

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the committee for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

Two deputations have been referred from the last Council meeting held on the 25th October 2012, which are detailed below along with the responses given by the appropriate Chair at the Council meeting:

(i) DEPUTATION CONCERNING THE No. 52 BUS SERVICE

Spokesperson: Mr. Steve Wedd

“Please re-instate the 52 bus service to it’s original route and timings from the city centre to Woodingdean and Ovingdean. You know the background, you made the decision and we know that money is tight at present and we know that savings have to be found but only Ovingdean in baring the brunt of those savings, all other bus services were saved.

Lost passengers, lost revenue, more car journeys. The brief in your papers from me showed some of those negatively affected. Residents, parent, school and college students, primary school children, nurses, volunteers, City Council workers and patients for the RSCH.

The new times don’t suit; when the choices miss the bus or miss school, my daughter misses the bus and I don’t go on the bus either with her. That’s missed tickets, missed revenue. Before this was introduced there was little or no visible consultation, certainly not on the 52 that I got on everyday. Since implementation, very little justification. Over the last 6 weeks I’ve asked Councillor Davey and his officers 21 questions about the tendering process. I’ve had barely an acknowledgement and yet no reply I’m sure the Councillors will share my regret at what appears to be reticence on behalf of Councillors whose decision it was.

9 other routes have been saved in part or in whole, I congratulate the Council for saving those, can you not save just the last one? We’ve been given lots of explanations about why the buses have to be re-timed. The Big Lemon says it’s to meet the 47 at the Marina. Not so, Mr Johnson told me that cross ticketing was always part of the tender, there was never a link. If that’s the case then why the City Council compel the Big Lemon 52 service to meet and only to meet, the 47 Compass?

Which organisation is telling the complete truth? Mr Johnson has also blamed the print run of the bus times publication for holding on to the new, inconvenient times and as we know bus times is published by the red buses which I think is a competitor

to Big Lemon and Compass. It's a bit like getting BA to sell the seats on Virgin Airplanes.

My brief to you Councillor shows that the morning timings are useless for all practical purposes for passengers trying to get to work or school. It isn't just a change at the Marina that's not a minor inconvenience, it's often windy, it's often wet, the sheltering is awful you have to walk and the bus times that you are going to catch are not on the internet and they're not on the real time displays.

Do we wait for 55 minutes or only 5? And those two changes together plus times and the changes are a positive disincentive to passengers, like me, committed to bus travel. Customers have a choice, most have cars or alternatives to the bus, they don't have to get the car, fight the traffic and parking fees but many are because the 52 no longer works for them. Think of the journey out of the city centre, there's only one place where the coast way bus combines with the 52 and that's Roedean School right on the A259 in the wind, I don't know if there's a bus shelter there, can't remember but it's bleak, horrid, exposed and it's the only place where the 2 buses cross.

Think about the walk up Greenways, for a young and fit and healthy pedestrian like me it's easy but for the infirm or the elderly; yet another obstacle to bus transport and school children have to change. You see 150 odd children from Cardinal Newman, 39 odd from BHASVIC. Their journey time has doubled. What about the impact of Kent having multiple bus companies running services in Brighton?

What about the tourists? Think about London buses, New York cabs. Ticket prices up 25% when you buy from the driver and just in closing, can I ask you to consider all the other places in the County of Sussex which are better served than Ovingdean. All we want is a service as good as Steyning, all those well known Brighton Council Tax payers in Tunbridge Wells, Lewes, Uckfield and Ringmer. Ringmer has twice as many buses as Ovingdean and they don't pay taxes to you. What do we want please Councillors? Reversion to our old bus times, school buses back, a direct city centre just like Ringmer and Steyning and you can afford it. It is not as much as you say Councillor Davey."

Councillor Davey Response:

"With regard to, I can't remember how many questions you submitted, but you asked for them to be treated as an FOI (Freedom of Interest request) and they are being treated as such and a response will be coming accordingly. Brighton and Hove Buses did not withdraw the 52 at weekdays and 57 Sunday services Woodingdean/Ovingdean direct to the city centre, the contracts for these Council supported services came to an end and the new tenders were awarded as you know to the Big Lemon and Compass Travel respectively.

Under European Legislation we have to go out to competitive tender for the services and each company bids for those tenders. We have to accept the best bid based on quality and price, as bus companies will use their vehicles on commercial and supported services in the most efficient way possible, we cannot stipulate a particular vehicle levy for our supported buses without insisting our services were operated

using branded buses which would raise the cost substantially and we are not allowed to direct an award to a particular dominant operator and I'm sure other Councillors would not wish us to show preference like that even if we were able to.

As you point out there is an improving service from and to destinations in the widest Sussex area which is very good news for this city as more people are choosing to travel here by bus. All of these services are operated commercially by either Brighton and Hove Buses or other bus companies with no financial support, certainly from this Local Authority. If the number of passengers on the number 52 route were sufficient a commercial service could possibly be operated but reports from the operators unfortunately show that, in their view, this is not the case. With regards to cost, the extra contract cost of maintaining a falling 52 service over 4 years was considerably more than £100,000 per annum which the Council was unable to afford.

However the Council has ensured that there is a good link from the 52 to the hospital and into the city centre. With regards to timetables, the Council has arranged the Brighton and Hove Bus Company to provide and maintain all timetables for the bus services it funds regardless of operator. This ensures that the bus information is provided to the same uniform high standard across the city and the number of other bus operators using commercial routes within the city also choose to pay to have their service included within the Brighton and Hove Buses timetable frames in Brighton and Hove Buses format.

The Big Lemon's Buses on the route through Ovingdean are clearly marked with the route number and destination, in your written deputation, and I'm not sure you mentioned it in your verbal one, you also mentioned the Lewes Road and the money being used to pay for the improvements is from a one off Government Funded grant specifically for that purpose and would not be transferable to support an existing bus service elsewhere."

Deputation as Submitted:

Please reinstate the No. 52 Bus Service on its original timings from the City Centre to Ovingdean and Woodingdean.

- 1) Thank you for receiving this deputation. I represent Ovingdean bus users, and the Ovingdean Residents and Preservation Society.

Background

- 2) The Council reduced the subsidy it paid to Brighton & Hove Bus Company to run non commercial services. Consequently, Brighton & Hove Buses chose to withdraw its 52 (weekdays) and 57 (Sunday) services from Woodingdean and Ovingdean direct to the City centre. A reduced tender was let to Big Lemon (weekdays) and Compass (weekends). The timetable was changed, the school buses withdrawn completely, and passengers now have to change at the Marina to continue to the City by bus.
- 3) We know that money is tight at present, and that the Council has to find savings wherever it can. However, it appears that only Ovingdean has borne the full

impact of those savings. All the other bus services proposed for subsidy cuts were saved.

Lost passengers, lost revenue, more car journeys

- a) Residents who gave up their private cars to choose to use the bus are now buying them back, because they cannot get to work on time.
- b) Parents who formerly entrusted children to the bus now drive them across the city.
- c) One parent told a public meeting last week about how she had chosen Cardinal Newman for her daughter, but regrets that choice, now the direct bus route has been removed.
- d) 152 school children from Cardinal Newman live in the four Deans. I don't know how many of those used the 52 service, but I witnessed many school services and they were always busy to full. BHASVIC is similarly affected – 36 students live on the route.
- e) A specialist cancer nurse can't get to work to open his 0900 clinic on time because the bus times don't suit.
- f) A man who offers his time as a volunteer at the Hove Town Hall CAB gets to his workplace 15 minutes late, which disorganises the remainder of his appointments.
- g) Those requiring medical services at RSCH can't get there by bus because the times don't suit and because of the compulsory change at the Marina.
- h) School children from Ovingdean attending schools in Rottingdean can no longer take the village bus to the coast and there change for Rottingdean. When the choice is '*miss the bus or miss school*', they miss the bus. Their parents don't buy a ticket either.

Supporting Information:

Timings matter

- 1) Before September, morning commute buses used to go at 0651, 0720, 0750, 0801, and 0820. The timings were good for those commuting to London, to school, to work in Brighton.
- 2) Now, the first early morning bus is 0738, then 0838. 0738 is no good for a London commuter taking the train (London Bridge by 0946), too early for Brighton commuters; and 0838 is too late for them. All now have to change at the Marina, or hope for space on a coastway bus.
- 3) Changing the timetable must have seemed such a simple matter, but it makes the route useless for passengers trying to get to work or school. Imposing a change at the Marina is not merely an inconvenience: it causes significant delay, in a place not unknown for bad weather, onto buses that don't go where people want them to go.
- 4) The two changes together act as a positive disincentive to passengers committed to bus travel to continue on public transport.

Detail matters - why the changes?

- 5) The Big Lemon told us that the change in timetable was forced upon it, due to having to connect with the Compass service 47 from Saltdean to the City Centre. We are told now by the Council that cross ticketing was part of the tender. Why did the City Council compel the BL 52 to meet (and only to meet) Compass 47 connexions? Without that enforced connexion, times could have been left as they had been for years – times that suit passengers.
- 6) School children and students used to be able to journey direct from the eastern villages of Woodingdean, Rottingdean, Ovingdean, and Saltdean to and from schools at Cardinal Newman and BHASVIC. Now they are obliged to change – onto coastway buses that are full, or buses that don't connect at the Marina, or then again at the Railway Station. The journey time has doubled.

Appearance matters

- 7) In a city so heavily reliant on tourism, uniformity of appearance is important. Red London buses, black taxis are worldwide symbols of London. In New York, you look out for a yellow cab. In the City of Brighton, the buses are mostly red and cream except when they are purple or bright yellow.
- 8) Route timetables in the village are printed on red and cream Brighton Hove letterhead, but the bus that comes is yellow. How do tourists or students at the College know that?
- 9) We know that the contract has been let. I am sure that revoking that contract will cost more than continuing it. Over the last six weeks, I have repeatedly asked 21 questions about the tendering process as it affected the 52 compared to other routes. I regret that up to the point of drafting this deputation paper, I have had barely an acknowledgement, and no reply.

Ticket prices matter

- 10) Because the new operators don't accept the smartkey card, passengers have to buy driver tickets or make complicated arrangements yesterday. £3.50 from the website well ahead of time, £4.00 from shops, but £4.40 from the driver on the route.

Taxpayers matter

- 11) The following suburbs of Brighton have better services than Ovingdean -
 - a) Tunbridge Wells has twice as many buses as Ovingdean, Lewes 6 an hour, Uckfield – 2 buses an hour, Eastbourne 6 an hour mid-day, Steyning has three buses in both rush hours - even Ringmer has two buses an hour from Brighton.

What do we want?

- 12) Reversion to our old bus times. School buses back. A direct city centre service, just like Ringmer and Steyning.
- 13) Can you afford it? Yes. It's less than £100k. Stop improving existing cycle lanes in Lewes Road and give us back our direct buses on the original timings, please.

(ii) DEPUTATION CONCERNING THE No. 52 BUS SERVICE**Spokesperson: Miss. Anelica Tsapparelli**

Travelling to and from Cardinal Newman School and the safety issues as a result of the changes to the 52 bus service.

“I’ve been catching the 52; the only school bus that services Woodingdean and Ovingdean for over 3 years. I left the house at 8:35am every morning and caught the bus all the way to school and also in the afternoons, a journey taking me around 50 minutes. The double decker bus was usually full with students from Cardinal Newman School and Sixth Form, BHASVIC and Blatchington Mill. Two weeks after the new school year began I was given a letter informing me that my bus would be cancelled in less than a week and I would have to find alternative means of getting to school. I currently catch 2 buses to school, the first of which being the 52 to the Marina and in order to catch this bus I leave at 7:25am 10 minutes earlier.

As we approach winter and it becomes increasingly dark in the mornings and late afternoons, I’m waiting at bus stops in the dark often alone. After catching the 52 for 25 minutes, I wait in the Marina for my next bus the 7 which despite being due every 7 minutes sometimes takes nearly 20 often in the cold and the rain. I get off the bus at Montefiore Road at approximately 8:30 but frequently later, school starts at 8:40am this is a 0.6 mile walk that takes 10 minutes if I rush, the journey entails walking along and crossing the busy Old Shoreham Road, in order to avoid being late for school and getting detention I do not have time to walk to a crossing and must wait for a gap in the traffic and run across the road.

I also have to walk across a field with no path and is muddy but as the mornings become colder, will become icy and more hazardous. In the afternoons I make the same journey in reverse arriving in the Marina at 3:35pm and wait until 4:10pm sometimes alone and, again, am concerned about the safety implications of this. I am currently 14 but my younger sister, aged 12, must also make this journey and I cannot always accompany her. My youngest sister is 10 and will be a pupil at Cardinal Newman School when she is aged 11, how am I expected to get to school in time without endangering my life?”

Answer from Councillor Sue Shanks

“The history of bus services is a long complicated one to fit in here, but we all wish that we did not have the situation of privatised bus services etc. We are really sorry about the lateness of the announcement of this and we have apologised to schools and to parents because people need to know what’s happening in advance so I do apologise for that. We are looking at school transport across the city because it’s obviously very important to us to make sure that children are able to get to school on time, we don’t have a legal obligation to make sure that there’s a bus that goes to your home but we do have a responsibility to make sure there are school places and we need to look very closely at the safety issues so we are having a review of this and I’ve asked officers to look at this across both school transport and public transport to make sure that those two are working well together. So I’m sorry about your journey but it is something that we are concerned about and we are happy to hear individual stories to see if we can help with that.”