

**Newmarket Town Council statement and policy adopted at the Town Council meeting on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022 in response to Stagecoach's announcement to axe the 11 & 12 bus routes.**

Newmarket Town Council are shocked and dismayed with the sudden announcement by Stagecoach of the draconian decision to axe (rather than even modify) the 11, X11 and 12 bus routes, the speed of the termination (providing only a few weeks' notice) and despite Government funding provided specifically to retain bus services.

Many people have understandably been thrown into panic adding to current social anxiety and stress. The detrimental social, economic, environmental and mental health impact is likely to be profound.

These services have for many years provided essential connectivity between the substantial settlements of Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds, Ely and Newmarket and the many villages in between.

They are heavily relied on to get to schools and colleges, work, for the elderly and the isolated to access healthcare and day centres. At times there is standing room only and in many cases there are simply no viable travel alternatives.

With the potential for congestion charging in Cambridge intended to promote a huge "shift" to public transport, forcing people back into their cars (where that option exists) is counter-productive.

Newmarket Town Council stands with Newmarket residents and others affected by this proposal and welcomes the public reaction and support demonstrating how valued and important these services are and the necessity to resolve the situation. We commend the petition started by Jemma Fortey now at well over 8,000 signatures, input on social media, other organisations and those attending tonight's Town Council Meeting (around 140).

**So Newmarket Town Council calls on the responsible Transport Authorities (the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority and West Suffolk County) to engage with operators, councillors and users to:**

- **Immediately (see note 1):** provide assurance to users by enabling the service to continue beyond 30<sup>th</sup> October or rapidly establish a new (as far as is practical and affordable) equivalent service
- **Initiate (see note 2):** a review of bus services so that they can continue to serve our communities taking the opportunity to re-look at the services in order to improve them, build patronage and make them more cost effective, understanding the public's travel needs, bus routing and capacity, making bus travel more attractive to users and more efficient.
- **Ultimately:** provide improved services for a substantially car-free, public transport orientated future as part of our move towards Net-Zero environmental commitments.

**Notes:**

1. *Stephensons have just announced that they will provide a service between Newmarket and Cambridge. They currently provide a service from Newmarket to Bury St Edmunds taking in many villages en route. However Exning, Fordham, Soham and Ely are currently not included.*
2. *Stagecoach have called for a rural connectivity summit to help protect future of local communities as:*
  - *Traditional bus links no longer viable in sparsely populated areas*
  - *New solutions needed to combat rising costs and decline in passengers*
  - *Publicly supported transport links, on long term basis, only way to protect rural connectivity*
  - *Plea for transport leaders and local bus operators to come together to seek solutions*