

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

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

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REFERENCE: **HSB-004-14**

PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES TO BUS SERVICES IN NORTH-WEST WILTSHIRE

Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet Member approval for proposed changes to bus services in north-west Wiltshire, in order to achieve financial savings.

Consultation

Consultation has been carried out to seek the views of users and other interested parties on proposed changes to the services affected:

- 648 responses were received to bus user questionnaires (**Appendix 1**) that were made available on the buses and also on the Council's website.
- 109 written responses and a petition of 40 signatures were received to letters (example included as **Appendix 2A**) that were 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 bus users, older people, and those with disabilities, and to local community and voluntary transport schemes. The 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 questionnaires in **Appendices 4A and 4B**.

Options Considered

The original proposals that were put out for consultation were developed with the intention of achieving financial savings by reducing the costs of operation, while maintaining a reasonable level of service that will continue to meet the needs of the majority of existing users of the services. An alternative approach would have been to seek to increase fares income by expanding the use made of the services, through a combination of service improvements and promotional activity. However, experience suggests that this approach is only likely to be successful on services that are already relatively frequent and where there are a sufficient number of potential users to generate significant volumes of extra traffic, and that regrettably cost reduction was the only option that would generate the required level of financial saving.

Community transport was considered as an alternative way of providing some services where the use made of the existing service was low but there appeared to be a continuing need for some transport to be provided. Community transport operators in the area were approached, with the assistance of Community First, to establish whether they had the capacity or the desire to play a greater role in meeting the public transport needs of their areas, and the consultation documents also invited groups to come forward with alternative proposals to meet local needs. However, as in other areas previously reviewed, this generated a very limited response. These discussions will, however, continue, and any appropriate and affordable opportunities to meet needs that are not otherwise being met will be pursued.

The consultation itself was designed to identify any significant impacts on the travel and access needs of current users of the services that would result from the proposed changes. 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), every effort has been made to look for affordable ways of revising the proposals to address the main issues raised. A number of significant changes have been made to the proposed timetables, as identified in the main report, to meet some of the main needs that respondents said would not be met under the original proposals.

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

I approve that the original proposals that formed the basis for the consultation be amended to incorporate the changes referred to in paragraphs 8-9 of this report, and be adopted as the basis for the changes to the service that will be introduced on Monday 31 March 2014.

This decision was published on 27 February 2014 and will come into force on 7 March 2014.

The following supporting documents are attached:

HSB-04-14 - Report

Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaires (i)

Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaires (ii)

Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaires (iii)

Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaires (iv)

Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaires (v)

Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaires (vi)

Appendix 2A - Examples of letters sent to consultees and summary of proposals (i)

Appendix 2A - Examples of letters sent to consultees and summary of proposals (ii)

Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (i)

Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (iii)

- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (iv)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (v)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (vi)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (vii)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (viii)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (viii)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (ix)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (x)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (xi)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (xii)
- Appendix 2B - Information sheets which accompanied the consultation letters (xiii)
- Appendix 3 - Summary of main points raised by written responses
- Appendix 4a - Summary of user questionnaires analysis
- Appendix 4b - Summary of user questionnaires analysis
- Appendix 5 - Guidelines for funding of supported services
- Appendix 6 - Revised timetable proposals

Date:

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