

13 February 2014

Agenda Item:6

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR TRANSPORT, PROPERTY AND
ENVIRONMENT**

LOCAL BUS SERVICE CONSULTATION

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Committee of the process and responses from the recent budget consultation regarding proposed changes to local bus services throughout Nottinghamshire

Information and Advice

2. The County Council currently spends around £6m a year on supported local bus services and is considering reducing this by £1.8m. Transport and Travel Services is currently reviewing the level and type of support provided for local bus services with a view to making these savings over the next two years. Careful consideration has been given to how these efficiencies could be made whilst still ensuring that people are able to access key services.
3. The required savings are proposed to be realised through two methods: firstly, achieving efficiencies through the restructuring of many supported services to provide feeder services to the commercially operated network (£1.1m); secondly, introducing a policy of not funding supported early morning journeys (before 06:30am), evening journeys (after 6:30pm) or Sunday / Bank Holiday journeys throughout the County (£0.7m). Some of these supported services may continue to be provided if there is a robust business case for their provision. Any changes will not affect any of the many commercial bus services (those provided without financial support) that operate across the County.
4. Prior to making any substantial changes to bus service provision the County Council has a duty to consult on the proposals. A separate consultation on the proposals to reduce funding and bus services has, thus far, been undertaken in addition to the County Council's wider consultation on the budget proposals.
5. The consultation exercise began on 18 November 2013 and finished on 17 January 2014. It forms one part of the overall County Council consultation on the proposed budget proposals. Given the complexity of some of the changes it was not possible to include all proposed changes within the consultation

documents. Respondents requiring additional information were asked to consult the detailed maps on the website or to phone or email the project team for more details. A number of consultation methods were identified and implemented by the project team:

- 6,250 printed consultation documents were produced (1,250 for each of 5 areas – Bassetlaw, Broxtowe and Gedling, Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield and Mansfield, Rushcliffe) these were delivered to bus stations, libraries and other community groups and individuals who requested them. Some were later reprinted owing to the high demand
- All parish councils were contacted by email or letter
- Community groups, schools and other individuals were contacted by email
- Members were supplied with copies of the consultation documents
- 3 Members' Touch Down sessions were held
- A wider community consultation list was used to contact potential respondents by email

Consultees could reply by:

- Using the on-line consultation documents
- Completing and returning the paper consultation documents by FREEPOST
- Printing off and returning emailed copies of the document by FREEPOST
- Phoning the County Customer Service Centre
- Phoning the project team directly
- Emailing the project team directly

Throughout the consultation process there has been ongoing dialogue and discussion with all bus operators and other stakeholders who may be affected by the proposed changes. These discussions have proved very fruitful and will help to shape the design of the final network proposals.

Consultation Summary

6. The following is a summary of the responses received:

- 643 individuals or organisations had responded using the paper documents or the website (12 were Parish Councils, 3 were community groups, 1 was a District Council and Lincolnshire County Council also sent a response)
- 80 letters, emails, phone calls and referrals from the Customer Service Centre had been received; mostly requests for more printed consultation documents (12) and specific information requests (31) – all of which were addressed; comments received by letter and email (30) were included within the consultation log
- 2 submissions were received from the National Campaign for Better Transport and from the local Nottinghamshire Group

- 2 petitions were received – 515 signatures from Harworth and Bircotes protesting against the negative impact on town centre development caused by service withdrawals; 542 signatures from Warsop / Meden Vale protesting against potential Sunday and evening service withdrawals
- 3 communications were received from MPs (Gloria De Piero, John Mann & Anna Soubry)
- Letter from Stagecoach East Midlands highlighting some important issues and stressing their desire to continue to work constructively with Nottinghamshire County Council and to maximise the commercial bus network

Of the total respondents:

- 2% represented organisations
- 98% were individuals
- 45% were male
- 55% were female
- 6% were aged under 26
- 87% were aged 36 or over
- 61% were aged 56 or over
- 35% considered themselves to have a long-standing illness or disability (the majority of these were mobility or physical disabilities)

Responses by Districts/Boroughs were as follows:-

- Broxtowe / Gedling 25%
- Ashfield / Mansfield 23%
- Newark & Sherwood 21%
- Bassetlaw 16%
- Rushcliffe 14%

Impacts on Personal Travel

7. The key responses have been grouped and are summarised here:

- 29% did not anticipate any changes or impacts
- 13% raised concerns over access to employment, especially for shift working and work patterns which required early morning, evening or Sunday journeys; areas particularly affected here were Mansfield, Bassetlaw and Newark
- 10% had concerns about access to various amenities including health, college, shopping, social trips, worship and travel by carers
- 8% had queries about services which are not directly affected by this consultation exercise
- 5% had concerns over the lack of proposed service change details within the documents, or felt that the questions were leading them to a particular response
- 5% expressed specific concerns over changes to services 90 / 100 around Newark and Southwell

- 5% expressed concerns over the impacts of the changes on rural isolation
- 4% had concerns over the proposed changes to services 140 / 141 and their impact on Bestwood Village and Skegby in particular
- 4% raised concerns over proposed changes in the Vale of Belvoir including the potential withdrawal of service 22
- 3% expressed concerns over changes to town services in Newark, including services to Coddington and Balderton & Sunday services
- 3% expressed concerns about accessing / using the new services given their long-standing illness or disability
- 3% expressed concerns over changes to the Toton Connect, Stapleford Shopper or No. 20 service to Beeston Rylands

Conclusions

8. Very valuable information on the proposals has been gathered through the consultation which will be used to inform the detailed planning of routes and networks to be introduced in August 2014. The new arrangements and funding will be considered by Committee at its meeting in May 2014.

Other Options Considered

9. The report is for noting.

Reasons for Recommendations

10. The report is for noting.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Equal opportunities Implications

12. The proposals have been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment, which can be viewed on the County Council's website.

Financial Implications

13. The proposals if agreed at the Full Council meeting on 27 February will deliver £1.8M of savings by 2015.

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that:

Committee notes the outcomes of the consultation exercise

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For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mark Hudson – Group Manager, Transport & Travel Services or Chris Ward, Team Manager, Transport Planning and Operations

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All