

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY – (9th September 2020)

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question
1.	Mr James Boyle	Mayor James Palmer	<p>On 28th August the combined authority published an article headed ‘Mayor Delivers on Promise of new Bus routes to link Cambourne to Cambridge’. This article announced that the X5 coach service between Bedford and Cambridge would be discontinued and replaced with double decker bus service, numbered 905. This is a significant downgrade in terms of on-board facilities but, more importantly, the new service takes a much slower route to central Cambridge. It takes a lengthy detour via Cambourne and then via the Science Park and North Cambridge rather than established direct route along Madingley Road which uses Madingley Road Park and ride as a hub for services to Addenbrookes and the Biomedical Campus. Journeys to Cambridge Parkside from St Neots during peak times are now 30 to 40 minutes longer than before. Was this downgrade in the service for St Neots and Bedford approved by the Transport and Infrastructure Committee and, if so, why was there no consultation with the public or with St Neots representatives?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response
	Mayor James Palmer	Mr James Boyle	<p>The Combined Authority is committed to doubling the size of our economy over 25 years, to extending employment and educational opportunities for residents, and to making growth more sustainable by encouraging the use of public transport and active travel. The new 905 service which I have commissioned means that residents in St Neots now for the first time have the choice of taking a bus service directly to the Cambridge Science Park, which is a high-wage employment supersite with over 7250 people working at the 130 companies based there. Getting some of the thousands of single-occupancy cars that crowd into the Science Park each day off the A428 will significantly assist many St Neots residents in addition to those who decide to commute by public transport.</p> <p>In addition the 905 bus gives St Neots’ students direct access to Cambridge Regional College, again with the aim of reducing car journeys (of staff and students).</p>

		<p>Furthermore, the 905 is arranged to assist people commuting by train from Cambourne to London by providing a fast against-flow bus link to St Neots station, which is expected to reduce the number of cars parked for the day in the streets around the rail station.</p>
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Instead of five year old coaches, two year old leather-seated double-decker buses, with phone chargers at seats and able to travel at 60mph rather than 55mph, are now being used on the route.

This strategic change to the bus service has been greeted by the Cambridge Area Bus Users organisation as “an excellent initiative”. It focuses on getting more local people to their travel destinations without using cars, by generating modal shift. I recognise that there is a small increase in the journey time from St Neots to Cambridge Drummer Street (around 10 minutes in the peak hours); that the benefits to other users, including students, commuters, and new users, and the opportunities the new route creates, all form part of a balanced decision in which the overall balance is strongly positive for the community, the economy and the environment.

Formal consultation is normal in cases where bus links are lost, or service frequencies reduced. In this case the service frequency is enhanced, no links have been lost and several new public transport links have been created.