

Petitions Panel

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	23 May 2018
Officer	Matthew Piles, Service Director Economy Natural and Built Environment
Subject of Report	Procedure for Petitions – Petition entitled ‘Save the 57 Bus’
Executive Summary	<p>A petition has been received (in accordance with the County Council’s published petitions scheme) in relation to the withdrawal of Service 57 which operated Monday to Saturday.</p> <p>This service, between Yeovil and Sherborne, operated commercially ie. without subsidy from Dorset County Council.</p> <p>The petition has been presented and relates 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">• The petition requests that Dorset County Council finds a replacement for this service, from West End – Sherborne – Yeovil.
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 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>

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	<p>The full Equality Impact Assessment is available upon request.</p> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <ul 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. <p>Budget:</p> <p>Reduction in budget of £1m to be achieved 2017/18. This is part of the £18.3m savings required to balance the County Council’s budget in 2017/18. Supporting an additional service which is not serving the core network will reduce the savings and open DCC to further challenges of a similar type.</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: MED 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 Panel is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>Appendix A – Copy of petition.</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	<p>Dorset County Council Petitions Scheme:</p>

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	<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
Officer Contact	Name: Chris Hook, Dorset Travel Service Manager Tel: 01305 225141 Email: c.p.hook@dorsetcc.gov.uk

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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 and 15 February 2018.
- 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 4,250 or more signatories it will be scheduled for a debate at the next meeting of the full County Council.

2. Petition – ‘Save the 57 Bus Service’

- 2.1 The County Council received a petition organised by Sherborne Transport Action Group. This reads as follows:

“SAVE THE 57 BUS - SIGN · THE PETITION

First Bus No57 (West End – Sherborne - Yeovil) is being withdrawn 4th February 2018.

Sign here to protest this closure and show support for a replacement service”.

- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Panel are invited to note and discuss. A copy of the petition can be found at Appendix A and the petition contains 468 signatures.
- 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
 - 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.
- 2.4 Alternatively, the Panel may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

- 3.1 Supported public bus services were procured under the T102 contract commencing in 2011. There were 72 services with an aggregate annual cost of £3.5million, which includes approximately £700,000 contribution from the mainstream school transport budget for school transport undertaken on supported public services. All contracts expired in July 2017. Supported public services account for only 9% of passenger journeys in Dorset.

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- 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 a passenger transport network within budgetary constraints, whilst delivering corporate outcomes and meeting the objectives of the Local Transport Plan. For the rural areas the Passenger Transport Strategy 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 £1.85m from 2017/18 in addition to the £500,000 in 2016/17.
- 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.

Matthew Piles
Service Director – Economy Natural and Built Environment

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