

Title: Reinstate the 93 bus service back to pre-covid timetable

Statement:

We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to Increase the Dorking-Horsham 93 bus service back to its pre pandemic timetable.

Justification:

The 93 bus service always used to be inadequate at peak times even before the pandemic. It ran every 20 minutes Mon-Sat and is now only running once an hour and hasn't returned back to its pre-pandemic timetable. Now there is only one school bus in the morning and afternoon and it very often drives past people at the bus stops because it's full to capacity. People have no other choice but to drive to school/work or wait out in the cold for the next bus. This is increasing car traffic which is having an environmental impact on our town.

Submitted by: Louise Waterton
Signatures: 130

Response:

Bus Service 93 operates hourly between Horsham and Dorking on Monday to Saturday, every two hours on Sundays. This is partly funded by the County Council and partly operated on a commercial basis by Metrobus.

Prior to the pandemic the passenger numbers had unfortunately already been declining and Metrobus had previously expressed concerns about the sustainability of the service with a significant reduction seen in school travel patronage in recent years which had challenged the financial viability of the route.

During the pandemic, with little passenger usage on bus services, timetables were reduced and service 93 was reduced to an hourly frequency which still catered for all school requirements.

The transport industry has been very slow in recovering from the effects of the pandemic. This is partly due to the change in travel patterns, with more people working from home and online shopping deliveries which have had a negative effect on the patronage levels; some bus routes may never recover to the pre pandemic levels. The cost of running buses has also significantly increased since covid and we need to ensure the services being supported are sustainable while also meeting resident's needs.

The overall capacity of the buses used on service 93 is 67 passengers, which is a seated capacity of 37 and standing capacity of 30.

From the initial analysis of three weeks passenger loadings data, commencing 16th January 2023 and covering all Monday to Friday journeys, there doesn't appear to be any journeys that would be classed as requiring additional capacity. For example, the busiest journeys had a maximum of 46 and 51 passengers travelling, (Note: that the maximum number of passengers travelling is across the whole journey and occupancy at any one time would be lower).

- 07.30 from Warnham (arrival in Dorking 08.24) the average number of passengers travelling was 43, the maximum was 51, capacity for a further 16 passengers.
- 15.14 from Horsham (arrival in Dorking 16.46) the average number of passengers travelling was 35, the maximum was 46, capacity for a further 21 passengers.

At the current time, with patronage levels still within the capacity being provided, we are unable to fund an increase in the frequency on this service. We sympathise with the concerns of residents and are genuinely saddened that the loadings remain low. We have raised the concerns with Metrobus, and they will investigate any specific incidents where passengers report overloading has occurred.

Matt Furniss

Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth

Date of meeting – 28 March 2023