

## **Update on the No. 94 bus service, July 2023**

### **Parish Council Actions**

The Parish Council, along with a number of residents, submitted statements to the West of England Combined Authority meeting on 16 June 2023, stressing the need for a solution to be found to secure the future of the 94 bus service.

All documents for the meeting, including the Parish Council's statement, are available from the [WECA website](#)

### **Current situation**

The service is currently fully funded until 27 August 2023 (by Wiltshire Council on a temporary basis).

A response from Wiltshire Council (29 June 2023) to a Freedom of Information Act request shared with the Parish Council stated:

'Prior to April 2023, the total cost of running bus service 94 was £108,108 per annum, with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) contributing 50% of the cost of this (£54,054).

On 1st April 2023, an inflation increase was applied to all Wiltshire Council bus contracts and so the total cost of the contract for service 94 increased to £114,594. However Wiltshire Council is only able to allocate 50% of this cost from its own budget (£57,297).

At the present time, no agreement has been made with WECA / Bath & North East Somerset Council to pay their share of the contract from 1st April 2023 and so Wiltshire Council is currently having to bear the full cost of this contract, which is a situation that we cannot sustain long term. However negotiations are ongoing and we are hopeful that an agreement will be reached during the summer.'

Ward Cllr Fiona Gourley has provided the following update on the bus situation (03 July 2023):

- 1) The bus situation is a top priority for B&NES, and I have been working with senior leaders to draft a proposal to persuade WECA to extend or restore some of the lost or threatened regular supported services across NES (such as the 94).
- 2) The Government has now given permission to WECA to spend some of its Bus Services Improvement Scheme funding on maintaining regular services – and we have written to the Bus Minister to ask him to use his influence on the WECA Mayor.
- 3) In putting together the proposal, we are working cross border with neighbouring transport leaders and officers, and cross-party with all the NES councillors, who can influence the WECA Mayor. This includes a meeting with Wiltshire County Council's Caroline Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, and Samantha Howells, Director of Highways and Transport.
- 4) We specifically discussed the funding of the 94 bus and how they could help us put pressure on the WECA Mayor to continue to part-fund the 94, as it is so urgent.
- 5) We have consulted bus experts and campaigners to include their ideas.
- 6) Whilst it takes time to retender buses that have stopped, we are suggesting to WECA that they use the Westlink buses to provide a regular, timetabled service in the mornings and afternoons as a quicker solution.
- 7) In the coming weeks, we are planning a campaign for our proposal, including press releases, a petition, letters to the media, information on the B&NES website etc and we will let you know when that goes live and how Freshford residents can take part.