

Chairman's Announcement

Southern Wiltshire Area Board

Proposed changes to bus services

As a result of significant reductions in local authority funding, and the Government's insistence that a high proportion of the savings are achieved in the first year, Wiltshire Council has had to make difficult decisions in setting its budget for the 2011/12 financial year. However, due to efficiency and procurement savings of £850,000 and the use of additional income from car parking to help fund bus services, it has been possible to limit to £600,000 the amount that has to be found from making changes to bus services. This puts us in a much better situation than many of our neighbouring authorities.

The proposed changes have been identified according to the Council's published Guidelines for funding of supported services, which were the subject of recent consultation as part of the third Local Transport Plan. The intention behind the proposals is to minimise the impact on users as far as is possible, by spreading the changes across the county and withdrawing services or journeys where alternatives are available, or which are relatively poorly used or expensive to run per passenger carried.

The main changes affecting the Southern Wiltshire Community Area are;

- Service r6 (Laverstock- City Centre) – withdrawal of journeys on Saturday mornings before 7.50am; withdrawal of Sunday evening buses after 5.00pm
- Service 89 (Winterslow – Salisbury) – reduction in frequency of the service from hourly to every two hours, between the hours of approx 9.30am and 3.30pm
- Service 63A (Salisbury – Porton – Winterslow) - withdrawal of the late evening bus that currently runs from Salisbury to Winterslow at 2310 on Fridays and Saturdays
- Service 34 (Salisbury – Romsey) – withdrawal of the late evening buses that run from Salisbury to Alderbury and Whaddon at 2143 and 2343 on Fridays and Saturdays
- Service X7 / X71 (Salisbury – Southampton) – withdrawal of the service on Sundays
- Service X3 (Salisbury – Fordingbridge – Bournemouth) – withdrawal of evening journeys after approx 8.00pm on Mondays to Thursdays and on Sundays

Although we have to make the required saving, we are confident that the proposals represent the best way of achieving this with the minimum of hardship. Nevertheless, we recognise that changing bus services will inevitably have an impact on users, and want to give communities the opportunity to respond if they are aware of particular difficulties that will result. It may be possible in some cases to fund a limited alternative service, or to help local people develop community transport solutions.

A letter has been sent to all town and parish councils explaining the proposed changes, and asking for feedback. The changes in the Salisbury area will be implemented on 6 June, to coincide with other revisions to services in the south of the county, and because of this, responses are requested by 15 April so that there is the opportunity if necessary to investigate alternative provision before the changes are implemented. Replies should be sent to ian.white@wiltshire.gov.uk in the Council's Passenger Transport Unit.