Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Councillor Kevin Guy
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To: All Parish and Town Councils
Bath and North East Somerset
Correspondence sent via email

Date : 15 February 2023

Dear Parish/Town Council Chair,

I wrote to you last month about decisions taken at the West of England Combined Authority Committee meeting on Wednesday 18th January regarding supported bus services.

Since then, we have continued to lobby the West of England Mayor to commit additional resources to invest in five new spinal routes, which will complement the introduction of DRT. These routes would ensure bus provision for Chew Valley, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Timsbury.

I have this week written again to the Mayor to raise a number of concerns about the changes to public transport services in our region, which will take place in April 2023.

Firstly, I pressed the Mayor to urgently provide more details about his planned demand-responsive transport (DRT) minibus scheme, which launches in a few weeks' time.

Given the short timescales, we would like to be in a position to reassure our communities about the details of the plans and respond to queries we have received.

At our cabinet meeting last week, we received questions and public statements on the issue of buses, and we are limited in what we are able to say, although we stand ready to help share information and want to help make the scheme a success.

I particularly asked the Mayor to release more information regarding how the scheme will be delivered, when exactly it will be introduced, how the app will work, progress on securing vehicles and recruiting drivers, and other key information, including his plans to raise public awareness of the new service.

The DRT is a key piece of the transport jigsaw that the Mayor proposed for North East Somerset. To ease the transition, Bath & North East Somerset Council is planning to increase its funding for supported bus services budget by 36% and will

extend five bus services for two months in areas where DRT will operate from April. This will help with the transition to his proposed ‘Westlink’ services. The extra funding will also be used to continue existing supported bus services in areas of Bath which would be left without public transport services, as the Mayor has chosen not to offer either DRT or new BSIP routes in these areas.

Secondly, I pressed the Mayor to confirm funding for the vital, new bus services using the £50m Bus Service Improvement Plan fund he has at his disposal. These are ‘lifeline’ bus services that are needed, and which will complement, not compete with, the ‘Westlink’ demand-responsive minibuses. These routes were identified as needed by transport officers and tendered. The Mayor has not publicly announced which routes he will fund and I pressed him to do so urgently.

Thirdly, I again urged the Mayor to ensure effective engagement with communities on the final design of new BSIP bus routes and DRT and make all future meetings of the Transport Planning and Housing Board public, so people see the ongoing work being undertaken to achieve a successful transport network and hold us to account on the commitments we have jointly made.

Finally, I’d like to flag up that public transport and the DRT proposals will be on the agendas of forthcoming Area Forum and Parish Liaison Meetings. We are arranging for West of England Combined Authority officers to attend to ensure they can answer people’s questions.

- Bath Area Forum 20 February, 6.00 pm, online
- Keynsham Area Forum 22 February, 6.00 pm, online
- Chew Valley Area Forum 23 February, 6.00 pm, online
- Somer Valley Area Forum 7 March, 6.00 pm, online
- Bathavon Area Forum 8 March, 6.00 pm, St Andrew’s in Foxhill
- Parish Liaison Meeting 15 March, 6.30 pm, Somerdale Pavilion

As I mentioned before, anything you can do as community leaders to share your residents’ views and comments with us and with the West of England Mayor will be very helpful. We want to work closely together moving forward making sure any concerns and suggestions are captured and to achieve the best possible public transport coverage across the area.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Kevin Guy
Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council