



## Give patient transport firm ultimatum

**L**eicester deputy mayor Rory Palmer has criticised Arriva Transport Solutions over its “poor performance” in running Leicestershire’s patient transport service. He says the company should be given a maximum of three months to improve. If it fails to do so, says Councillor Palmer, it should surrender the contract and hand it over to another provider.

Leicester West MP and shadow health minister Liz Kendall has also called for improvements. “Arriva must be made to step up and meet its obligations or step aside and let someone else get on with the job,” she says.

These criticisms come after a long-running series of problems since Arriva Transport Solutions won a five-year contract in 2012 to provide non-urgent patient transport services.

Many elderly and poorly people rely on this service to take them to and from hospital appointments. However, there have been a number of complaints about the length of time patients are kept waiting.

Last week, the Mercury reported how two elderly women had to endure waits of more than 10 hours each for a lift home from Leicester Royal Infirmary.

And on Monday we reported that the service had failed three out of five set standards following a recent inspection by the Care Quality Commission.

The CQC spoke to seven patients and 14 staff at Arriva in April. It found that patients often arrived late for their appointments and that some were having to reduce dialysis as a result.

Last week, this column endorsed calls by Zulfar Haq, of the Leicester Mercury Patients’ Panel, for a public meeting so that the company and local health officials can hear patients’ stories first hand.

As we reported on Monday, this is now being set up by East Leicestershire and Rutland clinical commissioning group, which is responsible for the contract, and we welcome this move.

However, it really is time for an ultimatum over this issue and Councillor Palmer’s suggestion that Arriva is given three months to improve seems entirely reasonable.

We have been constantly told that things will get better, but still the problems persist. It is time to lay down the gauntlet to Arriva to either shape up or ship out.