

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the Council, nominated by the Mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of three Deputations has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

(A) DEPUTATION CONCERNING THE 'ROUTING OF THE SIGHT SEEING BUS.'**Deputation - To prevent the City Sightseeing Bus being routed through Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent (East)****(Spokesperson) - Mr Christopher Goss**

On 3 March, the City Sightseeing Bus, operated by the Brighton and Hove Bus and Coach Company, was re-routed down the east side of Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent, from Eastern Road down to Marine Parade. The Company obtained a summer 2012 permit for the re-routing from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner from 3 March. The buses run daily at half hourly intervals from 10.35am to 6.35pm, that is 17 journeys per day, from 28 April till 16 September, then with reduced frequency until end September. This deputation is from the residents and requests the Council to take the necessary steps to prevent the bus being routed through Sussex Square/Lewes Crescent once the current permit has expired.

Sussex Square and Lewes Crescent, along with Arundel Terrace and Chichester Terrace, form the Kemp Town Estate, which has a Grade 1 listing. The Estate is a beautiful and cherished part of Brighton and we as residents want to share it with our Brighton community. We believe, however, that riding on a double decker bus, of up to 18 tons fully laden, which is travelling at speed through the Estate is not the way to enjoy, preserve and share its beauty and atmosphere. We believe that the bus is endangering the Estate's inhabitants. Many of the buses run empty or nearly empty, which is not good in terms of fuel use and maintenance, climate change and the environment. Scheduled bus services have never before run through the Estate.

We believe the Estate should be kept as a relaxed pedestrian area which all can share. We very much welcome visitors but believe strongly that the Estate can best be enjoyed on foot. For those unable to explore it on foot, the best way to get a good view of the buildings and gardens in their entirety is from the bus on Marine Parade or Eastern Road. The viewer does not gain much in addition from seeing just a few of the houses up close. We are also concerned that the bus will set a precedent in changing the road from being mostly residential to one with broader commercial use which will be very detrimental to the Estate.

This deputation by the residents has the full support of the Kemp Town Society. We will present to the Council at its meeting on 19 July an accompanying petition from local residents. The Brunswick and Adelaide Residents' Group, (covering Adelaide Crescent, Brunswick Square - which is also Grade 1 listed - and Lansdowne Place), also supports this Deputation. Tour buses passed through Brunswick Square at one time but no longer do so.

We understand that the Council's Conservation Advisory Group (CAG), at their 24 April 2012 meeting, discussed the re-routing of the bus through the Estate and that the Group agreed that it should write to the bus company expressing its concern and that the KTS should raise this concern with its members. We understand that CAG's concerns are similar to those raised in this deputation.

We were also heartened to hear of the strong action taken by the Bath Council in 1998 when the safety and environment of the Royal Crescent in Bath (in particular the historical cobbled roadway) was endangered by sightseeing buses. The Council there arranged a public enquiry which resulted in the closure of one end of the Crescent to prevent through traffic. We also understand that the closure has yielded unexpected benefits to the Crescent from enabling visitors and residents to enjoy a peaceful and relaxed primarily pedestrian environment in the Crescent.

Councillor West, Chair of the Environment & Sustainability Committee will respond.

1. Safety

We engaged the engineers Hemsley Orrell Partnership to provide an opinion on the safety aspects. A copy of their report has been provided to the Council and its findings are summarized here.

There are communal gardens in the middle of the Estate which all the flats and houses in the Estate own and maintain together. The owners and tenants use the gardens very extensively as their main outdoor living space as few of the flats have their own gardens. There is therefore a continual pedestrian flow across the road where the bus currently runs, of residents from the flats and houses to three garden gates. The first gate is just below the point where the bus turns from Eastern Road into Sussex Square. The second is right on the sharp bend half way down the road. The Appendix to the engineer's report has an aerial view of the Estate and the bus route. It also contains 6 photos, the first four of which are reproduced below and which show the bus rounding the sharp bend; photos 5 and 6 in the report show the bus entering Sussex Square from Eastern road near the top gate.

As shown in photos 1-4 below, the bus has to cross the centre line of the road into the path of oncoming traffic in order to round the sharp bend. This makes it difficult for it to pass oncoming vehicles, which are forced by the bus to go close to the railings, and so also become a danger to pedestrians, especially those entering or leaving the gardens. The road's overall profile is also ill-suited for regular use by large vehicles, because it is relatively narrow and its sides along its entire length have an unusually steep camber, so buses drive near the middle of the road, even away from the sharp bend. There is little warning time for pedestrians when the bus turns off Eastern Road, before it passes the first garden gate.

A large proportion of the pedestrians at risk are children and old people who are used to the road being quiet, with only neighbourhood cars and the occasional delivery vehicle moving along it. They are not prepared for a large bus travelling at speed and this is especially risky for small children, who may be less cautious and whose sight lines may be impeded by the parked cars, and for the elderly whose reaction times are slower. The added care needed to cross the road also reduces the enjoyment of the garden.

2. Integrity of the Buildings

Under the Grade 1 listing rules, the residents are required to preserve the buildings and adhere to very strict guidelines regarding the avoidance of harm or change to the structures and their appearance. We believe that this strict avoidance of harm criterion should be applied to avoid any risk of damage to the buildings and the environs from unnecessary vehicle traffic. The road is edged on the garden side by unusual steeply sloping cobble gutters, which are original from when the Estate was built and are probably fragile and at risk from the passage of regular heavy traffic. Cellars are located under the pavement to the front of the houses; in some cases these extend about 1.5 metres under the road itself and some of the cellars have been converted to full residential use. While the consultant engineers consider it would be difficult to establish a definitive connection between regular passage of buses and structural damage to the buildings, why subject the buildings and road to this unnecessary risk?

3. Photographs: Bus at sharp bend at Sussex Square/ Lewes Crescent/ access gate to communal gardens.

Photo 1: Bus and cars entering bend in opposite directions at the same time.



Photo 2: Bus swings out to avoid parked vehicles. Oncoming cars pull tight to left.



Photo 3: Cars pass bus at pedestrian access to communal gardens



Photo 4: Bus swings wide into opposite lane at pedestrian access gate.



(B) DEPUTATION CONCERNING ‘AGE FRIENDLY CITY’.

Mr. Bojczuk (Spokesperson)

“The Older People’s Council, with the support of the city’s major stakeholders working with the elderly – AgeUK Brighton & Hove, Pensioner Action, CSV, CVSF-FED, Carer’s Group and Alzheimers Society – are seeking the support and commitment of Brighton & Hove Council in making an application to the WHO for Brighton & Hove to become a member of the WHO Age Friendly City Network.

The Age Friendly City Network was launched in June 2010 in Geneva with New York as the inaugural city. Since then, 17 cities worldwide have joined the network, with Manchester the only member, so far, from Britain.

Our application will mark the start of a programme designed to build age friendliness and active ageing into Brighton & Hove city policies and so become a city fit for all ages that promotes active ageing and independent living well into old age.

This requires a commitment to undertake a base line age-friendly status study, then to plan for and commit to improvements over the following 3 years. We feel that Brighton & Hove already fulfil many of the required criteria and working to improve age friendliness will tie in with the council’s existing sustainable community plans and friendly neighbourhood strategies.

We propose that the council vote to accept our motion to apply to join the age friendly city network and to work to include age friendly principles into council policies.”

Councillor Jarrett, Chair of the Adult Care & Health Committee will respond.

(C) DEPUTATION CONCERNING ‘THE CUTS TO BUS SUBSIDIES.’

Ms. Tracey Hill (Spokesperson)

“When cuts were announced in early June to twelve subsidised bus services affecting large parts of the city, there was a public outcry. Cuts to the 81 and 52 mean no weekday evening service in Goldstone Valley, and no direct service at all from Ovingdean to the city centre. Sunday evening services will be thinned out from September to May, leaving no bus services at all on Elm Grove or Queens Park Road after 6pm on a Sunday for nine months of the year. Two school buses will cease, the 74 and the 96, serving Patcham, Hove Park and Blatchington Mill schools.

A petition in support of the 52 raised over 300 signatures in just a few days, and was presented at the Policy and Resources committee meeting on June 14th. At the same meeting, schoolchildren argued passionately in support of their school buses and amendments were proposed. However, the decision went ahead.

Since then, word has continued to spread. From Fiveways to the race course, from Woodingdean to Hove Park, over 1,600 signatures on the ongoing petition started by Brighton and Hove Labour demonstrates how much people value the city’s bus service. Many can’t understand why the Green Party controlled Council, so keen to get people out of their cars, would want to see the bus service reduced. People have pointed out that not everyone can cycle, and that many cannot drive or afford taxis. The elderly, those with disabilities, and young people are the most affected.

Targeting low usage services as a cost-saving exercise is short term. Those living far from the city centre with no car need a comprehensive bus service. Who would move to Goldstone Valley now without a car, knowing that there are no buses at all on a weekday evening, or Ovingdean, which is no longer linked directly to the city centre? Reducing the service causes a downward spiral, where rising car ownership drives down bus usage even more, making services ever more expensive to run, and at the same time increasing congestion, damaging air quality and enlarging our carbon footprint.

Following the support demonstrated by the petition and in the pages of the Argus, and after a meeting between Labour councillors and Brighton and Hove Bus Company, it now appears that the operator may be willing to reinstate the Sunday evening services, and we understand that there is a possibility that the Council will continue to fund the two school buses.

We welcome this, and thank the Council for responding to public opinion in this positive way. However, we would also like to ask that the funding of the 52 and 81 services be continued, by reconsidering other transport and sustainability budgets. It is difficult to justify spending on projects which may or may not deliver environmental benefits in the longer term, by cutting existing services which are helping people to live sustainably now.

Some have called Brighton and Hove a protest city, and people certainly have a right to voice a protest when services that they contribute to, and on which they rely, are withdrawn. We hope the Council is prepared to listen to the views of the people about their valued bus service, and to reconsider their decision.”

Councillor J. Kitcat, Leader of the Council will respond.