

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

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

OFFICER CONTACT: Ian White 01225 713322 email: ian.white@wiltshire.gov.uk

REFERENCE: 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.

DECISION MADE

1. That the original proposals that formed the basis for the consultation are amended to incorporate the changes referred to in paragraph 6 of this report, and that, subject to the outcome of the tendering exercise that is currently in progress, are adopted as the basis for the changes to the service that will be introduced in January 2014.

This decision was published on 17 October 2013 and will come into force on 25 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: 15 October 2013

Cllr John Thomson

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways,
Streetscene and Broadband