

**QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR**

**Question submitted by:** Cllr George Wheeler

**To Cabinet Member:** Cllr Jonathan Drean, Cabinet Member for Transport

**Question:**

*Can you tell me any more about the future of bus services in Plymouth after the withdrawal of grant in October, please? I asked about this at the last full council meeting but you were not able to tell me anything at that time. I'm pleased to see that Mr Shapps has offered £165million to operators to allow a maximum fare of £2 but that will be of little use if there are no buses. I noticed a press cutting today (16th August): Northern mayors warn of cuts to hundreds of bus routes The mayors of the Liverpool City Region, North of Tyne, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire have jointly written to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Transport Secretary to warn that hundreds of northern bus routes are set to be cut unless the Bus Service Recovery Grant - introduced to help services continue during the pandemic - is renewed. The latest Government figures, the BBC notes, show that weekday bus usage is still at around two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels, and the mayors have warned that half of all route will be affected "in some form", with some cut entirely after 7pm. Elsewhere, Somerset County Council is to introduce new lower fares in and around Taunton thanks to £11.9m in funding from the Department for Transport to improve services. Unlike Somerset but like Liverpool and the northern areas given above, Plymouth got nothing from the "Bus Back Better" funding so without continuation of BSRG, our services can expect to be badly cut. Thank you.*

**Response:** ( for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members)

On 19 August the Government announced that it is making a further £130 million available to bus operators as an extension to the Bus Recovery Grant for a further 6 months to the end of the current financial year. Specific details on how much will be received by bus operators operating services in Plymouth has yet to be confirmed, but officers will continue to review the network with the operators to maintain as good a level of service coverage as possible.

Details have not yet been received on the £165 million funding stream to cap fares at £2.

We will be refreshing our Bus Service Improvement Plan over the coming months. This is to allow us to be fully prepared in the event that, should a further funding opportunity be announced by Government in support of their National Bus Strategy "Bus Back Better", to enable an offer of improved services and lower fares in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Signed:**

**Dated: 30 August 2022**