

## **Freshford Parish Council**

### **Bus Service Consultation**

#### **Response**

##### **The Number 94 Bus service.**

The Number 94 Bus operated by Libra Travel, runs a return service between Trowbridge and Bath via Southwick, Wingfield, Westwood, Freshford, Limpley Stoke and Monkton Combe. Since the route crosses the county border B&NES Council contribute to Wiltshire Council half the cost of providing the service – about £28K in 2014/15.

Given the physical layout and nature of the villages of Freshford and Limpley Stoke there are six bus stops spread between the two villages – 4 in Freshford and 2 in Limpley Stoke.

##### **From Monday – Saturday the bus provides the following service for Freshford and Limpley Stoke into Bath:**

7.30 am

9.30 am

11.30 am

1. 30 pm

3.30 pm

5.13pm

There is a slight variation depending on whether or not the Service is on a school or non school day.

##### **The return journey from Bath to Freshford operates from Bath Guildhall:**

8.10 am (school days only)

10.10 am

12.10pm

2.10 pm

4.15 pm

5.47 pm.

No evening service is provided.

No service is provided on Sundays or on Public Holidays.

## **Representations by Parish Council**

Together, the villages of Freshford and Limpley Stoke form a vibrant and sustainable community. Freshford community Pre School provides early years education and care for up to 24 children aged between 2 years and 5 years. Freshford Primary School is thriving and providing primary education for close to 150 children. The Beckington Family Practice cares for some 10,000 patients and covers a largely rural area of about 100 square miles. One of its three surgeries (including a dispensing practice) lies in the centre of the village of Freshford and is an invaluable local resource. The Galleries Shop & Café is a successful community shop – built, owned and run by the people of Freshford and Limpley Stoke. The shop aims to serve the community, run an efficient business and to be green – its values include ‘encouraging people to walk, cycle and *to take the bus*’ rather than to use their cars. In the last 12 months development has begun on some 30 additional homes in the village – an increase of approximately 8% of the existing housing stock.

Given the core aims of both central and local government to raise the quality of life and environment in rural areas and to promote sustainable patterns of development, we take the view that the local authority is in a key position to underline its commitment to rural areas by not only sustaining the local infrastructure but also by showing commitment to further develop it. One of the ways this can be done is by ensuring that there is a comprehensive public transport bus service.

1. Freshford Parish Council take the view that the level of bus service currently in operation is already pared back to the minimum service that should be provided by Wiltshire Council. The proposal to reduce the service to 2-3 journeys per day will radically change the service offered. The present 2-hourly service enables a trip to Bath or Trowbridge with two hours there before returning home - something many people do. It also means that anyone on the route can take the bus to almost anywhere in Freshford and Limpley Stoke, stay there an hour and get the bus home again. This won't be possible even if the three trips a day in the consultation option is chosen. Those that can will revert to using their cars.

2. The Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan made on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015 now forms part of the Wiltshire Council Development Plan. See:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/freshford-and-limpley-stoke-neighbourhood-plan-post-referendum-decision-statement.pdf>

Objective 6.1.06 of the Plan reflects the expressed wishes of the community “ *to preserve and support public transport links serving the two villages and to encourage both B&NES and Wiltshire Councils to recognise the importance of their provision especially in the context of their crossing local authority boundaries.*”

3. The Parish Council aligns itself with the key findings of the Pre Consultation Survey conducted in July /August 2015 which reveal:

- *The importance of bus services to users, communities and public sector service providers.*
- *Community transport will not be able to provide transport alternatives on any significant scale.*
- *There is little scope to make subsidised bus services commercial.*
- *There were no new 'big ideas' suggested that would make significant financial savings within the necessary timeframe.*
- *There is limited potential for further savings in other areas of the Council's public transport budgets.*

4. The Parish Council supports the finding that:

***“These bus service reductions would likely have an adverse impact on a number of economic, social and environmental objectives, and the savings could likely be (partly) offset by an unknown impact on other Wiltshire Council and public sector budgets (social care, health, etc).”*** Equality Analysis Evidence Document. Wiltshire Council. 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

5. The Parish Council believes that the current proposals under consideration conflict with the stated objectives set out in the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011- 2026 and (see para. 4 above) will have an adverse impact and will not result in any significant saving. The Transport Plan speaks of:

- a transport system which helps support economic growth across Wiltshire's communities, giving choice and opportunity for people to safely access essential services.
- Seeking to retain overall levels of service that meets identified demand within available resources, meeting accessibility needs for those without private transport and making a contribution towards sustainable transport objectives
- improving sustainable access to a full range of opportunities particularly for those people without access to a car.
- reducing barriers to transport and access for people with disabilities and mobility impairment.
- Encouraging a switch from the private car to cycling, walking and public transport which can generate a dramatic improvement in health.
- A much greater reliance in rural areas on transport services subsidised by the council.

6. The Parish Council support and endorse the representations submitted by Limpley Stoke Parish Council. For ease of reference those representations are set out now below:

*Limpley Stoke Parish Council response to Wiltshire Subsidised Bus Consultation*  
*“The Parish Council is concerned at the possibility of a reduction in bus services in the area and in particular the No 94 bus which connects the villages of Limpley Stoke, Freshford, Westwood and Monkton Combe with Bath and Trowbridge and the No 265 between Bath and Salisbury which runs by the northern side of the village.*

*The current No 94 service operates at times which fit well with the working hours of many businesses in town and in the villages and offers an alternative for individuals not wishing to drive to work and incur parking costs.*

*For older people in the village, some of whom may not drive or own a car, the bus service is an essential link to local towns and their facilities e.g. libraries, swimming and leisure centres, hospitals, shops and cinemas and often a link to friends, all of which reduce the risk of social isolation. With an ageing population we should expect that this bus service will continue to be a lifeline for many in the village.*

*Public transport services are also relied on more by individuals with disabilities who may not otherwise be mobile.*

*The provision of bus services in our village allows families to operate without the need for a second car. Indeed, many individuals choose to take the bus as an environmentally-friendly option which is to be encouraged including many walkers accessing the local countryside. These bus services also enable young persons to travel independently whether to schools and colleges or for social or sporting purposes.*

*The No. 94 bus is used by people of all ages for a variety of purposes. There are clear benefits to the environment and to the safety of pedestrians in our area of reducing the use of cars. It should be recognised that the loss of the No. 94 bus would cut all public transport links between the villages and increase car travel and car parking.*

*The only other public transport available to Limpley Stoke residents is the train, however, Freshford station is a considerable walking distance from some parts of the village.*

*Rather than cutting bus services the Parish Council would support moves to promote greater use of public transport and consideration of alternative funding, with possibly some restrictions on free travel or discounted fares like the senior rail card.”*

Freshford Parish Council

31<sup>st</sup> March 2016