

Report to: **Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment**

Date of meeting: **16 November 2015**

By: **Director of Communities, Economy and Transport**

Title: **Petition requesting the rescheduling of bus service 7 in Hastings**

Purpose: **To consider the response to a petition requesting changes to the timetable of East Sussex County Council funded bus service 7**

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to advise the petitioners of the successful negotiations between East Sussex County Council and its contractor, Stagecoach, which have led to the provision of an earlier first bus service 7 departure and an increased daytime frequency.

1 Background Information

1.1. At the County Council meeting on 14 July 2015 Councillors Daniel and Hodges presented a petition to the Chairman requesting East Sussex County Council:

“look at the early morning schedule of the number 7 bus which forms an invaluable service for the residents of the St Helens area. The number 7 with its new timetable leaves many bus residents with no bus service until 10.30am, making doctors and hospital appointments almost impossible in the morning”.

1.2. A copy of the petition is available in the Members Room. Standing Orders provide that, where the Chairman considers it appropriate, 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 new 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 7 from hourly to 2 hourly with effect from April 2015.

2.2. The supported bus network, which service 7 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. The service 7 bus timetable introduced from 26 April 2015 was devised in such a way that only one bus is required for the combined operation of 2 hourly Hastings services 7, 27, 29 and Hastings-Pett service 347. The timetables for these constituent services are further constrained by the need for the 347 service to take school children to and from Guestling Bradshaw School.

2.4. The detail of the new service 7 timetable resulted in concerns being raised by service users, who are predominately elderly, leading to representations being made to the County Council from the Local Member, Hastings Borough Councillors and Amber Rudd MP. These concerns have centred on the 10:27am timing of the first bus from the hilly St Helens area, when before April there were early buses at 9:12am and 10:12am, and the reduced daytime service.

2.5. The County Council's Transport Hub officers have been working closely with Stagecoach, the bus operator providing services 7, 27, 29 and 347 under contract to the County Council, to identify a way of addressing the concerns raised. This has involved detailed consideration of how best to optimise the timings of these timetables for the communities served, within the resource constraint of the single bus. As a result of this work, new timetables have been introduced from 2 November 2015 at no additional cost to East Sussex County Council.

2.6. The following changes have been made:

Service 7 - an earlier first bus has been introduced at 9.30am, with the weekday daytime frequency increased from four journeys to six journeys.

Service 27 - in the Priory Avenue/Linton Road area there is an additional earlier departure at 9.05am, with the first bus having been 11.01am since April.

Service 29 - which serves Milward Road at off-peak times, is withdrawn and replaced by diverting service 347.

Service 347 - The morning peak service arriving Hastings Station at 08:51 is unchanged. Changes have been made to the timings of the off-peak service 347, with most journeys terminating at Priory Meadow instead of Hastings Station.

The combination of these alterations has provided the time needed for the earlier and additional journeys on services 7 and 27.

3 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1. The changes made to the supported bus services have addressed the concerns raised in relation to service 7 as well as a separate request for an earlier bus from service 27 users. As a result of these changes, all the communities served by these revised services will have a bus journey arriving in the centre of Hastings by 9.45am at the latest. It should be noted that these improvements have had to be achieved without additional cost to the County Council due to the savings it is required to find.

3.2. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to inform the petitioners of the positive outcome of the negotiations between Officers and Stagecoach.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Neil Maguire

Tel. No. 01273 482147

Email: neil.maguire@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBER

Councillor Hodges

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None