

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

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

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REFERENCE: **HSB-011-13 Intention**

**HSB-011-13 - PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES TO THE CONNECT 2
WILTSHIRE TAXIBUZZ SERVICES IN THE AMESBURY AND MERE
AREAS**

Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet Member approval for proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire Taxibuzz services in the Amesbury and Mere areas, 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 proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire Taxibuzz services in the Amesbury and Mere areas:

- Questionnaires (**Appendix 1**) were made available to users of both services. 21 replies were received from users of the Amesbury area services, and 46 from the Mere area.
- Letters and information sheets (**Appendix 2**) were distributed by the Area Board managers to affected town and parish councils, local members, and other local contacts. Copies were also sent to a number of groups representing bus users, older people, and those with disabilities, and to local community and voluntary transport schemes. Seven responses were received from the Amesbury area and six from the Mere area.
- The user questionnaires, consultation letters and information sheets were also available on the Council's website.

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

Options Considered

The services in both areas are expensive to provide and used by relatively small numbers of people, and as a result the cost per passenger of both services is considerably higher than the Council's guideline upper threshold of £3.50 subsidy per passenger trip. While drawing up the proposals, the option was therefore considered of discontinuing both services. However, there are no alternative public transport services available for some of the needs that the services are designed to meet (this was subsequently confirmed by the responses to the consultation).

Discussions were also held about the possibility of replacing them with community or voluntary transport, and while this could perhaps be a longer term option it did not appear to be feasible in the shorter term.

Rather than complete withdrawal, proposals were therefore drawn up which are designed to achieve significant economies in the operation of both services while continuing as far as possible to meet the needs of existing users. The purpose of the consultation was to identify the impacts of the proposed changes on the existing users, and whether there are significant needs that would not be met. Whilst it is not possible, in a situation where resources are limited, to cater for the needs of everyone (even the existing services are far from being able to achieve this), changes have been made to the proposals in response to some of the main issues raised in the consultation.

Reason for Decision

It is considered that the revised proposals offer the most acceptable balance between meeting the needs of users and ongoing affordability for the Council.

INTENTION TO MAKE DECISION

Following consultation with officers I give notice that I intend to make the decision set out in the attached report. If you would like to make any representations to me on this issue please do so by 14th October, 2013.

The following supporting documents are attached:

- HSB-011-13 Report
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 1 Copy of Bus user questionnaire
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 2 Copy of letters and information sheets sent to consultees
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 3A Summary of main points raised by written responses - Amesbury
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 3B Summary of main points raised by written responses - Mere
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 4A Summary of user questionnaire analysis - Amesbury
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 4B Summary of user questionnaire analysis - Mere
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 5 Guidelines for Funding of Supported Services
- HSB-011-13 Appendix 6 Final proposal

The following supporting documents are available from the officer named above:

Full responses to the consultation

Date: ...4th October, 2013.....

Cllr John Thomson
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for

Highways, Streetscene and Broadband