



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No. 1.4

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board
Wednesday 31 August 2022

Public questions

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
1.	Councillor Sam Hoy Cambridgeshire County Councillor, Fenland District Councillor and Leader of Wisbech Town Council	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	<p>It is not my intention to make a big political speech, I understand it is just a question. However, in Cambridge City they have some eight buses an hour, whereas in the Fens we are lucky to have eight buses a week in some areas. We all know the divide between the north and south of this county and it is shameful that the people that claim to help the poor and deprived never seem to when they have power. My question is: Why has it taken so long to reach a decision on the Number 68 bus run by FACT. Given that this is a vital service used by many vulnerable people will you commit to long term funding and if not why not.</p> <p>Supplementary comment:</p> <p>You talk about caring and it is one of your 3 Cs, but isn't it more caring to be honest with people and if you did not want to fund it to treat people as adults and be honest with them. If you want to cut me down that's fine. I don't need a reply because it is not worth hearing. Thank you.</p>

No.	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
1.	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	Councillor Sam Hoy	<p>The Wisbech Tesco bus route 68, which I have travelled on, will be discussed at the Combined Authority Board meeting on 21 September and will continue temporarily until at least 30th September 2022.</p> <p>Before this, the Transport and Infrastructure Committee on 14th September will be considering a paper on the future of all bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, looking at the wider issues affecting the sector and the options going forward. Route 68 and other routes will be considered as part of this process.</p> <p>It is quite clear that this is an incredibly difficult time for bus services across the country, not just in our own county, with the rise in fuel costs and the recruitment and retention of drivers impacting on services nationally. However, we are acutely aware of the real impact on day-to-day opportunities that a loss of bus services could have on our communities. Buses are essential in ensuring members of our community can get to work, to hospital appointments, to supermarkets and more, and in a cost-of-living crisis can often be the most cost-effective – and in some cases the only - transport option available.</p> <p>The Combined Authority is committed to providing sustainable public transport services which are good value for money and successfully meet the needs of those who use them. I have spent time over the last year talking to residents and listening to their concerns, taking the time to ride on both Route 68 and the Ely Zipper to speak to passengers first hand. I know those problems you talk about. I have already written to Baroness Vere in central Government to highlight the issues local bus providers are facing, and will continue to make the case to Government, alongside Mayoral colleagues, for funding support to ensure we have bus services that meet the needs of you, the residents.</p> <p>The Route 68 service is operated by FACT community transport, a charity serving the Fenland, Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire area. It runs on a circular route between Horsefair Bus Station and Tesco at Cromwell Road. There are also important stops at Aces Eye Clinic, Wisbech Retail Park, College of West Anglia, Queen Mary Centre and Rosmini Centre. The Combined Authority</p>

			will assist Fenland District Council to enhance the marketing of the route and improve the customer experience.
--	--	--	---

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
2.	Councillor Bill Hunt East Cambridgeshire District Council	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	<p>I hope what I say and your response will be accurately minuted and I hope we don't waste time bringing members of the public here to just have no record of the minutes. Given that the Mayor in his manifesto said he would concentrate on and improve bus services, can he confirm he will be doing this and will be supporting, at least to the same level, the bus services that currently exist in the Combined Authority area. In particular, I talk about the Ely Zipper as an example, but the Tesco 68 bus is another example and there will be genuine examples, but not everybody has the opportunity to come here. I would like a yes or no answer if possible or something that can be recorded for people to see. The people behind me have come to hear some action and not just waffle. If you have limited me to two minutes I hope your reply will be limited to two minutes.</p> <p>Supplementary question/ comment:</p> <p>I would like the Mayor to confirm that he will support the Ely Zipper and look to expand the service or will he allow the services to be cut in conflict with his manifesto commitments. I would also ask all Board members to make sure that this organisation behaves in an ethical and honest way, not just waffle and no action. I think it is beholden on all the members of the Board to hold the Mayor to account because it is clear what the people want. Thank you.</p> <p>I have tried to work with you, and so far it has produced little fruit. I'm here today with the people I'm with to try to get you to produce some action, not just waffle. So please can we have some action. We have spoken, and of course it is essential that I deal with the bus operators, and I will continue to do that because I am not going to wait for everything to be funnelled through the Combined Authority which seems to take a particularly long time.</p>

	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
2.	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	Councillor Bill Hunt	<p>As outlined in the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, and as I have already said, the Combined Authority is committed to sustainable transport across the region. Buses form a fundamental component of our transport network, allowing people to access opportunities to improve their quality of life. As a result, the Combined Authority will be preparing a Bus Strategy as a daughter document to the LTCP, working with constituent councils, stakeholders, and public transport operators. It is important that a bus network is created and maintained that people want and are able to use, so that we see an increase in passenger journeys as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. It is proposed that this is done by improving the quality and reliability of bus services, so that people can get to more destinations quickly, comfortably, safely, and affordably.</p> <p>However, in the short term, as you know, there remain a number of challenges that need to be addressed. As outlined in response to the previous question, the Transport and Infrastructure Committee on the 14th of September will be considering a paper on the future of bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and looking at the wider issues affecting the sector and options going forward. The Ely Zipper and other routes will be considered as part of that process.</p> <p>This is a very difficult time for bus services across the country, not just for the Combined Authority, with the rise in fuel costs and the scarcity of drivers impacting on services nationally. However, I am acutely aware of the real impact on day-to-day opportunities that losing a bus service means. The Combined Authority is fully committed to providing public transport services which are good value for money and successfully meet the needs of those who use them.</p> <p>Response to supplementary question/ comments:</p> <p>Councillor Hunt, you did write to me, and I have the email you sent to me. I do fully support the idea of the Ely Zipper, and ideally Ely Zipper 2. You also sent me an extra email where you have had conversations with operators. Liaison with operators is important, we need to understand those businesses. But we have to be very careful about using bus services as a political tool, or indeed using the language, 'I hope that gives a bit of ammunition to get at the Mayor'.</p>

			There is a need to work together, and I have got correspondence and I have got officers who are determined to offer bus services for all, across the whole of the community. I don't like any prospect that people are going to get a reduction in bus services. Work with me, work with the Board. Please.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
3.	Graham James Local resident	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	<p>I am the former Chair of Little Thetford Parish Council (a village situated about 3 miles south of Ely off the A10) and run a community cafe that was set up with support from AgeUK. Over 50% of our residents are aged over 60 and many of them rely on the Zipper Bus Service to get to Ely and neighbouring villages. This reliance is due to not having their own vehicles and concerns over cost of living and climate change.</p> <p>As Mayor you have clearly stated on many occasions that your priority for bus market reform is to improve bus frequencies to ensure that all Cambridgeshire Residents 'can get to places quickly'. How does this equate with the proposed removal of support to the Ely Zipper and significant changes to service in neighbouring villages? If these proposals are carried forward they will have a significant negative impact on local residents for whom this is a lifeline and an essential service.</p>
No.	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
3.	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	Graham James (written response)	As outlined in the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), the Combined Authority is committed to sustainable transport across the region. Buses form a fundamental component of our transport network, allowing people to access opportunities to improve their quality of life. As a result, the Combined Authority will be preparing a Bus Strategy as a daughter document to the LTCP, working with constituent councils, stakeholders, and public transport operators. As outlined in your question, it is important that a bus network is created and maintained that people want and are able to use, so that we see an increase in passenger journeys as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. It is proposed that this is done by improving the quality and reliability of bus services, so that people can get to more destinations quickly, comfortably, safely, and affordably.

			<p>However, in the short term there remain a number of challenges that need to be addressed. As outlined previously, the Transport and Infrastructure Committee will be considering a paper on the future of bus services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and looking at the wider issues affecting the sector and options going forward. The Ely Zipper and other routes will be considered as part of that process.</p> <p>This is a difficult time for bus services across the country, not just for the Combined Authority, with the rise in fuel costs and the scarcity of drivers impacting on services nationally. However, we are acutely aware of the real impact on day-to-day opportunities that a loss of bus services can have on our communities. The Combined Authority is committed to providing public transport services which are good value for money and successfully meet the needs of those who use them.</p>
--	--	--	---