



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

13 October 2023

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: Freedom of Information request ref CA259**

Thank you for your request for information received on 4 September 2023. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding. The response is given below:

***Request***

***Question 1.***

*A digital spreadsheet with service performance for the X3 and X2 bus routes operated by Whippet Coaches Ltd over the last 6 months to see what exact dates and times each bus route was cancelled or was delayed.*

**Response**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority do not hold this information.

***Question 2.***

*Any additional records of any service disruptions, delays or cancellations for the same period including reasons and duration - please provide this information in a digital format, such as email or electronic document.*

**Response**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority do not hold this information.

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Pathfinder House  
St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon  
Cambs  
PE29 3TN



### Question 3.

*Any customer feedback records related to X3 and X2 bus routes within the requested time frame - please provide this information in a digital format, such as email or electronic document.*

### Response

Any customer feedback records that we hold related to the X3 and X2 bus routes can be found below this email. Any information/detail concerning other bus routes has been redacted.

Any personal information or information which makes a person identifiable has been redacted.

- a. The exemption Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides that:

**40.— Personal information.**

*(1) Any information to which a request for information relates is exempt information if it constitutes personal data of which the applicant is the data subject.*

*(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if—*

*(a) it constitutes personal data which [does] not fall within subsection (1), and*

*(b) [the first, second or third] condition below is satisfied.*

*[*

*(3A) The first condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act—*

*(a) would contravene any of the data protection principles, or*

*(b) [ n/a ]*

Link to ICO guidance [s40](#)

[Personal information \(section 40 and regulation 13\) version2.3 \(ico.org.uk\)](#)

I hope this information is helpful but if you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review, you should write to us via our contact us email address: [democratic.services@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk) or write a letter to Complaints, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 3TN within 40 days of the date of this e-mail.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, or via their website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

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Generally, the ICO will not undertake a review or make a decision on a request until the internal review process has been completed.

Yours sincerely



**Sue Hall**  
Data Protection Officer



2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Pathfinder House  
St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon  
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PE29 3TN

The Whippet bus service, X3 is not showing up at around 7.30 am in the morning anymore. This has been the case for at least a week and my [redacted] has to get a lift into work. This service has not been reliable in the past either but since complaints were made, it improved for a while, now it's unreliable again. My [redacted] needs public transport to commute to a full-time job with the NHS

[redacted] I've since looked into it myself and discovered that the timetable has been updated this very month, to an earlier time. [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

I am emailing with a serious complaint about the bus service that Whippet are trying to provide for the residents [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] cancellations also apply to the [redacted] and X3 and [redacted] service.  
Residents are constantly being left at bus stops waiting for buses that don't turn up.  
Surely if Whippet are unable to offer the service they should have the route taken off them.  
I trust that you will investigate this unsatisfactory service.

Thank you for contacting [redacted] [redacted] which is much appreciated.

Bus reliability is very important to us, and we take complaints about it seriously.

Officers have met with the management team at Whippet Coaches to discuss the current problems. Unfortunately, Whippet Coaches are suffering from the same issue as all operators nationwide, which is driver shortages. This is mostly through a mixture of staff sickness and difficulties in recruiting new drivers. They also admit that there are some older vehicles in their fleet that are more prone to breakdowns. They are putting measures in place to increase the number of staff available, and will be replacing the older, unreliable vehicles. They accept that reliability at present isn't to the high standards they want to provide to their customers, but they are confident that the measures they are putting in place will soon lead to noticeable improvements. The Combined Authority will continue to monitor the situation and work with them to improve reliability.

I sincerely hope this email reaches you in good health. I feel compelled to bring to your immediate attention the abysmal level of service provided by Whippet Coaches, the operator responsible for buses X3, [redacted], and [redacted]. [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

Bus reliability is very important to us, and we take complaints about it seriously. Thank you for your detailed and very helpful email with regards to the challenges you are facing on a regular basis with the bus services X3, [redacted] and [redacted]

Officers have met with the management team at Whippet Coaches to discuss the current problems. Unfortunately, Whippet Coaches are suffering from the same issue as all operators nationwide, which is driver shortages. This is mostly through a mixture of staff sickness and difficulties in recruiting new drivers. They also admit that there are some

[REDACTED] I implore you to peruse the tweets disseminated by Whippet Coaches themselves, which starkly highlight this appalling reality. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Root Causes of Cancellations: Whippet Coaches conveniently attribute service cancellations to three vague and feeble reasons: Operational Issues, Vehicle Issues, and Driver Sickness. The so-called "Operational Issues" remain shrouded in nebulosity. However, the preponderance of service cancellations under the guise of these "operational issues" is indicative of a gross mismanagement of buses and drivers. "Vehicle Issues" are conveniently blamed on breakdowns, which may occur sporadically in any fleet. Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of Whippet Coaches' breakdown rate against that of Stagecoach East (or any other competent operator) unequivocally exposes the alarming propensity of Whippet Coaches' buses to incessantly break down. This alarming discrepancy can be attributed to their reliance on antiquated, second-hand buses acquired from London or other regions of the UK. The single-decker fleet (excluding the U bus fleet) hails from the distant years of 2010/12 and boasts a staggering mileage exceeding 300,000 miles, as per MOT data. The double-decker fleet, largely from the bygone era of 2005 to 2008, logs an astronomical mileage of over 600,000 miles. For reference, the average bus age in the UK stands at a modest 8 years. It becomes self-evident that the worn-out and excessively used vehicles in Whippet's fleet serve as a convenient scapegoat for the incessant breakdowns that plague their services. The convenient excuse of "Driver Sickness" merely signifies a driver's inability to perform their duties due to illness. While occasional sickness is to be expected, a

older vehicles in their fleet that are more prone to breakdowns. They are putting measures in place to increase the number of staff available, and will be replacing the older, unreliable vehicles. They accept that reliability at present isn't to the high standards they want to provide to their customers, but they are confident that the measures they are putting in place will soon lead to noticeable improvements. The Combined Authority will continue to monitor the situation and work with them to improve reliability.

competent bus company should possess adequate contingency plans and a reserve pool of drivers to ensure uninterrupted service provision. Regrettably, Whippet Coaches has demonstrated a glaring deficiency in these essential areas. Conclusion: Whippet Coaches continues to wreak havoc on the transportation landscape of Cambridgeshire. The prevailing patterns of service cancellations conclusively demonstrate their chronic incompetence and inability to fulfill their obligations. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In light of these disturbing revelations, I beseech the council to urgently reconsider Whippet Coaches' contract for the number [REDACTED], and X3 services. If Whippet Coaches persists in their blatant failure to deliver a reliable and efficient bus service throughout Cambridgeshire, it is incumbent upon the council to terminate their contract forthwith and entrust it to competent operators capable of meeting the requisite standards. Moreover, I believe that the £1.7 million subsidy bestowed upon this company should be accompanied by stringent penalties for cancellations and severe lateness. Such penalties would serve as a necessary deterrent, forcing operators to explore alternative solutions instead of resorting to their habitual cancellations. In the present climate, the dependability of bus services is of paramount importance. Should these services remain mired in unreliability, the public's trust will quickly erode, leading to an inevitable shift towards private vehicular transport, exacerbating existing congestion issues. I implore you to consider the severe underperformance of Whippet Coaches and to promptly undertake the necessary actions and provide a comprehensive response to address and rectify the aforementioned problems. Anticipating a swift and resolute course of action,

My [REDACTED] has to use public transport to commute to work. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and my [REDACTED] uses the X3 bus (Whippet). It is proving tricky to get a reliable service at the moment, there is often no display for the X3 bus, so it's uncertain when or if it will appear. It has been

No information held

<p>running late recently and after waiting 20 minutes, my son has to call us in order to catch a lift into work, otherwise ■■■ be late for work.</p>	
<p>Please can you confirm whether the X2 and X3 local bus routes operated by Whippet Coaches Ltd is financially supported (subsidised) by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority? In the following document. <a href="https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughca.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/documents/transport/buses/Bus-Reform-Mayoral-Task-Force/CPCA-BSIP-Final-291021.pdf">https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughca.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/documents/transport/buses/Bus-Reform-Mayoral-Task-Force/CPCA-BSIP-Final-291021.pdf</a> Appendix 1: List of local bus services supported by CPCA, X2/X3 is listed with a Min Sub contract type, what does this mean? Please let me know if any aspect of my question requires clarification</p>	<p><b>Response:</b> Bus services X2 and X3 are partially subsidised by the Cambridgeshire &amp; Peterborough Combined Authority. This means the Authority provides funding for some parts of the timetable, whilst other parts operate on a commercial basis. The bus operator retains any fares revenue on a minimum subsidy contract.</p>
<p>I wrote to you all 2 months ago regarding the inconsistent service that Whippet was providing. I was responded to that measures were soon to be put in place to help improve the service. I am writing again, 2 months later, to let you know that, service is getting even worse. The daily cancelations, especially on routes where there is no alternative, are clearly becoming more frequent if you just look at their Twitter page. What is the plan for them to hire more drivers and fix their aging busses? At this point having no service on X3 Route is more reliable than having what they are calling service right now. What has Whippet actually done in last 2 months to improve their service, because on the user end, it's not working?</p>	<p>No information held</p>
<p>I would like to know how I can find out the following information regarding the X3 and X2 bus routes operated by Whippet Coaches:  1 - Main Request. A digital spreadsheet with service performance for the X3 and X2 bus routes over the last 6 months to see what exact dates and times each bus route was cancelled or was delayed.  2. Any additional records of any service disruptions, delays or cancellations for the same period including reasons and duration - please provide this</p>	<p>I have provided a link to the Combined Authority's Freedom of Information Requests web page, which provides information and how to submit a request: <a href="https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/freedom-of-information-requests">Freedom Of Information Requests   The Combined Authority (cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)</a></p>

information in a digital format, such as email or electronic document.

3. Any customer feedback records related to X3 and X2 bus routes within the requested time frame - please provide this information in a digital format, such as email or electronic document.

Do you know if the CPCA holds any of this information?

If so, would I need to perform a FOI request?

I was pleased to read in the Hunts Post that you conducted a six district tour of Cambridgeshire recently to view at first hand the bus services. Not sure if you used whippet services via Godmanchester on your tour but if not I can inform you that the service provided is an utter disgrace. We are now reduced to travelling to Huntingdon or St Ives by car or cycle to ensure any sort of reliability. On a daily basis they cancel a number of services on routes X2, X3 and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Reasons given are 'last minute driver sickness' and 'Operating difficulties'.and 'Vehicle Breakdown'. It is obvious that they do not have the capacity, expertise or willingness to run the timetabled services and because it is virtually unusable it is not much better than having no services. Can I ask that you either personally or via your offices look into this for us [REDACTED] please. If you could let me know the outcome I would be pleased to hear.

Thank you for contacting the Mayor's Office which is very much appreciated.

I apologise for the poor bus service you are experiencing currently and in particular the unreliability and frequent cancellation of the X2, X3 and [REDACTED] services.

We completely recognise how difficult these bus cancellations are and the impact that they have on your daily life. Our bus team have met with Whippet to discuss the current issues and have been informed they have had a particularly difficult period of driver sickness which has made the industry-wide driver shortage worse.

Whippet have confirmed they are implementing a wide-ranging plan to tackle the problem. They have recruited more casual drivers to cover the gap, closed some routes to release drivers, and they have made big changes to improve recruitment, and increased wage rates, which are all measures intended to make sure the service can become more consistent. We should therefore see improvement on the services soon.

I do understand how important these services are, and we are continuing to work on our bus reform plans to make them better. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



	<p>Thank you for your invaluable feedback on the bus services and, rest assured, my team and I will continue to work with operators to address these concerns in a timely and effective manner</p>
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