

(For Democratic Services use)

Decision Number: 3 2016/17

Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Statement

The Local Authority (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

Subject:

Kent County Council (KCC) released a consultation on local bus services and the public subsidies that they pay towards particular services. The consultation seeks views on particular routes across the County which will see subsidies removed. Two routes in the District will be affected (Route 204 Tonbridge to Underriver service and Route 477 Swanley to Dartford)

Details of Decision taken

To agree the wording and send the proposed response to the "Review of KCC Funded Bus Services" consultation.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council's views on the proposals are taken into account.

All Documents considered:

The proposed response to the Review and original consultation material which can be found at

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/BusReview/consultationHome>

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Member when making the Decision:

The Council may choose not to respond to the consultation. This was rejected as proposals within the consultation will have an effect on the District, should the proposals be realised.

Financial implications

N/A

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

N/A

Equality Impacts (Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty)

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

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Local Member (s), other Portfolio Holders and/or Directors/Heads of Service Consulted

Cllr. R. Piper (Portfolio Holder for Planning)

Details of any conflicts of interest

a) declared by any executive member who is consulted by the Decision Taker

b) and any details of dispensations granted by the Chief Executive in respect of any declared conflict

Decision taken by:

Portfolio Holder for Planning

Signed by Portfolio Holder

Date of Decision

13 / 05 / 2016.

Record made by:

Date of record:

13/5/16

Sevenoaks District Council Response - Review of KCC Funded Bus Services

NB: only questions for Organisations have been answered as part of this consultation response.

Question 3 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the scoring method we are using to assess the overall impact of these changes?

Sevenoaks District Council disagrees - the scoring matrix used fails to account for other social groups as the scoring appears to be skewed towards the elderly population, failing to account for other users (i.e. young families/mothers), where the private vehicle may not be an option to them. These groups are equally important to include when examining the greater impacts of these proposals, especially in rural areas as buses might be the only method to take their young children to childcare, as well as access to local shops and facilities.

Question 6 - Please tell us how the proposed changes could affect you or the person / group you represent.

Sevenoaks District Council is deeply concerned by the number of services that are being reduced or halted across the County as part of a need to make savings. While there are only two routes that affect the District (Service 204 and Service 477), the impact that these services will have on local communities will be detrimental for certain groups across the County. Bus routes offer an important service to a number of individuals for their own needs i.e. childcare, local facilities and services. These routes are cheaper and more convenient for some, if the individual does not have regular access to a private vehicle. These routes are equally important in deprived areas of the County as well as in predominately rural communities; removing such routes will restrict access and remove a level of independent travel for certain groups (i.e. the younger and elderly population).

Furthermore, buses provide an invaluable service for those individuals who depend on them to access employment or support, especially when travelling to the Job Centre. Sevenoaks does not have a Job Centre within its boundaries. This means that residents have to travel outside the District to access their benefits and employment support in neighbouring towns i.e. Bromley/St. Marys Cray/Tonbridge.

The Sevenoaks District is predominantly rural. Individuals who are unable to have regular access to a private vehicle (i.e. younger people and the older population), bus services are the only means of travelling independently. While the frequency of bus services is moderate within rural communities, bus services allow access to facilities and services that are not provided within their own community. This is particularly acute to those individuals using the 204 service from Tonbridge to Underriver. There are very few services within Underriver and individuals living in this community depend on the bus routes to Tonbridge for either access to these facilities or to other bus routes to other areas.

The 477 service between Orpington and Bluewater is an important bus link for people living across the north of the Sevenoaks District, including Swanley, Crockenhill, and Hextable. It provides a link to London as well as access to one of the best retail and leisure destinations in North Kent. The cutting of the evening services will have a negative

effect on the retail economy, as a number of individuals (who can not afford a private vehicle) rely on the bus to get to and from their place of employment.

Question 9 - We have completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on our scoring approach and for each of the service routes identified for review. We welcome your views. Please write any comments here.

There is concern that these proposals will remove some independence for individuals, who rely on services that can provide them access to services and facilities, especially those individuals living within rural communities. While the scoring matrix has considered those groups most likely to be effected, it still causes concern that there will be a serious impact on those groups that regularly use the proposed routes within the consultation, limiting their accessibility to services and restricting their independence. This includes young people and young mothers who rely on these services to maintain their independence and access to vital services where the private vehicle is not an option.