

Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee – 2 February 2023

Agenda Item 4 – Public Questions

Question One

I am concerned about the removal of evening bus services: for instance, the 280 between Oxford and Aylesbury used to offer late-night services beyond midnight on Fridays and Saturdays pre-pandemic, which have now been removed. These changes clearly run counter to the aim of encouraging people out of their cars and have targeted services that used to be comparatively well used. What information does Bucks Council hold about the removal of evening services across the county's bus network and what steps is it taking to encourage a reversal of the trend, whilst recognising the economic difficulties being faced by the companies and the fact that the council has no direct control over them.

Answer

Thank you for raising this matter with us. The late-night services between Oxford and Aylesbury, via Thame and Haddenham, were not subsidised by Buckinghamshire Council. Unfortunately, these journeys ceased during the pandemic, when leisure destinations themselves would've been required to close. As of yet these journeys have not restarted and Arriva have indicated to the Council that there are no current plans to do so. To subsidise these services would not, regrettably, be something that would be affordable from Council budgets at present.

Information provided by Arriva indicates that an average of 8-12 passengers per journey used these services, approximately 40 per day in total. A number of these would have been wholly within Oxfordshire.

The bus industry has faced a number of challenges since the start of the pandemic and now, with usage recovering into the 80%, there have been sharp cost increases for operators to bear including fuel and staffing costs, driven partly by a shortage of drivers in the industry over the past year-18 months. We are working with operators to support them through maintaining our subsidy budgets, through continuing to pay our concessionary fares reimbursement based on pre-COVID usage and through promoting bus services alongside operators. We have some schemes in planning for 23/24 that we'll be able to confirm shortly.

All of the above is intended to provide certainty to operators so that they can plan their services and maximise the resources at their disposal. It ultimately comes down to where is each of the vehicles in the fleet best utilised and we do understand the need for operators to be focussing resources on core daytime and early evening services.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which is available on the website, sets out aspirations to improve evening services, although not specifically late night services such as these. We were disappointed not to receive funding for our BSIP that means we cannot deliver on many of our aspirations at this time. However, the Council will be keeping its BSIP up to date and ensuring the Department for Transport has access to up to date

versions of the document, so that Buckinghamshire can be in their considerations if any future funding related to the BSIP becomes available.

Question Two

The education of the public to be more careful on recycling waste would be effective in burning less waste at Greatmoor. There are indications from the Welsh experience that a 10% reduction in waste is achievable in Buckinghamshire. This would produce a corresponding drop in CO² emissions. What improved methods of education could be effective in defining exactly what can and cannot be recycled and the requirement of cleanliness of items?

Answer

Buckinghamshire Council sent less than 0.2% of waste to landfill last year (21/22). It achieved this through a combination of recycling and composting 49% of its waste and sending the remainder to Greatmoor Energy from Waste facility (EfW). Landfilling waste creates around 20x more greenhouse gas emissions than incineration, so by only sending 0.2% of waste to landfill Buckinghamshire Council is avoiding a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions which would have been emitted. There is also no incentive for the council to send more waste to Greatmoor than necessary. FCC, the contractor that runs the plant, are tasked with finding other waste sources if Buckinghamshire Council reduces how much waste it sends.

Welsh Authorities have very different methods of collecting recycling involving funding from the devolved administration which is not in place here in England. This makes it hard to draw fair comparisons between Welsh and English authorities.

However, we know the preventing materials becoming waste in the first place is important in reducing carbon emissions, saving taxpayers money and making sure natural resources are not depleted. We have a Waste Prevention Team who run public campaigns and projects to help residents prevent waste like;

- Delivering over 150 educational sessions to schools, community groups and local residents on Waste Prevention. These reached over 2,500 people, 1,300 of which were children.
- Managing the Waste Wizard and Zero Waste Map which had over 150,000 users combined in 2022. The Waste Wizard allows resident to get tailored recycling information on thousands of items and the Zero Waste Map helps residents find local businesses and projects that supply zero waste products or services.
- Launching new initiatives like the Cloth Nappy Discount scheme helping local residents choose reusable nappies instead of disposables saving waste going to Greatmoor and reducing costs for householders. Over 500 applications have been received in the first year.
- Working with our HRC contractor to increase how much waste was donated for reuse at the Charity shops at Aston Clinton & High Wycombe. We achieved the biggest percentage of reuse last year at the HRCs than ever before.

We will continue to deliver project like these and more to help reduce the amount of waste produce by Buckinghamshire homes.