

County Council

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	20 July 2017
Officer	Chris Hook, Dorset Travel Service Manager
Subject of Report	Procedure for Petitions – Petition entitled ‘Save our Bus Services and Save the No 18 and No 3 buses from cuts’
Executive Summary	<p>A petition (comprising two petitions on the same topic) has been received in accordance with the County Council’s published petitions scheme in relation to reduction in public transport subsidy and the outcome of reduction of subsidised public transport services from 35 to 7. The Petition contains more than 1000 signatures and is therefore referred to the County Council to consider a respond.</p> <p>Two petitions have been presented in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan reducing public transport subsidy by £1.5m (£500k 2016/17 and £1m 2017/18).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ‘Save our Bus Services’ calls for funding to be re-instated to the 28 services which will not receive support after 22 July 2017.• ‘Save the No 18 and the No 3 buses from cuts’ relates to No 18 which Poole Borough Council fund and will continue. The No 3 will continue without subsidy after 22 July 2017 after discussions with the incumbent operator. <p>Four other services of the 28 will continue without Dorset County Council subsidy, including Dorchester Town Services 1&2, Poundbury 6 and Crossways/Broadmayne Service 101 which has been replaced by Service 5 and offers journeys to Weymouth.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>Full EqIA and Screening completed.</p> <p>The loss of bus services can significantly impact those affected. Negative impacts have been identified for younger people, for</p>

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	<p>disabled people and for older people, particularly older women, as people in these groups are more likely to use passenger transport services.</p> <p>The replacement contract for schools and public transport (Contract: DN245509) seeks to mitigate the reduction of public transport subsidy by implementing open schools routes, in-fill services and increasing community transport coverage. Dorset Travel will continue to engage with local communities and with existing community transport schemes seeking to further develop services and to prioritise those areas with unmet needs.</p> <p>The full Equality Impact Assessment is available upon request.</p> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Public & Schools Transport Review Public Consultation Response Reports – DCC August 2016; b. Public & Schools Transport Review Full EqIA – DCC Oct 2016 c. New Contract Model for Passenger Transport Business Case – the TAS Partnership Oct 2016; d. New Contract Model For Passenger Transport – Procurement Options Report – TAS Oct 2016; D e. Dorset Travel Market Engagement Event – DCC Hosted Oct 2016. f. T102 Contract for Passenger Transport Services – DCC Feb 2012. <p>Budget:</p> <p>Reduction in budget of £1.5m to be achieved 2017/18. This is part of the £18.3m savings required to balance the County Council’s budget in 2017/18.</p> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council’s approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: HIGH Residual Risk LOW</p> <p>Risk of not reducing public transport budget would impact on delivery of key services.</p> <p>Other Implications: Nil.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>The County Council is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.</p>

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Reason for Recommendation	In order to comply with the County Council’s published scheme for responding to petitions and so as to enable local people to connect with local elected decision makers.
Appendices	None.
Background Papers	Dorset County Council Petitions Scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cabinet: 24 February 2017 – item 35 Rural Bus Services Review- Cabinet: 11 February 2017 – approval of Passenger Transport Strategy 2011-2026- Cabinet: 11 February 2017 – Medium Term Financial Plan: Appendix 2 – Economy & Environment Savings Measures
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1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The County Council's Petitions Scheme was adopted on 29 April 2010 and came into effect on 15 June 2010. The Scheme was subsequently updated by the County Council on 21 July 2016.
- 1.2 If a petition is supported by 50 or more signatories then it will be dealt with by a small customer focussed panel. If a petition is supported by 1,000 or more signatories it will be scheduled for a debate at the next meeting of the full County Council.

2. Petition – 'Save our Bus Services and Save the No 18 and No 3 buses from cuts'

- 2.1 The County Council received two petitions organised by West Dorset Liberal Democrats and Mid-Dorset & North Poole Liberal Democrats on 20 June 2017, and the lead petitioner is Councillor Andy Canning. This reads as follows:
 - West Dorset Liberal Democrats - I/We, the undersigned, view with dismay the decision by Dorset County Council to cut the number of supported bus services from 35 to 7 and call for their funding to be reinstated. (3909 signatures)
 - Mid-Dorset & North Poole Liberal Democrats- We urge local residents to support our petition so that Corfe Mullen residents who rely on these services can continue to use them. (1480 signatures)
- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 1000 signatures, the Council is invited to consider it. This discussion should conclude with a decision as to how to respond to the petition. This may include one or more of the following:
 - taking the action requested in the petition
 - considering the petition at a council meeting
 - holding an inquiry into the matter
 - undertaking research into the matter
 - holding a public meeting
 - holding a consultation
 - referring the petition for consideration by the council's audit and governance committee
 - calling a referendum
 - writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.
- 2.3 Alternatively, the Council may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

- 3.1 Supported public bus services were procured under the T102 commencing in 2011. There are currently 35 contracts with an aggregate annual cost of £2.9million, which includes approximately £700,000 contribution from the mainstream school transport budget for school transport undertaken on supported public services. All contracts will expire in July 2017. Supported public services account for only 9% of passenger journeys in Dorset.

- 3.2 The County Council's legal duty for subsidised buses is to identify where public transport is needed but is not being provided and, once identified, secure appropriate services. The Council is not obliged to subsidise services and may take into account the funds that are available to them. The Council is also required by law to:
- a. Take into account the transport needs of those who are elderly or disabled;
 - b. Work with other councils concerned with public transport;
 - c. Work with other councils regarding school and social care transport, to ensure best value for money for these services; and,
 - d. Take into account the needs of the public and bus companies.
- 3.3 The Council's legal duty for subsidised buses is to identify where passenger transport network within budgetary constraints, whilst delivering corporate outcomes and meeting the objectives of the Local Transport Plan. For the rural areas the PTS envisions a core network of high quality inter-urban routes linking the market towns, with access from surrounding villages by demand-driven community transport offers, and by integrating some school services into public provision.
- 3.4 A comprehensive consultation was undertaken from 27 May to 22 July 2016. The consultation described the need to reduce the combined budgets for mainstream school and public transport by £1.85million from 2017/18.
- 3.5 The consultation generated 2605 responses. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposed approach to focus on maintaining core bus routes that serve the most people (inter-urban services) whilst opening up school buses and supporting community transport in rural areas that may lose their bus. 54% of respondents agreed with this approach compared with 27% who did not agree.
- 3.6 Five of the 28 services will continue without subsidy including Dorchester Town Services 1&2, Crossways & Broadmayne with a new link to Weymouth (commenced 22 May), Poundbury Service 6 will remain supported by developer contributions and Service 3 Wimborne will continue to operate without subsidy.
- 3.7 Discussions with communities continue with over 20 routes and 3 new community schemes having started since April 2016 under community leadership. 6 community groups have received grants and we would welcome more requests with community transport included in the previous 7 Your Dorset editions, 60 public events in 14 months and social media channels.

Matthew Piles
Service Director – Economy
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