

Freshford Parish Council
Highways & Transport Report
10 June 2024

Centurion Coach School Transport

It was reported via a resident that the daily school transport from Freshford run by Centurion, supported by BANES, to Ralph Allen School has ceased serving the village. It continues to operate for other villages. I have subsequently investigated the issue with help from Passenger Transport Team at BANES, Parking Enforcement at BANES, Avon & Somerset Police and the School Governors via Talia Kelly.

The facts are that the bus was stuck for 10 consecutive days at the junction of New Road, Freshford Lane and Dark Lane. Photographic evidence has been sent to me by Centurion, shared with Freshford PC and Avon & Somerset Police.

The views of the various stakeholders can be summarised below.

Centurion (Steve Spiller – Operations Director):

- If the parking problem was to be resolved they would resume the service.
- The issue in their view is not solely caused by parents but also by residents and visitors.
- A shorter bus is now used but has the same width so doesn't solve the problem.
- A minibus would not be financially viable for the council, mainly due to having duplicate drivers.
- Crucially, no student or parent has complained to Centurion about the withdrawal of the service.
- We are checking if any parent has complained to Ralph Allen School. We know that none have complained to Freshford PC.
- A daily log of incidents is available and will be shared after the time of writing this report.

The Governors (Talia Kelly)

The matter was discussed by Local Governing Committee on 22 May and all relevant authorities involved. No recommendations or decisions were made to my knowledge.

Parking Enforcement at BANES (James Davey-Cundick)

He states: "Whilst the Highway Code states that 'you should not park opposite or within 10 metres (32 feet) of a junction, except in an authorised parking space', without a formal restriction being in place with a supporting Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), Parking Enforcement are currently unable to take any action here in relation to this matter."

"Formal parking restrictions for these locations could be considered to discourage the inappropriate parking and enable penalties to be issued by Parking Enforcement if not complied with by drivers."

Avon & Somerset Police (PC Matthew Bendall Beat Officer)

He states: "I have viewed all the photos and it appears that none of the vehicles are being parked illegally."

PC Bendall has no suggestions other than a new parking area provisioned in the village or use of a lay-by on the A36.

Options for the Parish Council

There is not an obvious solution to the problem.

- 1 Given that no-one affected by the situation has actually complained to the Council or Centurion we could do nothing and simply keep monitoring the situation.
- 2 BANES officials with responsibility for School Transport and Parking Enforcement are helpful but are not considering that it is their problem to solve without political pressure to act. Cllr Fiona Gourley is aware of the situation.
- 3 Interim action by the police does not seem a viable option given PC Bendall's comments above.
- 4 Introduction of a mini-bus solely for Freshford is not financially viable.
- 5 Recommend and introduce single yellow line parking for Monday to Friday excluding Bank Holidays between the hours of 08:00 and 17:30. This would require a proposal drawn up by Parking Enforcement, an informal public consultation by Freshford Parish Council, and finally agreement at a TRO Review. The cost would be approximately £5,000 to BANES so would depend on other conflicting priorities. There would as part of the TRO process be a formal BANES-led consultation. Once implemented, enforcement would be via Parking Enforcement, however someone would have to advise them of the issue on the day.

I am happy to be guided by the Council as to the appropriate course of action.

Julian Carpenter

5 June 2024