

**Motion to:** Council

28 November 2023

**Subject:** UEA Night bus

**Proposer:** Councillor Lubbock

**Seconder:** Councillor Ackroyd

---

This council knows the 25/26 blue bus route serves an important social need in our city, particularly for students, who predominantly live in western Norwich, and for whom it is the main connection into the city centre and train station. Extending the hours of operation for the service would allow it to better fulfil this need and improve accessibility for all.

We also know the blue bus route is of great benefit to our local economy, connecting thousands of students and residents to our local businesses, whose footfall and custom invigorate our city. Extending the hours on this route would allow people to more easily and cheaply access our nightlife industry in the city centre, stay out for longer, and in turn supercharge our economic growth in that sector.

It would also allow those returning from a night out on the town to negate the need for walking along streets which are poorly lit beyond a certain time of night. This would be of benefit in particular to vulnerable people in our communities, such as women or young people walking alone at night, while also meaning that local residents may face less disturbance from antisocial behaviour and excessive noise on their streets from those returning home on foot from the city centre, which has flared up in recent times.

The introduction of a pilot scheme for the UEA night bus, as is in discussion between the UEA, UEA Student Union, FirstBus, and the county council, using the bus improvement fund from the Department of Transport, would represent excellent progress in addressing existent transport issues in Norwich, particularly for young people.

We strongly believe that the county council should offer to fully fund such a trial using their bus improvement fund, and consider evidence from usage statistics and ticket revenue raised to investigate a more long-term solution which is badly needed.

Council therefore **RESOLVES** to:

1) Note that:

- a) FirstBus have previously offered a late-night service on the 25/26 blue line route, which was cancelled during the preliminary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic as it had become uneconomical.

- b) Recent SNAP and UEA liaison meetings have raised night-time antisocial behaviour as an ongoing issue for local residents in wards surrounding the UEA.
  - c) There have previously been student-led campaigns at the UEA, including by the students' union, expressing concern for the safety of young people, particularly women, walking on the streets at night.
  - d) Students contribute significantly towards the night-time economy in Norwich, a significant number of which live along the current blue-line route.
  - e) The current blue-line service ends at 2330, before the closing times of many night-time commercial establishments in the city centre.
  - f) The county council have recently received circa £50m for bus improvement programmes in the immediate future from the Department of Transport, and a short-term calendar-year trial of a return for the UEA night bus (0000-0400, Monday to Saturday, once an hour, during term time) would need to take advantage of only a very small amount of this funding, about 0.1%.
  - g) There is an ongoing campaign for a reinstated night bus from the UEA student union which has received public support from:
    - i. David Maguire, UEA Vice Chancellor
    - ii. Sgt Mike Larkin, Norfolk Constabulary in Norwich West
    - iii. UEASU Council Members
    - iv. Clive Lewis MP
- 2) Clearly state its support for the return of the UEA night bus.
- 3) Express its disappointment that the county council is as of yet unwilling to award the full funding this scheme needs and deserves.
- 4) Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the county council cabinet member for transport asking that the county council reconsider its prohibitively low funding offer to the UEA and FirstBus for the establishment of a year-long trial period of this service, across two consecutive academic semesters.
- 5) Ask the Leader of the Council and cabinet member for sustainable transport to work with partners, including the county council, FirstBus, UEA Students' Union and the UEA in seeking funding arrangements for the long-term establishment of the service for such a time as the bus improvement fund remains unallocated to this project or runs out.