



From: Councillor Lister John Wilson

Please reply to: Wheatfield House
Royston Road
Litlington, Royston
Herts. SG8 0RL

Tel. & Fax: 01763 853339
Shire Hall Fax: 01223 717561
e-mail: lister@listerwilson.net
Website: www.listerwilson.net

31st. March 2011

Andy Campbell
Stagecoach in Cambridge
100 Cowley Road
Cambridge CB4 0DN

Re: Bus Fares in Cambourne

Dear Andy

You will not be surprised to be receiving a letter from me as County Councillor for Cambourne.

I found out on Tuesday that my constituents in Cambourne who use your buses will have to buy much more expensive tickets from April 17th. At present they have Megarider Xtra but from this date they will have to buy Megarider Plus Xtra at an increased cost of 85% for the same journey. This equates to a rise from £40 a month to £75.50 and annually it's £480 to £894. Such a rise leaves us all with breathtaking astonishment. I need a full explanation for this fare increase which I will pass on to the residents of Cambourne and to those who live in Cambridge but who work in the village.

We all know that diesel prices have risen by around 60% in a year but the ticket price rise is way beyond this. Diesel is not the only cost in running buses so it is only a proportion. That being so, if you just passed on the fuel-price increase it would not raise fares by this much. My concern is that Stagecoach is behaving as a near-monopoly providing an essential and well-used service which is known to be profitable already. To what extent are you building-in an expectation of future fuel price increases?

Cambourne residents note that the boundary of what constitutes the Cambridge catchment area, always defined by the bus companies anyway, has been manipulated to their disadvantage and they give the example of Bar Hill where fares have not increased by anything like 85% despite it being a not very different distance from the City.

I am additionally concerned about the impact on car use and traffic jams on Madingley Road at each end of the working day. As a County Council we have a strategy to promote non-car use and greener forms of transport. Raising fares by this much runs counter to what we are determined to do. I take it that you've done the sums and worked out how much demand will fall as a result and taken a risk that the service will become unviable.

There are two other points I wish to make. Firstly, this steep increase could have been phased-in. There are no precedents for such price increases anywhere that I can find, including the current increase in RPI. Secondly, I am informed that it was left to your drivers to announce to passengers that the fare increase was coming in. They were in the front line of public anger and it is quite unfair on them that you should hide behind the drivers. I do not know if our Transport Officers knew of the impending fare increases in advance but if they did, they did not tell me.

Over all this is a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation and I must ask you both to explain your action, and to request that you reconsider it with a view to phasing-in the hardship you will inevitably impose.

Regards

Lister Wilson
County Councillor for the Bourn Division Cambridgeshire County Council