



Cllr Carolyn Thomas
Flintshire County Council
County Hall
Raikes Lane
Mold
Flintshire CH7 6NB

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair of the Petitions Committee

Dear Janet

Bus Petition – Buses for People Not Profit

I have submitted the background information as requested which was attached to the petition, I hope you find it useful. It covers the consultation process we started undertaking with residents three years ago when we knew there was an issue regarding the sustainability of the public services. Commercial operators started pulling out of areas they were regarding as non profitable and we could not keep increasing subsidies as a result of decreasing Council funding. We gathered a lot of information at the community meetings and via questionnaires.

In response to the Minister's letter forwarded to me by the petitions Clerk I welcome that he will be introducing a Public Transport Bill in this Assembly term and hope to work with Welsh Government, Transport for Wales and Neighbouring Authorities across Wales (and across the border in England for border Counties) in delivering a sustainable, integrated public bus (&rail) transport solution for our residents.

The Bus Services Support Grant, although significant, even with match funding from Local Authorities isn't enough to sustain bus transport without reform. When divided, it equates to approx £500k for Flintshire, the Council matches this, however, one route can cost £200k - £300k and many operators have been requesting six figure sums as subsidies for them to continue to operate routes which were recently commercially run with no subsidies. The amount of operators is diminishing affecting the market and pushing up the cost as well as inflationary costs such as fuel. School transport costs have increased by 10%.

I would be interested to hear the outcomes of the four pilot projects or indeed how many have taken place. In Flintshire we were in dialogue with an operator regarding a demand responsive service but they wanted £500k subsidy, they would not take concessionary passes and the fare was estimated at £5 per journey.

I know that funding comes from the Environment service area regarding access to employment, education and social activities. However, the impact on health is a huge part of providing a public bus service and residents wanted to do something to help me raise this with Welsh Government. Providing a bus service helps people stay physically and mentally fit and independent in their own homes longer, it has a social impact and combats loneliness and isolation. When I travelled by bus from Cardiff station to Cardiff Bay last week, I chatted to a mental health nurse from Bridgend who said that her patients were devastated to discover that the public service bus they used would be reduced to just two per day, she said they would not walk to town, further impacting on their health and wellbeing. I know funding priorities focus on the NHS but preventative measures and services are vital and will save in the long run.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn

Cllr Carolyn Thomas, Cabinet member for Streetscene & Countryside
Deputy Leader
Flintshire County Council