



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Mayor's Office
2nd Floor, Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
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PE29 3TN

Anthony Browne MP
By email only to anthony.browne.mp@parliament.uk

Thursday 6 October 2022

Dear Anthony

RE: Withdrawal of Stagecoach bus routes in South Cambridgeshire

Thank you for your letter sharing concerns and questions on the future of bus services in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. It will not come as a surprise to you that no issue has generated as much worry and distress from people in the region since I became Mayor. I fully understand and share the deep concern of you and your constituents in South Cambridgeshire.

As you note, I have indeed been very critical of Stagecoach for announcing on September 20 a cut to 18 routes in Cambridgeshire, despite being receipt of public Bus Recovery Grant funding. Earlier in September, the Combined Authority lobbied successfully for an extension of this grant funding to help keep services running, and so I find it particularly unacceptable that such a decision was taken.

On September 21 I authorised Combined Authority officers to urgently go out tender with the intention of retaining as many of the affected Stagecoach East bus services as possible, like-for-like, and with no gaps in service. That process began immediately and will run until October 13.

The Combined Authority has found £1.7m to keep as many of the withdrawn services going as possible between the end of October and the end of March 2023. The outcome of the retendering process will be reported to Combined Authority Board on October 19 for decisions to be taken on which withdrawn routes can be supported and maintained for that period. The initial response from bus operators to the retendering process has been positive. These actions also have the support of the Combined Authority Board.

I confirm that the services affecting your constituents that you raise, namely the V4 (St Ives-Boxworth), 18 (Longstowe-Cambridge) and 915 (Royston-Cambridge), as well as the re-routing of the Citi 4 (Cambourne to Cambridge) and its impacts on Hardwick and Caldecote, are the subject of the ongoing tendering process. As described, we are going into the tendering process with the intention of continuing services like-for-like.

In relation to the Combined Authority's contact with Stagecoach East in the run up to the announcement of the service withdrawals, we were first made aware of an initial longlist of potential service cuts at the end of June 2022 – a long list that we were not permitted to disclose and that was still subject to further assessment by Stagecoach before it was finalised and formally communicated to the Combined Authority.

A final list of these confirmed service withdrawals was received on August 15 giving at least 70 days' notice to the Combined Authority as required by the Transport Act. The Act stipulates that the first 28 days of this notice are on a confidential basis.

Stagecoach did share some details and rationale for their decision with the Combined Authority and other stakeholders at their three roadshows on 22, 23 and 24 August. The Combined Authority made clear its expectation that services should not be withdrawn now that Bus Recovery Grant funding was agreed.

However, apart from changes to one service, they confirmed the list of service withdrawals to the Combined Authority as final on Friday, 26 August.

The information was then registered by Stagecoach with the Traffic Commissioner's Office giving the required 42 days' notice on Friday 16 September, after which the information was able to enter the public domain. With the Queen's funeral and mourning period, Stagecoach understandably chose to delay their announcement until on 20 September.

And, as noted, on 21 September I authorised the retendering process to commence as a further reflection of my commitment to respond to the situation as it developed.

You raise bus franchising, which is something I am supportive of, and sits within a wider Combined Authority Bus Strategy programme. The Bus Strategy is due to be presented in draft form to our Transport and Infrastructure Committee in November. The Bus Strategy will be consulted on after this committee and will set the direction for a refreshed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to be submitted to Government before the end of this year. The objective is to set out a clear case for investment in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough bus system.

The Bus Strategy will also set the framework and direction for a new sustainable bus network across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from March 2023 onwards. In answer to your question on further funding for services, in addition, the Combined Authority is exploring further options for funding this new network, including continuing to make the case to Government for additional resources.

Since my election bus franchising business case has been developed and work to refresh it is also part of the wider Bus Strategy. It will take full account of the emerging strategy and other initiatives, including the Greater Cambridge Partnership's City Access proposals, which are set to go to consultation. This refreshed business case is expected in early 2023. And while I am fully behind franchising, it is imperative that a business case is developed which is sustainable and affordable, and delivers a high quality, accessible service in what is a largely rural region.

I welcome your offer of help. As described, we will be making the case to Government for investment into our bus network. As a nationally important local economy, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough needs more Government investment in transport to unlock the growth and prosperity we all want to see. Your support in any such submissions by the Combined Authority to Government would be welcome and I would be only too happy to keep you advised of progress in this regard.

Please let me know if you have further questions.

Yours sincerely



Dr Nik Johnson

Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

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