

County Council
Wednesday 20 July 2022
10.00 am Westlands, Westbourne Close,
Yeovil, BA20 2DD



SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA

To: The Members of the County Council

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Item 5	Public Question Time (Pages 3 - 16) (see explanatory notes attached to agenda) This item includes the presentation of petitions. Details of any public questions / petitions submitted will be included in the Chair's Schedule which will be made available to the members and to the public at the meeting.
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Published on 19 July 2022

Democratic Services, A Block, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY

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Name of person submitting	Question	Response from
Nigel Behan	<p>PQ1: Q1 a) Bus services cut by 16 per cent in a year Campaign For Better Transport</p> <p>The Campaign for Better Transport reported that: "When employment advisers were asked what would most improve job opportunities specifically in rural areas, better public transport was the number one priority."</p> <p>- From a blog by Sarah Welfare, Head of Policy and Research at Reed in Partnership</p> <p>And "In the longer term, the Government must move away from its current, fragmented and competitive way of funding and replace it with a long-term funding settlement for all councils.</p> <p>And a greater proportion of bus funding should be revenue funding (to enable more frequent buses and cheaper tickets) rather than capital funding (for one-off projects like bus stations).</p> <p>How can the Government afford to give every community the bus service it needs? Well, it should start by reallocating money from carbon intensive transport, like road building, into a single funding pot for all local authorities to spend on buses. And with vital services at</p>	Cllr Mike Rigby / Federica Smith-Roberts

	<p>risk and households struggling, it should act quickly.”</p> <p>Does the Council agree and what steps and measures (including consideration of a County-wide Travel Pass - similar to an Oyster card in London) are being considered to turn these type of priorities and proposals into reality?</p> <p>b) What plans are being considered to re-open Taunton Bus Station (fully functioning)?</p> <p>Q2 This question relates to Item 10 Requestioned Items B. Cost of Living (Emergency)</p> <p>It concludes that: “Finally, Council joins other local councils in calling for a local Cost-of-Living Emergency Summit, with stakeholders, including Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Local Trades Unions, and Chambers of Commerce and will invite local MPs to attend this hybrid meeting.”</p> <p>The opportunity to engage is welcome, and assuming this item is “carried” will the “Local Trade Unions” also include Taunton and West Somerset Trades Union Council (TUC) - also known as “Trades Councils”, Bridgwater and District TUC, Mendip TUC and Yeovil TUC?</p>	
Linda Snelling	<u>PQ2:</u>	Cllr Mike Rigby

	<p>My name is Linda Snelling, and I am making this statement on behalf of Yeovil citizens.</p> <p>I'd like to highlight the impact of recent cuts in Yeovil's public transport, and the effects it has had mentally and physically upon citizens.</p> <p>Since the 6th June, the reduction of bus service has had a dramatic impact, three areas are now without a service. These areas have a high proportion of elderly, vulnerable people with health issues, low-income families, people with mobility or learning disabilities who relied heavily on those public transport options.</p> <p>The cuts have quite literally divided rich from poor, young from old and the able from the disabled. We live in a democratic society where non-discrimination/ equal opportunities are paramount. This should not be occurring! Yeovil's bus network needs proper, consistent funding, and revising to make it more inclusive.</p> <p>I ask whether an assessment regarding social impact was carried, what consultations were there? And Was this published?</p> <p>What is happening in Yeovil runs completely goes against the aims of the Government 's "Bus Back Better" National Bus Strategy. Yeovil's bus service needs attention and rerouting, and by not addressing these issues in favour of just concentrating on Taunton gives a strong clear indication that you are willing to let the people of Yeovil and surrounding areas suffer mentally</p>	
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	<p>and physically, without any regard to your duty of care towards them.</p> <p>Key Issues are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now many residents are unable to access basic essential services that are fundamental to survival. • Increased depression of citizens due to isolation/the inability to engage in society, Quote "I no longer have a reason to get out of the house - Because I can't get anywhere". "I'm unimportant, I don't matter!" - And so on. • Nearest bus stops for isolated citizens are 15/20-minute walk uphill, not an option for many, but those trying to remain independent, its causing great physical strain. Come winter, this extra burden will have impact increasing the likelihood of falls, broken bones, chills and pneumonia or worse! <p>One elderly gent said "it is causing pain and exhaustion when I return home with my shopping after walking an extra 15 minutes uphill from the bus stop".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marooned no longer have direct and frequent access to the hospital and GP surgeries. 	
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	<p>Yet many of these citizens have severe health conditions i.e., cancer. People should not have to endure more stress and anxiety regarding transport in addition to their health. Many are now having to rely on family from elsewhere, which is making them feel a burden! Community cars are oversubscribed. Whilst NHS staff struggle to reach work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning disabilities lives are in chaos, changes to buses are detrimental to their wellbeing, disrupting social integration and volunteering, making it difficult to attend such activities. Nine Springs volunteering group have members with learning difficulties. Cuts have meant that some can no longer participate, whilst others are struggling to get to grips with timetables and a change of bus. This is traumatic, and affecting their mental health and quality of life, a problem highlighted by support workers. • Stroke victims can no longer access groups and services that are vital for health and wellbeing, just as the elderly can no longer reach the Day centre, and parents are unable to reach baby groups. • Parents on low-income are unable to fund cars, 	
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	<p>so a bus service is vital. children are suffering anxiety and stress because of difficulties in reaching schools and preschools, no longer supported by transport, Taxis are not an option.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People's jobs have been disrupted due to the changed bus times and routes.• The recently split Yeovil to Taunton bus service is leaving people stranded in Somerton due to buses not connecting, and workers abandoned after work as the last bus leaves Taunton too early.• Extra private cars are forced to take to the roads causing more congestion at peak times. This adversely affects the environment and the health of pedestrians, who are now expected to wait at bus stops on main roads inhaling toxic fumes.• By reducing public transport availability, it significantly reduces footfall into the town. The Elderly support our economy due to less online purchases.• Elderly are being excluded due to disparagement of technical online knowledge meaning they cannot access vital transport information.	
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	Yeovil Bus Users Group and Somerset Bus Partnership	
David Redgewell	<p><u>PQ3:</u></p> <p>Question 1</p> <p>Currently, Somerset County Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council have been looking at enhancements through the bus service improvements plan.</p> <p>Recently there was a meeting between the Somerset Bus Partnership, Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign, Railfuture, Southwest Transport Network, a representative from Travel Watch Southwest, Southwest Coach Operators and the Confederation of Passenger Transport.</p> <p>At this meeting the group came to the conclusion that Taunton needed three transport hubs:-</p> <p>One at the railway station with bus interchange for more services,</p> <p>A second one by reopening the existing bus and coach station as a transport hub with a cafe, waiting room, toilets, provision for bicycles and an e-scooter hub serving local, regional and National Express coaches along with Flixbus and Berry's Coaches with parking for</p>	Cllr Mike Rigby

	<p>tourist coaches.</p> <p>The Department for Transport is looking at national roads at the A38 / M5 coach stops, one at Gateway Park and Ride site or at Riverside for Megabus Stagecoach and Falcon Coaches.</p> <p>We felt that a bus boulevard was difficult to build in the Parade and North Street without the removal of private car use, widening pavements, new shelters and investment.</p> <p>Question 2 What action is the County Council taking to restore Somerset commuter bus network?</p> <p>We believe that the early morning and evening services should be restored especially on the following routes :-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Taunton to Yeovil bus station via Langport and Somerton. All other journeys have to change at Somerton to service 77 Wells bus and coach station, Glastonbury and Street. 2. Somerton, Ilchester and Yeovil bus station. The last bus service departs at 17.10 which is no good for commuters. People are now having to use the First 	
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	<p>Group Great Western Railway from Taunton to Yeovil Penn via Castle Cary and a bus from Yeovil Pen Mill station.</p> <p>But were not sure the level of service in December 2022 railway timetable.</p> <p>3. The last bus from Bridgwater bus station to Street, Glastonbury and Wells bus and coach station is 16:40. Previously, the last service used to be the 18:15 to Street with all services going via Bridgwater Hospital. Now the 16:50 service is the last one to Bridgwater hospital. Services 1 and 75 used to run in the evening to the hospital.</p> <p>4. Service 21 Burnham on Sea, Highbridge, Bridgwater and Taunton now start later. There also needs to be a later bus service from Burnham on Sea to Berrow, Brean, Uphill hospital railway station and Weston Super Mare bus and coach station number 20 Sunday service in the winter, along with connections from Taunton and Bridgwater bus and coach stations, Highbridge, Burnham on Sea service number 21</p> <p>5. Service 30 Taunton to and from Axminster via Chard now starts later as do services 75 and 99 to Taunton to Chard</p> <p>6. Services from Wells bus and coach station to</p>	
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	<p>Bridgwater bus and coach station now starts from Glastonbury Town Hall and there are poor connections with the 376 service from Wells bus and coach station.</p> <p>7. Service 29 from Wells bus and coach station now starts from Glastonbury Town Hall with poor connections from Wells bus and coach station.</p> <p>8. Also, we now have a 2 hourly service 25 Taunton Town Centre via Bampton and Dulverton instead of hourly.</p> <p>9. There is no longer any evening or Sunday services on the 126 from Well bus and coach station to Cheddar and Weston Super Mare bus and coach via Draycott, Axbridge, Winscombe, Banwell, Locking.</p> <p>10. Yeovil and Bridgwater have lost most of their town services with the one in Yeovil being very limited now. Services are run by First Group South West Buses and South West Coaches.</p> <p>Question 3 Across the county, with the District Council going, very little bus stop shelter and timetable display maintenance is taking place. Yeovil has very few updated timetables in place and no bus shelters are being cleaned by District Council contractors. Similarly in Mendip District</p>	
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	<p>Council area there are some broken shelters on the highway.</p> <p>In the Sedgemoor District Council, Axbridge Estate, Somerset West and Taunton Council areas, public transport user groups are putting up many timetables. In the County Council and North Somerset Council area, public transport user groups are cleaning shelters in Glastonbury, Frome station and in part of Frome itself.</p>	
Ian Beckey	<p><u>PQ4:</u></p> <p>What progress is being made on reopening Chard junction railway station and the Exeter central to Yeovil junction and Salisbury and London Waterloo main line with the Southwest Transport Board, Heart of the west local Enterprise partnership, Western gateway transport Board, Department for transport, Network rail Wessex route and First group MTR Southwestern railway.</p> <p>As Chard is a fast-growing Town and in need of both good bus/coach and train links to London and the South west Region.</p>	Cllr Mike Rigby
Andrew Lee	<p><u>PQ5:</u></p> <p>It is as follows:</p>	Cllr Bill Revans

	<p>Over the past decade the process of asking questions to Somerset County Council has had a look and feel that is redolent of North Korea.</p> <p>District Parish and Town councils hold their meetings in the early evening when most (I accept not all) members of the public can attend. By contrast SCC hold meetings at 10am on a Wednesday more or less guaranteeing that the only members of the public who can attend are shift workers or retirees.</p> <p>In all other councils, District, town or parish, when public questions are called, the public need only raise their hand and then speak freely for no more than 3 minutes. By contrast to ask this question I am required to contact Democratic Services 3 clear working days before the meeting, no later than 5pm.</p> <p>I will then be "invited" to submit a written statement or question.</p> <p>This will only be able to be asked if approved (though I agree I have only once had a question refused).</p> <p>If approved, my question can be asked, but when I speak, I will be told to stick to the script and not wander into any other territory.</p> <p>By contrast, the person from the council responding is free to wander far away from the question and on more</p>	
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	<p>than one occasion has chosen to effectively answer a different one or at least not address the nub of the question asked.</p> <p>If this happens, there is no redress or comeback. the questioner has no opportunity afforded to them to point out that the question has not been properly answered, or to come back on the answer.</p> <p>With a new administration in place, may I ask if it is not time to have a more open and transparent engagement with members of the public who wish to ask questions of their council?</p>	
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