



Petitions Panel

17 November 2016

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 – A Bus for Burton

- 2.1 The County Council received a petition organised by Mr PG Coffin on 12 October 2016. This reads as follows:

Following the recent decision to cut subsidies to the Yellow Bus service 24, Burton residents are faced with losing a bus service completely, as of 6th August 2016.

It goes without saying the huge impact this will have on villagers, with many elderly residents reliant on the service to maintain their independence and attend medical appointments. However, it is wrong to assume that it is just the older residents of the village that will suffer the effects of this decision.

Being a large village of over 4000 residents, we have a diverse population. School children, college students and work commuters are now facing the prospect of being unable to get to their place of education or employment. Less abled residents are even considering moving home.

This decision to cut what many people view as an essential public service is a prime example of ideological austerity policy disproportionately affecting the less well off in society, as ashamedly confirmed by recent UN findings.

This petition, whilst urging Dorset County Council to reinstate subsidies to restore our service, is intended to show the overall support for a village bus service.

It may not be financially viable due to central government cuts to restore subsidies, but as servants of the public, Dorset County Council and its employees have a duty to take personal responsibility in the role they play in the execution of these policies and to convey these concerns and consequences to central government and demand an end to such hurtful policies for the sake of their constituents.

- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Panel are invited to note and discuss this.
- 2.3 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

Petition – A Bus for Burton

- 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 the Panel's views about the request in the petition.

2.4 Alternatively, the Panel may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

3.1 The contract for service 24 in the Christchurch area expired in August 2016. The county council's budget for supported bus services was unable to provide the £87,000 support for this service to continue. The vast majority of bus services in the south east Dorset conurbation, including Christchurch, operate without subsidy. The county council, working with bus operators, sought a solution whereby these services could continue to operate without subsidy. A public consultation was held to establish travel patterns and needs; the results of which were shared with operators to inform service development.

3.2 An equalities impact assessment (EqIA), was undertaken to consider the impact of the proposals on those in our society who are protected by law. The assessment has identified that young people, older people and the disabled are most likely to be impacted and that people in Burton may struggle to continue to access employment and education.

3.3 An alternative operator has been able to provide a revised service from 8 August with hourly departures from Burton between 9:18 and 14:18 Monday to Friday. This service, which will enable the many older residents of Burton to maintain independence and to attend medical appointments, operates without the need of financial support from the county council. The previous supported service operated from Monday to Saturday providing hourly departures from Burton starting at 6:32 until 18:37.

3.4 Community transport is able to provide further assistance, especially for people requiring access health related appointments. Dorset Travel has increased engagement with community transport schemes in the area, seeking viable, innovative ways of supporting these services. In Burton there are three community transport schemes catering for various needs: Age Concern, Christchurch, Christchurch Community Partnership Dial-a-bus, and Christchurch Neighbourcar.

3.5 People travelling outside the operating times of the revised bus service, particularly school students, can make use of active modes. A shared use footway/cycleway was completed in 2014/15 to create a safe route from Burton village to the Grange School in Christchurch. The scheme straddles the A35 bypass and is linked by a shared foot / cycleway overbridge. This scheme has enhanced pedestrian and cycle access, improved safety and reduced the need to travel by car to the school. It provides a quality safe route to school, as well as providing a link to the cycle network along the bypass, the bus network and links to the town centre.

4. Next Steps

4.1 The Panel is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.

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Petition – A Bus for Burton

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