

## **Changes to Yeovil Bus Services**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To make the committee aware of proposed bus service changes that will impact on residents of Yeovil and surrounding areas.

### **Public Interest**

The routes detailed below have been taken over by a new operator. This has resulted in some proposed changes to routes that will reduce the frequency of some services. Declining bus services are making it increasingly difficult for those without private transport to be able to access the services they need by traditional bus services.

### **Recommendation**

That members note the notified changes and consider if they wish to make representations on this issue

### **Background**

SSDC has been informed by John Perrett, Service Manager, Transporting Somerset (SCC) that, as a result of The Buses of Somerset's recent take-over of the First Wessex bus operations based in Yeovil, they have been looking at the routes and timetables they have inherited and he confirms that SCC have received registration for changes to take place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The Buses of Somerset is a wholly owned subsidiary of First Group.

### **The notified bus service changes**

The services they took on were:

- 1, 2 and 3 – Yeovil Town Services
- 57 Yeovil to Sherborne
- 58/58A – Yeovil to Wincanton.

A summary of the changes that have been registered are:-

They have rationalised the town bus network from the current three services down to two and numbered these 51 and 53 (this appears to be an attempt to number local services in Yeovil between 50 and 59).

51 replaces the current 1 but the frequency has been reduced from every 15 to every 20 minutes.

53 replaces the current 2 and 3 but three roads (Westfield Road, Westfield Grove and Greenwood Road) are no longer being served, although in all cases the 53 runs very close by. The service has been reduced to half hourly although many parts of the two routes only have a half hourly service at present so many current users will not be affected by this reduction.

57 – Continues to operate between Yeovil and Sherborne on an hourly frequency as now.

58/58A – The main change to this service is that another variation has been added (59) this will operate between Yeovil and Marnhull in Dorset with the 58/58A and 59 both operating on a two hourly frequency. This maintains the current hourly frequency between Virginia Ash and Yeovil but it reduces the frequency between Yeovil and Wincanton (including the villages of Yenston, Henstridge, Templecombe, Horsington South Cheriton and North Cheriton) from hourly to two hourly.

## **Implications**

Nigel Collins our Strategic Transport Officer comments

“These routes are commercially operated (i.e. without subsidy from SCC) and the bus company is seeking to streamline their routes to reduce operational costs. The revised timetables mean that the Yeovil Town routes can be run with fewer vehicles.

However it also means that Westfield Road, Westfield Grove and Greenwood Road will no longer be served and whilst the ‘able bodied’ should easily still access the vehicle, some of the most vulnerable residents in those areas are likely to find it more difficult to continue to catch the bus and thus experience increased isolation.

I have discussed the changes with Transporting Somerset. They regret the route changes and reduction in frequency, although they understand why the operator has had to make savings. They also add that unfortunately in the current financial climate they are unable to provide any subsidy to support the current timetable.

For those for who may now find getting to the bus stop too difficult then it would be possible to use the SSVCA’s Community Transport (CT). Bus pass holders would get a 50% reduction on the CT fare, as against free bus travel at present and of course it is necessary to pre-book.

Transporting Somerset have also commented that they are disappointed in the reduction of frequency to 2-hourly between Wincanton (and the above villages) and Yeovil. They have expressed their concern to the Buses of Somerset, although this is a commercial decision on the operator’s part and again no subsidy funding is available. However the key journeys on 58/58A/59 to/from Yeovil College are being maintained.”

## **Financial Implications**

None for SSDC arising from this report. Subsidy of bus services on non-commercial routes is a Somerset County Council matter.

## **Corporate Priority Implications**

Not applicable

## **Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)**

The advice hub, if implemented, could reduce the need for the public to travel out to Brympton Way and so reduce car / taxi journeys.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

Declining bus services are making it increasingly difficult for those without private transport to be able to access the services they need by traditional bus services. This particularly affects older people and those on lower incomes

### ***Background Papers:***

none