

Strategic Planning Sustainability & Transportation Committee

14 June 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Response to Consultation by Kent County Council on Final Review of Funded Bus Services

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning and Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Steve Clarke: Principal Planning Officer Spatial Policy
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Councillors note for information the response attached at Appendix Two, that has already been forwarded to the Kent County Council Public Transport Team.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

The maintenance of good public transport connections is an integral part of the Council's Integrated Transport Strategy. Good bus services will assist in the development of the local economy and also in making the Borough an attractive place for all.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	14 June 2016

Response to Consultation by Kent County Council on Final Review of Funded Bus Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Kent County Council has been undertaking a review of its funding of un-commercially viable bus services across the County, in the light of continuing pressure on financial resources and the need to make further savings in the order of £800k in the financial year 2016/17. Working with bus operators some £250k worth of savings had been found, leaving a shortfall of around £500k. This has resulted in a review of County funded bus services and services where the subsidy can be stopped or reduced and where alternative services can be provided have been identified. A consultation exercise on the proposed changes took place between 21 March 2016 and 15 May 2016. The Consultation document is attached at Appendix One
 - 1.2 Attached to this report at Appendix Two, is the response to the County Council sent by Officers and the report recommends that Councillors note this for information.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As indicated above, the County Council has recently concluded a review of bus services it directly funds.
 - 2.2 In terms of the proposed changes to supported bus services within Maidstone Borough, only two are affected; the service 89 to Coxheath directly, and a consequential change to service 5 to Staplehurst/Hawkhurst.
 - 2.3 The consultation document indicates that the current evening journeys for Arriva route 89 to Coxheath will be withdrawn with a potential saving of £23,677. The withdrawn journeys will however, be replaced by Arriva route 5 which will divert into the village of Coxheath in the evenings to provide a replacement for the withdrawn 89 journeys on a similar but not directly comparable level.
 - 2.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken by the County Council assessing the impact of the proposed changes which indicates that as a relatively high proportion of older passengers travelling on an English National Concessionary Travel Pass use the services, additional weight in assessing the potential impact on these users will need to be given.
 - 2.5 The final decision on the proposed service changes across the County has not yet been taken. It is anticipated that the results of the consultation and the proposed changes will be considered by County Members in July 2016. Councillors will also have results of bus passenger surveys when final decisions are made.
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3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Given the work programme leading to the submission of the Local Plan for examination on May 20th, it was not possible to report the Consultation to this Committee previously. Officers also secured agreement that it would be possible to forward the response as soon as possible after the 15 May given the on-going Local Plan work.
- 3.2 It is not considered that the proposed withdrawal of evening services to Coxheath on route 89 would have an unacceptable impact on local bus service provision, as consequential changes to the Route 5 are proposed to provide a similar replacement service to Coxheath in the evenings. The service 5 does already divert into Coxheath on a few journeys on Sundays.
- 3.3 It will be necessary to ensure appropriate publicity for the changes if they occur. In addition, it is also hoped that with identified development in Coxheath that the re-introduction of Route 89 evening services on a commercial basis may be possible in the future.
- 3.4 The County Council have also been advised that this Council stresses the importance of on-going dialogue with the County on public transport issues in particular support for improved bus services from Maidstone to the Rural Service Centres and larger villages as an integral part of the Integrated Transport Strategy and traffic mitigation proposals.
- 3.5 Councillors are therefore asked to note the attached response that has already been sent to the County Council.
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4. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 4.1 The response attached at Appendix Two has already been forwarded to the County Council. The County will consider all the responses it has received and will consider these alongside bus surveys and the Equality Impact Assessments when final decisions are made by County Members, which is anticipated to be in July 2016.
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5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The maintenance of good public transport connections is an integral part of the Council's Integrated Transport Strategy as it seeks to encourage modal shift. Good bus services will assist in the development of the local economy and also in	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development

	making the Borough an attractive place for all.	
Risk Management	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Financial	No specific implications arise	Head of Finance & Resources
Staffing	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Legal	No specific implications arise	Kate Jardine: Team Leader Planning, Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	An EqIA has been undertaken by KCC. This will be further reviewed as the process moves forward. The EqIA indicates that the changes may have a potentially greater impact on older persons using bus services as they represent a significant proportion of existing users.	Anna Collier: Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Community Safety	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Human Rights Act	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development
Procurement	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning & Development & Head of Finance & resources
Asset Management	No specific implications arise	Rob Jarman:

		Head of Planning & Development
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6. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Final review of KCC Funded Bus Services Consultation Document
 - Appendix 2: MBC response to the consultation dated 19 May 2016
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