

Appendix 1

Contextual information from Somerset County Council for proposals for reduction in bus subsidies (written prior to 27 February 2012).

Somerset County Council has a budget gap of around £26m for 2012/13 so has no choice but to reduce services across all service areas to create a balanced budget.

SCC has agreed to reduce subsidies to supported bus services by about £1.53m. This leaves approximately £1.9m annual budget to continue supporting services, with an additional budget for park and ride.

The £1.53m savings include an assumed £100k to be achieved through 'consolidating contracts' rather than cutting services. There are also a number of other separate restructuring and efficiency savings for the transport service that have been agreed in setting the new budget so we are not simply cutting services when considering budgets for this service area.

It is important to note that the proposals do not affect statutory services including home to school transport for eligible pupils or adult social care transport.

The large amount of consultation feedback has given us much more detailed insight into the likely impacts and this is being used to further refine the proposals prior to the decision on 27 February to minimise any impacts.

The key points arising from the impact assessment are that the proposed service withdrawals and reductions could impact on all groups, but significantly females and older people, low income families who do not have their own transport and disability groups. The changes could affect young people, but the new budget actually increases the annual budget for the bus network that provides travel for college students in order to stabilise the County Ticket arrangements so impacts on young people will be minimised.

Mitigating Actions

To mitigate these impacts, the proposed detailed changes in bus services that were published for consultation:

- Were carefully chosen to retain supported services in those areas with the greatest need to minimise adverse impacts;
- Protected the further education college network to minimise impacts on young people;
- Protected funding for demand responsive transport to ensure many users will still have an accessible travel opportunity where fixed route services are withdrawn;
- Took account of the availability of Community Transport alternatives.

The subsequent consultation process has enabled us to challenge operators to replace subsidised services with commercially operated alternatives and detailed discussions with operators are likely to result in a number of routes being registered commercially as we withdraw our financial support. We have also been successful in negotiating with operators to continue to operate some services largely unaltered at reduced levels of funding, and re-route some existing services where our withdrawal of funding would have created particularly significant gaps in the network. (See tables 1-4 below for details.)

We will also delay withdrawing contracted services that currently carry non-eligible school children so that those children can continue to travel by bus until the end of the academic year in July 2012.

We will continue to work with operators to resolve as many of the remaining impacts as possible.

Table 1 Services which following discussion and negotiation are now likely to be replaced commercially should the Council withdraw financial support. (No cost)

| Service | Route | Recommended Response to Consultation Feedback |
|---------|---------------------------|--|
| N12 | West Chinnock - Yeovil | Operator has offered to provide a replacement service serving significant parts of these routes linked to a college bus service they intend to register commercially |
| 30A | Taunton - Axminster | |
| 91 | Chard - Crewkerne | |
| 9 | Wiveliscombe - Wellington | An operator is proposing to restore most of this service on a commercial basis |
| 603 | Wellington - Wiveliscombe | Delay withdrawal until end of academic year Working with operator to find long term commercial solution |

Table 2 Services which the Council has successfully negotiated to continue running largely unaltered but at reduced levels of funding. (No cost)

| Service | Route | Recommended Response to Consultation Feedback |
|---------|--------------------|---|
| N6 | South Somerset DRT | Negotiations with operator to continue service unaltered for 10% funding reduction rather than 16% |
| N8 | South Somerset DRT | Negotiations with operator to continue service but with Saturday service withdrawn for 8% funding reduction rather than 16% |
| 667 | Street - Wincanton | 8% reduction in contract cost agreed with operator for no reduction in service |

Table 3 Services which will be replaced by re-routing nearby services. (No cost)

| Service | Route | Recommended Response to Consultation Feedback |
|---------|-------------------|--|
| 90 | Chard - Crewkerne | Consultees have requested diversion of 99 service through Winsham and Clapton. Discussions with operator are currently taking place. |

Table 4 Service withdrawals which will be delayed until July 2012 so that school children who use the bus but are not eligible for free school transport can continue to travel until the end of the academic year. (Total cost approximately £15.5k)

| Service | Route | Recommended Response to Consultation Feedback |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 221 | North Petherton - Blake School | Delay withdrawal until end of academic year |
| 499 | Williton - Danesfield School | Delay withdrawal until end of academic year |
| 603 | Wellington - Wiveliscombe | Delay withdrawal until end of academic year Working with operator to find long term commercial solution |
| 9 | Wiveliscombe - Wellington | Delay withdrawal until end of academic year |
| 15b | Bridgwater – Chilton Trinity School | Delay withdrawal until end of academic year |