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Date: 04/06/25

Dear Lord Houchen

Council Motion –Bus Services

The Director of Community Services, Environment & Culture wrote to you on 13 March 2025 with details of a motion approved by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council at its meeting on 22 January 2025. The motion related to bus services and stated:

Motion to Council – Bus Services

"This Council notes that:

- The new government has pledged "the biggest overhaul to buses in a generation" to "put local communities in the driving seat" by supporting them to place buses under public control and announcing £1Billion for better buses,
- The Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham has provided a model for placing buses under public control, stating -

"Greater Manchester is on course to complete the re-regulation of buses on time and on budget early in the New Year, becoming the first city-region outside London to put them fully back under public control after four decades of deregulation.

"Our policy aim throughout has been to create a low-fare, high-patronage system similar to the one that has brought higher growth and productivity to London. This will remain the mission of the Bee Network.

"On 5/1/25, we will proceed with our plan to introduce a new simpler, flatter fare structure based around a £2 single fare and, on 23/3/25, a contactless London-style payment system with a daily and weekly cap setting a maximum for what people pay when travelling on our buses and trams.

"Because of the decisions we have taken, and the progress we have made, Greater Manchester is in a different position to other areas across England when it comes to bus funding and bus fares. We are beginning to benefit from similar financial advantages as those long enjoyed by London."

- The Mayor of Liverpool City Region have also taken the decision to franchise local bus services to ensure they take back control of these vital public services that make the difference for people who have no other choices to travel to access education, healthcare and employment opportunities.
- The Mayors of the West Midlands, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and the North East are also in the process of preparing to make similar decisions.
- The Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority can exercise such powers under the Bus Services Act and by doing so would make a real difference to the residents of this Borough and others in the Tees Valley.

Therefore, we call on Stockton Council to write to The Mayor of the Tees Valley, Ben Houchen and the Tees Valley Combined Authority to –

- Bring back under public control the disastrously deregulated bus system.
- Reinststate a reliable and regular bus service to outlying areas such as, but not only, The Clarendes and Stillington
- Fund a maximum £2 bus fare across the Tees Valley”

At the Council meeting on 21 May, Councillor Paul Weston asked if we have received a response and was advised that the Council had not yet received a response. I therefore undertook to contact you directly to seek a response to the motion.

At the same meeting, Councillor Katie Weston posed the following question to me:

“As the leader is aware, for the first time in over a decade the Clarendes finally have a direct bus to Billingham, although limited and on a trial basis. This bus service is getting cancelled next week, as a private bus company cannot make a profit from a customer base of a village, especially off-peak. Does the leader agree that bus services shouldn’t be ran purely on a profit motive, and instead, like Teesside Airport, should be ran as a public service?”

In my answer, I agreed that every area across the Borough deserves access to a regular bus service but that this had proved problematical over many years for vulnerable communities like the Clarendes. I firmly believe that transport cannot be purely run on a profit motive and the needs of communities must be taken into consideration. I undertook to contact you myself to seek your support in securing bus subsidies for all vulnerable areas.

Thank you in anticipation for your consideration of the above.

Please note that any response you send to this letter will be shared with all Members of the Council and made available to view with the relevant minutes from the meeting of Council (22 January 2025 and 21 May 2025) on the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council website.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Lisa Evans
Leader, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council