

DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, STREETSCENE AND BROADBAND – CLLR JOHN THOMSON

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

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REFERENCE: HSB-008-13 Approved

**HSB-008-13 PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES TO EVENING JOURNEYS
ON BUS SERVICE X3 (Salisbury – Downton – Ringwood –
Bournemouth)**

Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet Member approval for the withdrawal of funding provided by the Council for evening journeys on bus service X3, in order to achieve financial savings as agreed by the Council in its financial plan for 2013/14.

Consultation

Consultation has been carried out to seek the views of users and other interested parties on the changes to the timetable that it was expected would result from the reduction in Council funding:

- 86 responses were received to a bus user questionnaire (Appendix 1) that was handed out on the bus and which was available on the Council's website.
- 16 written responses were received to a letter (Appendix 2) that was distributed by the Area Board managers to affected town and parish councils in their area, local members, and other local contacts. Copies were also sent to a number of groups representing older people and those with disabilities, and Hampshire County Council also circulated it within its area.
- Discussions have been held with the transport officers of Hampshire, Dorset and Bournemouth Councils whose residents would also be affected by the proposed changes.

The main points raised by the written responses are summarised in Appendix 3, and the responses to the user questionnaire in Appendices 4A and 4B.

Options Considered

The results of the consultation demonstrate a higher number of passengers than expected using the service, for a range of journey purposes including travel to/from work and education as well as leisure. Consideration has therefore been given to finding ways in which a service can continue to be provided that meets the needs of as many of the current users as possible while reducing the cost to Wiltshire Council to an acceptable level. Options that have been considered (these are not mutually exclusive) include:

- (i) Funding a reduced level of service that can be secured at a lower cost but that still provides the journeys that have been identified by the consultation as being the best

- used and most important to those who responded to the consultation (in particular the 2000 Bournemouth – Salisbury and the 2140 departure from Salisbury).
- (ii) Asking the bus company to review the commercial viability of the evening service and its ability to operate all or part of it at a reduced cost to the local authorities.
 - (iii) Asking the other local authorities (in particular Hampshire) to reconsider the funding they provide in view of the benefits that the evening service brings to their residents and communities.

Reason for Decision

Wilts & Dorset's decision to operate a service on a commercial basis meets the majority of the needs identified by the responses to the consultation, and allows the Council to achieve a financial saving. However, the situation may need to be reviewed again if there are future changes to the service that is provided commercially.

DECISION MADE

I approve that:

- (i) In view of Wilts & Dorset's decision to operate a commercial evening service that continues to provide journeys at 2000 Bournemouth – Salisbury and 2140 Salisbury – Ringwood on Mondays to Saturdays, the funding that is paid to maintain the current Sunday – Thursday evening service be withdrawn.
- (ii) The situation be reviewed again, using the evidence gained in this consultation, if the commercial service provision is reviewed at a future date.

This decision was published on 30/08/13 and will come into force on 09/09/13

The following supporting documents are attached:

HSB-008-13 - Report
HSB-008-13 - Appendix 1 Copy of bus user Questionnaire
HSB-008-13 - Appendix 2 Copy of letter sent to consultants
HSB-008-13 - Appendix 3 summary of main points raised by written responses
HSB-008-13 - Appendices 4A and 4B summary of user questionnaire analysis
HSB-008-13 - Appendix 5 Guidelines for Funding of Supported Services

Date:29 August 2013.....

Cllr John Thomson
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for
Highways, Streetscene and Broadband