

Report to: Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 19 October 2015

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Petition requesting a more frequent bus service 129 in Winterbourne, Lewes

Purpose: To consider the response to a petition requesting changes to the timetable of County Council funded bus service 129

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to:

Advise the petitioners of the successful negotiations between Compass Travel and East Sussex County Council, which have led to the restoration of an hourly daytime bus service in the Winterbourne area.

1 Background Information

1.1 At the East Sussex County Council meeting on 14 July 2015, Councillor O’Keeffe presented a petition to the Chairman requesting that the County Council:

“look at the timetabling of the 129 bus service in Lewes and consider amending the route of the Malling buses in order to better serve the Winterbourne area”.

1.2 A copy of the petition is available in the Members Room. Standing Orders provide that where the Chairman considers it appropriate, that petitions are considered by the relevant Committee or Lead Member and that a spokesperson for the petitioners be invited to address the Committee or Lead Member. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 A draft Public Transport Strategic Commissioning Strategy and reformulated supported bus network were agreed by Cabinet on 16 December 2014. This decision followed a 12 week public consultation between July and September 2014, which included the proposal to reduce the frequency of supported service 129 from hourly to 2 hourly with effect from April 2015.

2.2 The supported bus network, which service 129 forms part of, was designed using a hierarchy of service provision, so as to meet the needs identified in the Strategy. By identifying and then meeting the needs of residents on the basis of strategic priorities, the County Council was able to make decisions on a uniform and equitable basis across the County and to balance the wishes of bus users with the requirement to make savings.

2.3 Since the Cabinet decision of 16 December 2014, our discussions with partners, community transport and commercial bus operators have resulted in the commercialisation of additional services and some services offering a more frequent service than anticipated. These discussions have continued since the changes were introduced in April.

2.4 The County Council’s Transport Hub officers have been working closely with Compass Travel, the bus operator providing service 129 under contract to the County Council, to improve this and other services. Following very positive discussions, Compass Travel agreed to restore an hourly daytime frequency to the 129 serving Winterbourne, as well as changes to buses serving Spences Lane, Landport and Nevill which have restored daytime frequencies to their pre-April levels.

2.5 The improvements were introduced from 14 September 2015 and are at no additional cost to East Sussex County Council. They were made possible by both parties agreeing to integrate the bus used on the County Council supported service 129 with the bus used on Compass Travel's commercial services 127 and 128. Through minor amendments to the routes of these services, this has provided significantly better utilisation of the two buses and drivers overall, thereby allowing more frequent services to be provided. The feedback the bus company has received from service users since the changes in September has been positive.

2.6 Separately, Lewes Town Council is providing some funding support to Compass Travel, which has helped the bus operator in taking the decision to improve these services.

3 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 Through the changes negotiated with Compass Travel, the frequency of service 129 in the Winterbourne area of Lewes has now been restored to that which existed before the introduction of the reformulated supported bus network. It should be noted that due to the savings that the County Council is required to find, this had to be achieved without additional cost to the County Council.

3.2 It is recommended that the Lead Member informs the petitioners of the positive outcome of these negotiations.

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LOCAL MEMBERS:
Councillor O'Keeffe

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:
None