

13 March 2014

Passenger Transport Unit
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Our ref: IW/PTB302

Dear Consultee

Proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire services in the Calne and Marlborough area

The Council is currently reviewing the Connect2 Wiltshire bus services which run in the Calne and Marlborough areas. I am therefore writing to ask for your views on the proposed changes, which it is intended will be introduced in October 2014.

This is one of an ongoing series of reviews which are looking at poorly-used bus services that require a relatively high level of council funding in relation to the number of passengers they carry. The reviews are being carried out in the context of the current pressures on public spending and the requirement of the Council's Financial Plan to make savings in funding for bus services.

However, although there is a need to make financial savings, the reviews are also a part of an ongoing re-assessment of the bus network in the county, which aims to identify the most cost-effective means of meeting local access needs in a way that can be financially sustainable in the longer term. The help of the area boards and community area partnerships is being sought to identify local needs and priorities, and possible ways of meeting these in an affordable way. This could include local initiatives to develop community and voluntary transport, or car sharing.

In this context, Wiltshire Council has been allocated some one-off funding by central government to assist with expanding and setting up community transport schemes. Part of this has been used in association with Community First to set up a Community Transport Development Fund, to which groups are able to bid for help with setting up or expanding alternative transport schemes to meet local needs.

The proposals

The existing Connect2 Wiltshire services are relatively costly to operate and some journeys are poorly used. The council is, therefore, looking for a more cost-effective way of providing a service that meets the needs of the area at an affordable cost to the council. A

proposed timetable is suggested that we believe will meet the majority of these needs, while reducing the cost of operation. In addition to changes to the frequency and timing of journeys, the proposals would also replace the current bookable service that is available in some areas with fixed route timetabled services. This would allow a significant saving to be made as there would no longer be a need to pay for a call centre or booking system.

The Calne town bus service is not included in this review.

An information sheet is attached which summarises the use made of the current service and sets out the proposals in more detail.

Your views are sought on these proposals and in particular your answers to the following two questions;

1. **Are you aware of any significant hardship** that would be caused if these proposals were implemented? If so, please could you let us know what specific journeys could no longer be made and, if possible, give an indication of how many people you think would be affected.
2. **Do you have any suggestions for alternative proposals** that would achieve a similar level of financial saving with less impact, or for ways in which any important needs that are not met by the proposals could be provided for at an affordable cost? (We are aware that there may be other ways of meeting some of the needs of the area in other ways, for example by community or voluntary transport.)

The consultation will close on **14th May 2014**. Responses can be sent by email to buses@wiltshire.gov.uk, or by post to the Passenger Transport Unit, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge BA14 8JN (attention of Ian White).

This consultation letter has been sent to town and parish councils; councillors and Area Boards; user and community groups and transport operators, including community transport. Questionnaires will also be made available on the bus so that users are able to comment on the proposals. Copies of the user questionnaire will also be available shortly on the council's website, or can be requested from the address above.

Yours sincerely



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