

Golden Motion (Liberal Democrat)

TAKING BACK PUBLIC CONTROL OF OUR BUSES

Full Council notes that:

1. A comprehensive bus service, providing a reliable and economical means of travel to all parts of the city for work, child support, health care, leisure, and other purposes is ~~of a vital~~ part of any city's integrated transport network and of great importance to the city's residents.
2. There are multiple economic and social benefits of maintaining an effective and accessible bus service including
 - a. providing a reliable means of travel for commuters and consumers contributing to the local economy.
 - b. allowing those who would otherwise be isolated more freedom to access safe and social ways to participate in community and city life, improving their wellbeing and aiding independent living. This includes, but is not restricted to, those with physical or other disabilities, the elderly, and those on low incomes.
 - c. reducing traffic, congestion, and air pollution through the removal of private vehicles from the roads.

~~3.~~ The Bus Services Act 2017 prohibits 'relevant authorities', such as councils and combined authorities, from establishing municipal (publicly owned) bus companies. However, it allows for some alternative models to the provision of bus services where these were previously required to be operated solely by private companies whose working relationship with local authorities was strictly limited. The revised options are Enhanced Partnership, Advanced Quality Partnerships, and Bus Franchising. ~~This act also prohibits 'relevant authorities', such as councils and combined authorities, from establishing municipal (publicly owned) bus companies.~~

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~~4.~~ Bus Franchising offers the opportunity for public direction of innovation of fares, routes, and bus quality.

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5. Bus Franchising is being implemented or explored by a number of city and regional authorities across the country including the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

~~5-6. Franchising the region's bus network and building the necessary infrastructure to facilitate a reliable, efficient bus service will be costly and time consuming – Greater Manchester's franchising scheme will take eight years to materialise. Therefore, further measures are needed to address the bus crisis in the immediate term. Bristol City Council should support WECA in this endeavour wherever possible.~~

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Full Council believes that

7. As a key public service, bus services should ideally be publicly owned and publicly run. The Government should overturn the ban on councils and combined authorities establishing municipal bus companies.

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~~There are significant speed and cost advantages in implementing a more comprehensive mass transit solution based on buses as opposed to alternatives that are dependent on costly and disruptive infrastructure.~~

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~~1. Pending any new government overturning the current legislation, Bus Franchising could provide some of the improvements and innovation required to achieve modal shift, increasing bus usage and reducing private car journeys.~~

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9. Implementing bus franchising would provide the opportunity to comprehensively re-think and re-design how the bus service can best serve our citizens, the city, and the region.

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~~7. Services provided under a franchising model would be better designed to meet the needs of the city rather than those of the bus operator(s).~~

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~~8.1. Bus Franchising could provide the improvements and innovation required to achieve modal shift, increasing bus usage and reducing private car journeys.~~

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11. Bus Franchising would strengthen the West of England Combined Authority's position in discharging its responsibilities for planning and transport across the region.

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12. The West of England Combined Authority's previous dismissal of franchising in favour of developing an Enhanced Partnership was not the result of a comprehensive review of its potential benefits. The Enhanced Partnership model is compromised by the power of veto that the region's major bus provider will have over decision-making.

~~9.~~

~~10.1. The West of England Combined Authority's previous dismissal of franchising in favour of developing an Enhanced Partnership was not the result of a comprehensive review of its potential benefits.~~

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~~11.1. The Enhanced Partnership model is compromised by the power of veto that the region's major bus provider will have over decision-making.~~

~~1. The Government should overturn the ban on councils and combined authorities establishing municipal bus companies.~~

13. While a franchised bus service presents a considerable number of upsides, a publicly owned, municipal bus company is preferable, as it offers the same benefits but allows profits to be directly reinvested into the service. This is in contrast to a franchised system, where profits are paid to private shareholders.

Full Council resolves to

1. Call on Party Group Leaders to write to the Government to ask it overturns the 2017 ban on councils and combined authorities establishing municipal bus companies.

2. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the WECA Mayor requesting that he commissions a comprehensive feasibility study of all aspects of adopting and financing a system of franchising bus services in the region. The commission should also consider how the existing knowledge and experience of each member Authority could also be maximised in the consultation and design of such an approach.

3. Should the current government overturn the ban on the establishment of municipal bus companies, Bristol City Council resolves to work with WECA to commission a feasibility study for a publicly owned bus network. If it is found to be feasible, Bristol City Council and WECA should prioritise establishing a publicly owned bus network over a franchised network. This view should be reflected in the Chief Executive's letter to the WECA Mayor.

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4. Request that the Mayor seeks consensus from the leaders of the other WECA authorities, and the WECA Mayor, in order to facilitate the delivery of a feasibility study as soon as possible.

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Motion to be moved by: Cllr Andrew Brown

Date of submission: 01 12 2022

Motion proposed by: Councillor Andrew Brown (Liberal Democrats)

Motion submitted: 1st December 2022