yeovil bus and coach station.

And a bus driver recruitment campaign

Similar to First Group plc Wales and West buses..

With first group plc South the buses of Somerset.

This whole situation show the need for permanent Employees at the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and West of England mayoral combined Authority and local Enterprise partnership.

To set up a marketing strategy and structure that works for passengers.

The need for an urgent HR committee to recruit and Employ a chief Executive and Authority Directors like any other combined Authority with Transportation responsibility and Regional planning.

For staff to be transferred for Transport functions from Bristol city council South Gloucestershire county council and North east Somerset council ,

Who under the west of England mayoral combined Authority act are Highway Authority not Transport Authorities.

We need to make progress on partnership working between the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council which needs to join the Authority and Bristol city council South Gloucestershire county council and Bath and North east Somerset council

Over the Transport levy and the west of England buses Service improvement plan governance.

The cost to the Taxpayer for Interm staff and consultant is expensive and we need to save public money by Restructuring and recruitment of west of England mayoral combined Authority staff and Directors.

The need for a Directorate for marketing of the combined Transport Authority bus coach rail ferry e scooter and e bike services and network.

Like the other combined transport Authority's The metro mayor Democratically Elected must be allowed to promote and run Transport services.

No public transport users groups can see the need for a special meeting at cost to the Taxpayer when council that are part of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council,

We need the bus service improvement plan to be taken back into Democratic control and delegation removed from officers and put back to the metro mayor Dan Norris and the west of England committee and joint committee for decision making.

Somerset catch the bus campaign

At present Somerset bus partnership
Gloucestershire catch the bus campaign.
Bristol rail campaign Railfuture Severnside, south west Transport Network.

Are working hard to promote the use of bus coach and Ferry services over the Christmas and New year marketing
With campaigning

We welcome the marketing campaign by visit West on Christmas shopping in Greater Bristol and Bath. With First group plc Wales and West buses Division and First group plc Great Western Railway company.

But the money spent on this special meeting could have been spent on officer time promoting public transport in the city Region and Do not Drink and Drive campaign with the police and crime commissioner marketing mark Shelford.

We need public transport Network marketing by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

This item should have been add to an agenda item it January for the the spending £10 000 to recruit bus drivers community champions for the Transport Authority and to promote a fares scheme something that happens every day in Greater Manchester combined transport Authority mayor Andy Burnham, West midland combined transport Authority mayor Andy street And Liverpool City Region mayor Steve Rotherham.

I hope after the meeting councillors on west of England mayoral combined Authority committee and west of England joint committee and officers
Can work together to Promote and providea Public transport Network in the Bristol and Bath city Region.

Statement 3

From Barbara Lawrence

Statement to support Greater public good in public spending investigation

An extraordinary meeting is taking place on Friday 1st December 2023 by WECA to investigate the unauthorised funding of £10,000 to promote a free bus scheme.

I am resident in Wotton under Edge and part of the campaign group looking to save our bus service 84/85 bus route from

Wotton under Edge to Yate.

Our 84/85 bus is the only public transport option available on the 32 mile round trip serving 11 communities.

In April 2023 we already suffered a reduction in the service and removal of subsidised funding for 2024/25 would have a devastating effect on the wellbeing of many people and of the local economy.

The service is used by a variety of demographics and for many people is an essential lifeline.

Our successful sixth form at KLB school do not have another public transport route. The only alternative for these students is to walk or cycle. Wotton under Edge to Yate via Hillesley, Hawkesbury, Horton and Chipping Sodbury have many unlit country roads and volume of traffic has increased.

People use the service to access work, onward travel links by bus or rail for learning opportunities or apprenticeships.

Many residents do not have vehicles, including a significant number of elderly or disabled who are reliant on public transport to access GP, dental and hospital appointments or to shop for affordable food, go to bank, community services or recreation.

Demand Responsive Transport is unsuitable as a substitute for a fixed route, timetabled bus service. It is unsuitable for those people who require a reliable arrive by time as listed above.

DRT is a Government Initiative and presumably funded through BSIP grant. It is not financially viable as confirmed by Metro Mayor Dan Norris during his question and answer session at a public discussion "Big choices on non-commercial buses" hosted by Metro Mayor Dan Norris on 7th September 2023 in Chipping Sodbury.

During this public discussion Metro Mayor Dan Norris detailed funding constraints and the audience who were seated at tables (areas) were asked to take part in an exercise. His team would walk around room to observe how the areas were rating the cards provided. Very Important, Important, Less Important piles were the criteria and the areas were asked to place marked cards into what we considered appropriate pile/criteria. Metro Mayor Dan Norris explained that his team would take their observations away and in time they would determine which area routes would be funded.

Our campaign group provided significant evidence including a 1300 signed petition and 200 impact statements detailing the impact that removal of our well used bus service would have. The information was collated by Wotton Town Council and sent to WECA, SGC and GCC in March 2023 to inform authorities in their decision making process. This evidence contributed to the decision to award temporary funding of a revised contract until 7th April 2024 and operated by The Big Lemon CIC.

We do argue that the evidence provided in March should be used in part to evaluate a comprehensive perspective of this funding allocation round for 2024. Not simply an observation of how we played a card stacking exercise in September.

Despite asking many questions we have no feeling that any further negotiation is taking place at County level between SGC, GCC and WECA. We understand that the funding round is now underway and we ask for transparency in consultation.

We ask if WECA is taking into account the current passenger numbers that are regularly using the 84 and 85 bus route given that the revised service has obviously impacted the footfall on the service.

Have you any alternative solution to providing vital public transport to the proportion of passengers who are commuters for work, sixth-form and others for whom DRT is unsuitable.

DRT is not a substitute for fixed route bus services and not a substitute for government investment in traditional bus services. WECA has responsibility to ensure they are accountable for funding all public transport systems for all users, ensuring city, urban and rural areas remain connected. While funding promotion of bus schemes either authorised or as reported unauthorised must be deemed inappropriate use of public funds.

Statement 4

From Dan Ackroyd

I do think the West of England should have better presence as a governmental organisation. I don't think getting more people to see a photo of a politician achieves that goal.

In fact it's not just a question of marketing.

People need to be able to interact with a government body for them to take it seriously.

You might have seen a story recently about a group of people representing the elderly community, who are deeply upset about the lack of bus service in the area of Bristol where they live, which is making people be prisoners in their own home, unable to go anywhere unless they pay for a taxi.

These people went and gave a passionate statement at a Bristol City Council meeting, not WECA, because in their minds "buses equals local council".

Mr Norris, if you want the West of England to be taken seriously as a government body, and have members of the public consider it as the provider of "their" public transport, then this organisation needs to be talking to people in Bristol, and the other areas, listening to what they have to say about transport, even when it's not good news.

I know communication at scale is 'non-trivial', and it's not at all obvious what should be done to fix the situation, but I can suggest doing two things:

1. The West of England should look to see which comparable authorities around the UK are doing communication really well, and try to learn some lessons from them.
2. Talk to the Committee Model Working Group that is looking at how Bristol will be better governed from May 2024. I believe the chair of that committee has recently sent you a letter inviting you to talk.

I think a few topics of conversation might be useful:

Stability

Every route change has a cost. This apparently is a huge problem for people who suffer from early dementia, who just can't cope with route changes. It's also just not great in general as adapting to new routines is costly.

Reliability

People who need to get to work, will only choose public transport if it is reliable enough for them to not get into trouble for being late at work.

Equity

An area of the city with no public transport is uninhabitable unless you own a car.

There are probably also lessons to be documented about the transfer of Scooters from one provider to another.

By the way, I find it good that your Monitoring Officer takes his job seriously and has written a report under Section 5(2)(a) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

I've been trying to persuade the Monitoring Officer of Bristol City Council to write a report that is required under that piece of legislation.

I won't bore you with the details, but they can be found in the public forum document for the last BCC Audit committee:

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s90028/20%20Nov%20Audit%20Cttee%20PF%20Bundle.pdf>

It's good to see that the West of England is run better than Bristol, at least in this regard.

Statement 5

From Ian Beckey (Gloucestershire catch the bus campaign)

The Gloucestershire catch the bus campaign with campaign for public transport and Bus services across Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire county council and into the city and county of Bristol.

And in the Gloucestershire bus service Improvement plan and West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plans area

Can not understand the reason the west of England mayoral combined Authority is calling a very expensive to the Taxpayer a single issue item meeting on the reason the metro mayor Dan Norris spent £10 000 on advertisement for marketing a fare offer the Birthday card travel scheme and more importantly to try to stop a bus being wrapped with the metro mayor Dan Norris and his Dog to Campaign for Bus and coach drivers during the biggest reduction in service

In Gloucestershire South Gloucestershire county council and West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service network area

Stagecoach west and First group plc Wales and West buses Division

West of England buses all the smaller bus operators were using agency drivers and running emergency bus timetables

Stagecoach west Depot in Bristol at Patchway advertised daily bus service cancellation on the Greater Bristol bus network and into the Depot at Stroud and Gloucester.

Service were running at 65% to 70 % of

Pre covid levels.

Agency drivers were brought in to run Services and drivers brought from Swindon Stroud and Gloucester.

To run Greater Bristol bus Network operated for the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority.

Service 10 11 Shirehampton and Avonmouth to Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus station uwe bus station Bristol Parkway railway station Bradley stoke Aztec west, Hortham Alverston and Thornbury

13 Bristol city centre to Southmead hospital, bus station and sea Mills and shirehampton were cancelled daily.

Service 12 Bristol parkway via cribbs causeway bus station to Pilning and seven Beach was cancelled daily

As was 86 yate to kingwood Town centre.

84 85 yate park and ride, Yate railway station, Yate bus station ,chipping Sodbury Wickwar Charfield and Wotton under Edge.

Cancelled journeys.

Now run by big lemon buses

622 Cribbs causeway bus station to Olverton Alverston, Thornbury Tytherington,yate bus station and chipping Sodbury.

First Group plc west Of England buses

Cancelled the Bristol bus and coach to Yate bus station via Fishponds and Staple Hill.

Service 5 Bristol city centre to st Paul's st werburgess Eastville park Stapleton Broomhill Fishponds oidbury court Downend via Bromley Heath bus service ,

The service 35 6,7 ,48 ,49 4,2 43, 44 ,45

Bristol to Kingwood and East Bristol.

Bristol to Downend and Staple Hill to Emerson Green.

The network was reduced to hourly

Service 17 Keynsham to Kingwood Staple Hill, Fishponds, Eastville Park, Horfield and Southmead hospital bus station loss is evening service.

75, 76 Hartcliffe, Bedminster Redcliffe

Bristol city centre to Cribbs Causeway bus station via Gloucester Road via Patchway or Henbury,

Service 1 Bromhill to Cribbs Causeway bus station via Brislington, Arncliffe Bristol Temple Meads station Bristol city centre, Bristol Cabot Circus, Bristol Broadmead shopping centre, city centre park street Clifton Down station, Downs Westbury on Trym, and Henbury.

Stockwood, to Southmead and Cribbs Causeway bus station 2 and 2a

Service 3, 4 Bristol city centre to Park Street Clifton Down station, Sea Mills, Shirehampton

Avonmouth or Lawrence Weston Henbury and Cribbs Causeway bus station.

70 72 Bristol Temple Meads station to Bristol UWE via the city centre

M1 Hengrove Bristol Cribbs Causeway bus station metro bus

M3 Bristol to Emerson Green Metro bus

T1 Bristol bus and coach station to Thornbury.

Y1 Bristol bus and coach station to Yate and Chipping Sodbury.

All the services we're reduced to hourly in Bristol and South Gloucestershire Greater Bristol area.

Passengers groups were complaining

People could not get to school, college, university, work, hospital, food shopping or shopping centre.

There was a need to urgently restore the situation by running a campaign by the metro Mayor Dan Norris for community champions bus driver, cleaners and engineers.

Every First group plc west of England buses depot in Greater Bristol and Bath city region, we're short of bus drivers

Bristol Lawrence Hill, Bristol Hengrove,

Bath, Western Island, Weston Super Mare and Wells bus depots.

As well as Stagecoach West depot at Bristol Patchway, Stroud and Gloucester.

The metro Mayor Dan Norris led a campaign with the bus operators and the local Enterprise partnership to recruit bus drivers community champions.

With bus advertising, on bus shelters.

Newspaper and all media outlets.

The Mayor and officials addressed South Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committee with Rachel Geliemassi from Stagecoach West and Doug Claringbold MD of First group plc west of England buses.

The issue of shortage of bus drivers and cancelled routes were addressed

and the urgent need for bus driver.

and Westlink Demand responsive bus services drivers.

To restore support bus services as per the West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority and North Somerset Council Transport Levy.

The restoration of support services is still being addressed via the Transport levy paid from Bristol city council, South Gloucestershire council, Banes and North Somerset council to the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority mayor Dan Norris.
And bus services improvement plan allocations .

With the lack of Christmas and New years marketing campaign by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

And only the only Marketing is the
Tourist Boards visit west and visit Somerset .

So we were very shocked to see west of England mayoral combined transport Authority committee meeting with just one item of the agenda for the spending of £ 10 000 to rap abus to campaign for to recruit bus drivers ,and the Birthday card fares scheme for one month free travel on the Bristol city Region and North Somerset council bus network for free on the mouth of your Birthday.
Which had a picture of mayor and his Dog on the bus .
But the bus never appeared on First group plc or stagecoach west bus .

With shortage of public Money.

And the metro mayor Dan Norris in charge of the public transport Network.

And the need for urgent item single issue agenda appears to costing the Taxpayer a lot of public Taxpayers money.

We do not understand why this issue could not have been addressed at January 2024 items .

We would ask urgently the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

Set up a marketing Department to

Promote the bus coach Regional Railway Metro west and Ferry services

E bikes and e scooters

And that a strategy is brought to the west of England mayoral combined Authority committee and joint committee and scrutiny commission for urgent discussion.

We urgently request the set up of marketing Department for public transport in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

So a we have a proper programme of marketing and communication in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority urgently

And a structure for marketing public transport urgent to prevent these items

Being single issue bus strategy and that such a panel can over see marketing of west of England mayoral combined transport Authority.