

SIR, — I am greatly surprised that apart from the mayor of Lymington there were no other elected officials for this area present at either of the special consultation meetings hosted by Morebus, the service provider, on January 6th and 7th at Lymington Community Centre.

Three of my election committee, including a UKIP candidate in this year's council elections in May, were present and joined the rest of the attendees in asking questions of the bus operator's representatives, who confirmed that the reduction in service was a direct result of funding cuts made by Hampshire, and to a lesser extent Dorset, county councils.

Although the bus company said they had advised local county councillors of the meeting, and a lady in the audience said she had advised our local MP's office, there was general anger at their apathy in not attending or sending a representative.

I know that there were strong feelings against the changes amongst those present, who numbered well in excess of 100 people, but also frustration that there was no one present to accept responsibility! It was said at the Tuesday meeting that the issue is apolitical, a view I disagree with. It is a political issue as the cuts in funding have been made by our current elected representatives.

Clarification was sought on the question of the starting time for elderly bus passes. It was stated that this is a matter for Hampshire County Council which, on further investigation, will be changing the start time to 09.30 weekdays in line with national guidance — another political decision.

In your January 10th feature you quote the mayor of Lymington as having said: "We all accept that you have to make cuts." But I do not think the bus users present at the meetings accepted them. What is necessary is a cohesive service which caters for those who either cannot drive, or better still choose not to!

Cancelling the 119 Saturday service does not help them; as we have the highest density of elderly citizens in the country, let alone the county, there is a pressing need for a frequent and reliable service connecting towns, villages and our three major hospitals.

As the UKIP parliamentary candidate for New Forest West constituency, I wish to announce that we are launching a campaign to retain the current start time for use of bus passes and to fully restore funding to all bus routes operating from Lymington and for the services to be returned to their pre-January 4th 2015 timetables. I have written to Coun. Seán Woodward, executive member for economy, transport and environment, setting out my concerns and asking for a full explanation.

Paul Bailey

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