

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

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

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REFERENCE: HSB-27-14

PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES TO THE CONNECT2 WILTSHIRE BUS SERVICES IN CALNE AND THE KENNET VALLEY

Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet Member approval for proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire bus services in Calne and the Kennet Valley, 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:

- 163 responses were received to bus user questionnaires (**Appendix 1**) that were made available on the buses and also on the Council's website.
- A letter (**Appendix 2A**) was distributed by the Area Board managers to affected town and parish councils in their area, local members, and other local contacts. A copy was 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 letter and accompanying information sheet (**Appendix 2B**) were also available on the Council's website. Written responses were received from eight organisations or individuals.

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 option 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 in this case that would generate the required level of financial saving.

The consultation itself was designed to identify any significant impacts on the travel and access needs of current users that would result from the proposed changes, and every effort has been made to look for affordable ways of revising the proposals to address the main issues raised. A number of changes have been made to the proposed timetables as a result. However, it is not possible in a situation where resources are limited to cater for the needs of everyone, and it is unfortunately not affordable to maintain a higher frequency of service overall, or to restore some of the diversions to outlying villages where use of the service has been low.

Community transport has been, and will continue to be, considered as an option for meeting needs that cannot be served cost effectively by the bus service. For example, it was suggested to Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council that a lift giving scheme might be developed locally to take residents to the bus stop at Avebury, if it was not possible to continue to divert buses via the village. It is now proposed to divert a limited number of buses to meet the main demands, but a lift giving scheme could supplement this to provide transport for residents who need to travel at other times. It is possible that local lift giving could also be developed in other areas where there are important needs that will no longer be met by the bus service. The Community Transport Development Fund is available to support the setting up costs of new community or voluntary transport schemes or expansion of the services provided by existing schemes.

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 5 August 2014.

The following supporting documents are attached:

- Report
- Appendix 1 - Copy of bus user questionnaire
- Appendix 2A - Copy of letter sent to consultees
- Appendix 2B - Information sheet which accompanied the consultation letter
- Appendix 3 - Summary of main points raised by written responses
- Appendices 4A Summary of user questionnaire analysis
- Appendices 4B - Summary of user questionnaire analysis
- Appendix 5 - Guidelines for Funding of Supported Services
- Appendix 6 - Revised timetable proposals

Date: 29 July 2014.

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