
By: Phil Lightowler, Head of Public Transport, Kent County Council

To: Ashford Joint Transportation Board

Date: Tuesday 12th December 2017

Subject: Proposed £4M Reduction in Socially Necessary Bus Budget

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

Within Kent County Council's (KCC's) previously published Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) there is a proposed reduction to the budget for Socially Necessary Bus Services (SNBS) of £4m over the coming two year period; 2018-2020. This is a 70% reduction in the current budget and will require significant contract withdrawals.

On 30th November 2017, an item was included on the agenda of KCC's Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee which requested that Members endorsed, or made recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste on proposals to use the current SNBS funding criteria to identify the contracts affected in order to realise the savings figure identified. Members were also asked to make recommendations or endorse the proposal to go out to consultation on this basis and an associated timetable for this process.

A decision was taken to proceed to consultation, which will take place from January 17th to 28th March 2018.

This paper summarises the proposed approach and provides information on the contracts affected in Ashford should the current SNBS funding criteria be applied.

1. Introduction

1.1 Within the KCC Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2018/19 to 2019/20 is a reduction in the base budget for socially necessary bus services (SNBS) from £5.69m per annum to £1.7m.

1.2 This reduction in base budget is spread over the two year period with a £2m reduction in 2018/19 and a further £2m reduction in 2019/20.

2. SNBS and the Proposal

2.1 The supporting of socially necessary bus services (SNBS) is a discretionary activity in that there is a statutory requirement on a local authority to consider the provision of funding for socially necessary bus services, but no statutory requirement to provide the funds.

2.2 KCC has historically and currently provides funding for SNBS. Since 2012 there has been a criteria in force which sets down the framework for supporting such services. The funding covers whole services, School day only services, Evenings, Saturdays, Sundays, route diversions, Kent Karrier services and a ferry service. A number of other authorities has stopped this activity entirely.

2.3 SNBS, as supported by KCC, represent only 3% of the total local bus mileage in Kent, the remaining 97% is commercially operated. In 2016/17 there were 3.8m journeys made on the SNBS.

2.4 Excluding Kent Karrier services and the Gravesend – Tilbury Ferry service (which do not form part of this proposal) the net budget for SNBS is £5.2m.

2.5 As such, a £4m budget reduction represents a 70% decrease in the overall net budget.

2.6 To deliver a package of this scale, it is proposed to utilise the current criteria for the funding of SNBS which was agreed in February 2012. The criteria sets out the circumstances in which the authority will consider the funding of bus services, the criteria for prioritisation and the mechanism to withdraw funding when the budget has been reduced. This criteria has previously been used to deliver reductions in SNBS and to work with operators on taking subsidised services into commercial operation. This criteria will be used for the purposes of the consultation.

2.6 A list of **contracts** which would be affected in the Ashford District should this criteria be used is detailed in appendix A. Please note that this is subject to change. Detail is contained within the appendix of what KCC pays for within each contract, and therefore what could potentially be affected. Whole services are not necessarily affected and in many cases only some journeys within the overall timetable are contracted and therefore impacted.

2.7 The public consultation will be on the use of the criteria for the achievement of the MTFP saving and its impact on SNBS.

2.8 The consultation outcome will only be enacted if the budget reduction is passed at the county budget setting meeting in February.

2.9 KCC will work hard both prior and during the consultation process and in the longer term to encourage bus operators to take on work commercially, support community transport and develop the Total Transport concept.

3. Timeline

- Agree contracts proposed for withdrawal to be included in the consultation – w/c 4 December 2017
- Consultation Go Live – 17 January 2018
- Budget approval – February 2018
- Consultation Ends – 27 March 2018
- Consultation review and proposal amendments as appropriate - April 2018
- Recommendation to Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 25 May 2018

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Appendix 1: Summary of Ashford contracts affected should the criteria proposed within consultation be utilised. (As of 4th December 2017)

Service covered by contract	Operator	Route	Days of Operation	What could be affected (what KCC subsidises on the contract concerned).
292, 299	Arriva	Hawkhurst - Tenterden	Fridays only	Whole service, for shoppers - one journey each way from Tonbridge to Tenterden via Pembury, Lamberhurst, Hawkhurst and Benenden; one journey each way from Tenterden to Hawkhurst via Rolvenden.
293	Arriva	Tunbridge Wells - Tenterden - Rye	Thursdays only	Whole service, for shoppers - one journey each way from Tunbridge Wells to Rye via Pembury, Lamberhurst, Flimwell, Hawkhurst, Benenden, Rolvenden, Tenterden and Appledore
B-Line	Stagecoach	Ashford - Park Farm	Mondays to Saturdays	Evening journeys between Willesborough and Ashford as an extension and to complement the wider commercial service
C-Line	Stagecoach	Ashford - Towers View / Tritton Fields	Mondays to Saturdays	One early morning and two evening journeys between Willesborough and Ashford as an extension and to complement the wider commercial service.
2A	Stagecoach	Ashford - Tenterden	Mondays to Saturdays	School journey from Ashford into Homewood School, Tenterden, and early evening return journey from Ashford for workers/commuters and those accessing services in Ashford. The wider commercial service operates every day throughout the daytime and provides access to essential services.
10X	Stagecoach	Maidstone - Ashford - William Harvey Hospital	Mondays to Saturdays	Certain journeys on Monday to Saturday to complement the wider commercial service, including a schoolday journey for Ashford Schools and one early morning and one early evening return journey between Ashford and Maidstone.
10X	Stagecoach	Maidstone - Ashford - William Harvey Hospital	Sundays only	Sunday service (five return trips) between Ashford and Maidstone to complement the main Monday to Saturday commercial service.
11	Stagecoach	Lydd - Ashford - William Harvey Hospital	Mondays to Saturdays	Daytime service between Romney Marsh and Ashford on Monday to Saturdays providing access

Service covered by contract	Operator	Route	Days of Operation	What could be affected (what KCC subsidises on the contract concerned).
				<p>journeys into Ashford including schools. This represents the only public transport directly serving some communities including Brookland, Brenzett, Ivychurch, Newchurch and St Mary in the Marsh. Some other towns and villages have alternative commercial services between Folkestone, Hythe, Rye and Hastings (from New Romney, Greatstone-on-Sea, Lydd-on-Sea and Lydd) or rail services towards Ashford, Rye and Hastings (from Ham Street and Appledore).</p>
18A	Stagecoach	Ashford - Canterbury	Schooldays only	<p>Schoolday journeys from Ashford to Canterbury via Brabourne, Sellindge, Lympe, Stone Street and Stelling Minnis. Primarily exists to provide access to Canterbury area schools.</p>
111	Stagecoach	Ashford - Dover	Thursdays only	<p>Thursday only shopper service providing access to Folkestone. This service represents the only public transport for communities such as Court-at-Street, West Hythe and Burmarsh, while others including Aldington and Mersham are also served by service 125 to and from Ashford on Mondays to Fridays.</p>
123	Stagecoach	Ashford - Biddenden	Mondays to Fridays	<p>Monday to Friday daytime service for schoolchildren into Ashford Schools, and for access to Ashford. The service represents the only public transport for Egerton Forstal, Egerton, Pluckley, Little Chart and the main service (along with service 24 towards Maidstone on Tuesdays only) for Smarden.</p>
292	Stagecoach	Jury's Gap - Tenterden	Schooldays only	<p>School journeys from Lydd, Newenden, Rolvenden and a number of East Sussex communities into Homewood School, Tenterden.</p>
666	Stagecoach	Ashford - Faversham	Mondays to Saturdays	<p>Service for those accessing services and schools in both Faversham and Ashford. The service represents the only public transport for communities along the A251 between the two towns including Sheldwich, Challock and Boughton Lees.</p>

Service covered by contract	Operator	Route	Days of Operation	What could be affected (what KCC subsidises on the contract concerned).
HS1	Stagecoach	Ashford - Homewood	Schooldays only	Schoolday service from Little Burton, Willesborough, South Ashford and Great Chart to Homewood School, Tenterden.
125	Kent Coach Tours	Ashford - Aldington	Mondays to Fridays	Monday to Friday daytime service for schoolchildren into Ashford Schools and access to Ashford town. The service is the only public transport for Bonnington and Cheeseman's Green and the main service (along with service 111 towards Folkestone on Thursdays only) for Aldington and Mersham.
293/294	Kent Coach Tours	Tenterden - Rolvenden Layne, Tenterden - Appledore	Mondays and Fridays only	One return trip for shoppers on two days a week (Mondays and Fridays) only. Service 293 from Smallhythe, Wittersham, Stone-in-Oxney, Appledore, Appledore Heath, Reading Street and Leigh Green to Tenterden. Service 294 from Rolvenden Layne to Tenterden.
WS3	R&J Coaches	Ashford - Wye Free School	Schooldays only	School service into Wye Free School
297	Renown Travel	Tenterden - Tunbridge Wells	Mondays to Saturdays	Whole service between Tenterden and Tunbridge Wells serving all the villages along the route including Horsmonden, Goudhurst, Cranbrook and Benenden. It provides student travel to Homewood School, Tenterden as well as to Tunbridge Wells schools.