



PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE LEADER

TOPIC – CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO HCC REVIEW OF SUBSIDISED BUS AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICES

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Dan Massey, Tel: 01962 848 534, Email: dmassey@winchester.gov.uk

Democratic Services Officer: Nancy Graham, Tel: 01962 848 235, Email: ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

Hampshire County Council is aiming to save £1.25 to £1.5 million from public and community transport spending by 2015/16 and is undertaking a consultation to seek the views and preferences of district council, other organisations and individual users to aid them in their decision-making process. The consultation ends on 31 May 2014.

Currently Hampshire County Council spends £4.7 million on supporting local bus services and ferries across Hampshire, with a further £1 million spent on supporting community transport services. The County Council supports 200 bus services across the county, which account for 28% of bus journeys, the other 72% being made on commercial services which do not receive a subsidy from them.

The bus services supported by the County Council cater for around 4 million of the 30 million bus passenger trips in Hampshire in a year. In addition to this, Hampshire

County Council spends £13.4 million on concessionary fares by providing people with older, disabled and companion passes and travel vouchers.

The County Council indicates that the savings from the Passenger Transport Services budget could be achieved by a combination of the following options:

- Reducing or ceasing support for Sunday services
- Reducing or ceasing support for evening services after 7pm
- Ceasing the 9am early start for the older persons bus pass
- Reducing the frequency and/or days of service
- Replacing bus services with taxi shares or community transport services
- Reducing the amount of printed publicity with a greater use of electronic information

The current level of District subsidies across the County are as shown:

District/borough	HCC buses (£)	HCC Community Transport (£)	Contributions from districts (£)
Basingstoke	632,688	167,044	391,693 (both buses & CT schemes)
East Hampshire	607,651	94,490	69,098
Eastleigh	548,709	127,892	163,698 (both buses & CT schemes)
Fareham & Gosport	350,488	68,371	46,867
Havant	685,404	56,932	21,371
New Forest	568,962	48,549.50	44,832.50
Rushmoor & Hart	780,918	58,945	35,379
Test Valley	689,136	42,728	18,157
Winchester	269,503	82,099	52,676

From the above table it could appear that Winchester may compare unfavourably to other areas but many services run across district boundaries and to minimise double-counting the table shows contracts originating in a district even though those routes may run into other districts. Many contracts are part of combination tenders making allocation of cost by district difficult. A brief assessment of the subsidised services that benefit Winchester, but which are counted in other Districts/Boroughs, indicates that the overall level of subsidy to Winchester District residents is likely to be over £700,000.

For example, the following subsidised services benefit Winchester residents but are part of other tender areas.

- E1/E2 Winchester-Eastleigh (Eastleigh)
- 28 Whiteley-Fareham (Fareham & Gosport)
- X9 Hambledon-Waterlooville (Havant)
- 64 Winchester-Alton [Sundays] (Alton)
- 68/77 Winchester-Andover (Andover)

- 145 Hambledon-Emsworth (Havant)

In addition, the size of the bus network varies according to geography and population and the majority of services are provided commercially without subsidy and do not feature in the above figures. In Winchester, the city is fortunate in that most city services and the main interurban routes are provided commercially (without HCC subsidy).

As part of the consultation exercise the County Council has produced two questionnaires for groups/organisations and individuals. Those questionnaires have been distributed to all elected Members in Winchester for individual response on a ward basis and for wider dissemination.

DECISION

That the proposed consultation response appended to this Notice be agreed for submission to Hampshire County Council.

REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The option to respond using the questionnaire was considered and rejected as the nature of the questionnaire makes completion by a district/borough councils difficult as it seeks to generalise how 'members of the organisation would be affected' by the different options considered. Consequently it is considered more appropriate to send the bespoke response appended to this notice.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

In the short term, there should be no direct impact on Council budgets, there being no net cost to the Council.

However, in the longer term, there are other considerations; Winchester City Council, through the General Fund, already supports Dial-a-Ride through a matched funding agreement with the County Council, which costs both authorities £46,352 in 2013/14

Any changes to the way the County Council chooses to fund the Dial-a-Ride could have implications for the City Council in terms of continuing to support this service and the level of service that is delivered. Such a decision could only be taken after further consideration by both the County and City Council. Furthermore, reducing evening services in the city could potentially have some future impact on the night us which is also supported financially through the Town Account.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION

Councillor Weston (Portfolio Holder for Built Environment) was consulted before the draft notice was issued, together with Hampshire County Council (Passenger Transport Section).

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

One comment was received from a Councillor who was in support the general thrust of the Council's response but believed that the City Council should do more to promote a more positive approach to developing bus services in conjunction with the County Council. It was also mentioned that a review of the Park-and-Ride arrangements might enable the Park-and-Ride buses to be better integrated into the City services.

The City Council will look to promote and support public transport services where it can and when suitable opportunities arise. However, it is not the main authority for public transport (this responsibility rests with Hampshire County Council). The City Council has limited resources which restricts its ability to take on further work and responsibilities in this area. There is considerable existing commitment to public transport by the City Council in terms of Park & Ride, dial-a-ride, the Winchester night bus and other community transport schemes. The Park and Ride is currently the subject of a review and a number of options will be considered as part of that process.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

None.

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

None.

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 09.06.14

Councillor Humby – Leader

HCC Review of subsidised bus and community transport

Response by Winchester City Council

The City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation relating to the County Council's review of subsidised bus and community transport services. As requested we have forwarded your consultation documents to a wider audience of Local Members and other organisations.

I understand that you have identified the need to save £1.25 to £1.5 million from the supported bus services budget, but other than an indicative 12% saving required you have not given any indication of the likely impact on services operating within the Winchester District and therefore it is difficult to give a detailed response.

With ten other Districts within the County Council's service area, it could be argued that the fairest approach to how decisions relating to service reductions are made should be based upon sharing the impact equally across these administrative areas, especially as it appears in the past similar cuts have had a disproportionate affect on the services in Winchester District.

However, whilst wishing to ensure the impact on services in the District is minimised we understand that that the County Council may focus on getting best value for money in terms of supporting services with highest demand and least level of support per passenger trip.

The City Council would have liked to have seen more detail included in the original consultation letter; there was no indication of the level of savings that would be generated from the different options. To enable a more coherent assessment and response more information is needed such as; the cost of the HCC subsidy per service, the annual passenger numbers carried and affected, the effective subsidy per passenger and the value / affect of the proposed cuts or savings.

We would also point out that City Council makes a significant annual investment in bus services through the park and ride operation and is proud of our partnership with the County Council on this service. We also fund half of the Dial-a-Ride operation and the Winchester night bus. Beyond this we have no financial capacity to further subsidise bus services since we receive no revenue support grant for this purpose.

Whilst appreciating the need for all local authorities to examine their budgets in order to look at opportunities to reduce expenditure the City Council is concerned that the cuts in bus services are potentially a major blow to local communities and appear inconsistent with the transport policies we share which are aimed at reducing dependence on the car as a mode of transport. We should be moving towards a situation where those who do not have a car, whether through necessity or choice, have the alternative of using readily accessible public transport. At a time when we are all seeking to improve air quality in Winchester and are trying to avoid isolating rural communities, reducing bus services (rather than promoting or improving their desirability) seems paradoxical in policy terms.