

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

14 JULY 2014

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

SUPPORTED LOCAL BUS SERVICES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the current status of local commercial and subsidised bus services operating in Bridgend County Borough and to highlight the current and potential future impacts to these services following changes in local subsidies including BSSG (Bus Services Support Grant)

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report is consistent with the corporate aims as detailed in the Bridgend County Borough Council Corporate Plan, in particular the improvement priority to develop the local economy.

3. Background

- 3.1 Within the County Borough public transport operators provide some 34 services operated on a commercial basis during Monday to Sunday.
- 3.2 The Authority subsidises a further 22 local bus service contracts operating Monday to Saturday.
- 3.3 In addition the Authority provides support for its community transport operator, as well as cross border services.
- 3.4 Funding to support the subsidised services is provided through direct Local Authority support in addition to a grant provided by Welsh Government, known as Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG), which also contributes towards Community Transport.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 Funding settlements provided to Councils to run and support services from Welsh Government has decreased, requiring the Authority to identify budget reductions in the order of £36 million pounds for the financial years 2014 to 2017.
- 4.2 For the period 2014-2015, a budget reduction of £50,000 was identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for supported bus services.
- 4.3 The Authority has sought to minimize the impact of this budget reduction through discussion with the bus operating companies which identified that the removal of subsidy from Sunday services could be mitigated by the majority of services being run on a commercial basis. These changes took place on the 12th May 2014. The

cabinet report of 4th February 2014 details the changes. This is attached as Appendix 1.

- 4.4 Any future review would take a similar form of consideration and seek to minimize impacts by not only taking into account the value for money aspect of the provision but also its relationship to deprivation factors. A full list of remaining subsidies and services is included as Appendix 2. These will be subject to ongoing review as it is possible further financial savings to those already identified in the medium term financial plan may be required over the next few years.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 The content of this report does not propose any effect upon Policy or Procedure

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The content of this report does not propose any changes to current practice.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The content of this report identifies that a £50,000 saving has been identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2014-15. A further saving of £80,000 is identified for the period 2016-17.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted

MARK SHEPHARD
CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

Contact Officer: Kevin Mulcahy : Group Manager Highway Services, Communities Directorate,
Telephone 01656 642535
Background documents: None

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

CABINET

4 FEBRUARY 2014

RATIONALISATION OF SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To consider proposals for the rationalisation of supported bus services across the County Borough in response to budget reductions proposed for supported bus services as suggested through the medium term financial strategy, and put forward a criterion to define and measure the value or benefit of supported bus services in relation to the cost of their provision.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority.

- 2.1 The effective management of supported bus services contributes to the Single Integrated Partnership Plan Outcome of “People in Bridgend County Borough benefit from a stronger and more prosperous economy”.
- 2.2 The provision of supported bus services focuses on social exclusion within communities, significantly promotes access for all especially in relation to those with disabilities, older persons and residents in households without access to a car.
- 2.3 Supported services also provide access to transport hubs in Bridgend and Maesteg and links to the regional public transport network. Supporting bus services therefore promotes sustainable transportation, benefits the environment and helps sustain communities.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Council and the Welsh Government support the provision of local bus services by subsidising routes that are not commercially viable. These services serve routes that enable residents who live along them to access employment, education, health care and social activities.
- 3.2 The medium term financial strategy includes a reduction in the Council allocation for supported bus services by £50,000. Currently the Council’s allocation is £476,088, this being reduced to £426,088 in 2014/15.
- 3.3 The allocation of funding provided by the Welsh Government, through the South East Wales Transport Alliance (Sewta), is currently £357,422. Discussions are currently taking place with Sewta over the allocation for next year, 2014/15. However, this report will only deal with the Council’s reduction and a further report will be provided should there be a reduction in the Welsh Government’s allocation.

- 3.4 Therefore, the overall budget for supported bus services in 2014/15 including the Council's allocation as well as the Welsh Government's contribution is likely to be £783,510. This is assuming that there will be no reduction in Welsh Government's allocation.
- 3.5 The current supported bus services contracts commenced in November 2011 to run for three years with the option to extend them for two years. However the Council can terminate any of these contracts as long as twelve weeks' written notice is given by either party.
- 3.6 In anticipation of a reducing budget, the Council will not be able to maintain all the bus services currently subsidised in 2013/14 within the budget available for 2014/15. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to reduce the number of bus services for next year but ensure that the most necessary bus routes and services that are not commercially viable are retained and supported by the Council.

4. Current Situation / Proposal.

- 4.1 It is appropriate for the Council to approach the reduction in service provision in a manner that is fair and equitable that helps in the delivery of an efficient service and public certainty. Similar rationalisation exercises in the past had used criteria to review and assess supported bus services on the basis of the cost per passenger, passengers per journey, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation and car ownership in the County Borough.
- 4.2 Although initially these levels of criteria were considered as the best way forward in order to prioritise this year's supported bus services, on looking at the services provided, consideration was given to withdrawing funding for Sunday services as a possible means of reducing the budget required. Unlike bus services operating from Monday to Saturday, bus operations on Sundays are unique in that they do not have a County Borough-wide coverage.
- 4.3 There are only six Sunday bus services which are supported by Bridgend County Borough Council all of which serve Bridgend town centre from Blaengarw, Cefn Glas, Maesteg, Nantymoel, Pencoed and Porthcawl as shown in **Appendix 1**. It is clear that large parts of the County Borough are without bus services on Sundays and removing all Sunday services is seen as more equitable and efficient than applying a piecemeal and patchy reduction in all services across the County Borough. This would result in a potential saving of £55,600 in 2014/15
- 4.4 Although a bus network devoid of Sunday services would inconvenience some people and certain communities, it would impact less on passengers than providing a patchy and sparse service all other days of the week. Removing support from these few Sunday services means that the whole County Borough is being treated equally.
- 4.5 In order to lessen the impact of withdrawing these Sunday services, officers have explored measures that would mitigate the impact of withdrawal. Officers therefore have been in discussions with the operator, First Cymru Buses Ltd. As a result, First Cymru Buses Ltd have suggested that they would consider continuation on a

commercial basis, for Sunday bus services on four of the six routes proposed for withdrawal, between the hours of 09:00 to 17:00. These being:

- Bridgend to Blaengarw (Service No. 14)
- Bridgend to Cymmer (Service No. 36)
- Bridgend to Nantymoel (Service No. 22)
- Bridgend to Porthcawl (Service No. 63B)

The two routes which are not deemed commercially viable by First Cymru Buses Ltd and therefore will be withdrawn altogether are (evidence of this is shown in Appendix 1; Cost Per Passenger):

- Bridgend to Cefn Glas (Service No. 1 & 2)
- Bridgend to Pencoed (Service No. 62)

Although it is being proposed to withdraw the two Sunday services above, residents who live along these routes would not be without a bus service, as the 44 Service will continue to run from Rhondda Cynon Taf to Bridgend through Pencoed. In the case of Cefn Glas, it is expected that residents would be able to access the X2 Service from Porthcawl to Bridgend at Park Street.

As such there are alternative public transport opportunities to either replace or operate parallel to the services under consideration which significantly reduce any impact of these changes.

- 4.6 The withdrawal of subsidy by the Council to all supported Sunday services would generate a budgetary saving of £55,600, which meets the £50,000 saving contained in the medium term financial strategy for 2014/15.

Under the provisions of the contracts between Bridgend County Borough Council and First Cymru Buses Ltd, either party has to give a 12-week notice for changes to, or withdrawal of, subsidised services. It is envisaged therefore that the notice period could start on approval of this report with changes to the routes during May 2014, by which time the budgetary changes would have been effected.

In view of this, the probable date that the contracts can change is during May 2014, incurring a potential overspend in the order of £8,500, which represents the transition period cost of subsidising the six routes proposed for change, part of which will be defrayed by the £5,600 budgetary surplus.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 There is no effect upon Policy Framework or Procedure Rules.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 A high level Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This did not indicate any adverse impact.

7. Financial Implications.

- 7.1 Under the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15, the Council's allocation for supported bus services has been reduced by £50,000 in order to meet proposed budgetary savings.
- 7.2 As can be seen from this report, the removal of support for Sunday Services should realise a saving of £55,600 which meets the proposed saving.
- 7.3 It is likely that the full year effect of this reduction will not be put in place until May 2014 due to the 12 week notice period required to terminate contracts. Therefore, this additional saving of £5,600 will be needed to cover transition costs in the initial weeks of the financial year 2014/15 and the Directorate will ensure that the balance of £2,900 is met from within existing budgets.

8. Recommendation.

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

Approve changes to Sunday Services supported by Bridgend County Borough Council as result of budgetary savings identified within the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2014/15.

MARK SHEPHARD CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

Contact Officer: Kevin Mulcahy, Group Manager Highways
Telephone: (01656) 642535

E-mail: Kevin.Mulcahy@bridgend.gov.uk

Background documents:
Equalities Impact Assessment Toolkit

APPENDIX 1

Contract No.	Operator	Route	Service No.	Weekly Cost	Yearly Cost	Passenger No's 2012/13	Cost Per Passenger 2012/13
062-220	First Cymru	Bridgend to Pencoed - Sundays, Daytime	62	£131.39	£6,832.28	4006	£1.71
100-220A	First Cymru	Bridgend to Maesteg, Maesteg to Maesteg Parc, Daytime & Evening	36/39	£178.33	£9,273.16	23296	£0.40
200-220A	First Cymru	Bridgend to Blaengarw, Daytime and Evening	14	£178.33	£9,273.16	11592	£0.80
300-220A	First Cymru	Bridgend to Nantymoel, Daytime and Evening	22	£178.33	£9,273.16	12961	£0.72
500-220A	First Cymru	Bridgend to Porthcawl, Daytime and Evening	63B	£178.33	£9,273.16	21840	£0.42
600-220	First Cymru	Bridgend to Cefn Glas, Daytime	½	£225.25	£11,713.00	5016	£2.34
TOTAL					£55,637.92	78,711	

BRIDGEND CBC - CURRENT SUPPORTED LOCAL BUS SERVICES

Contract Number	Operator / Payee	Service No.	Route / Description
100-210A	FIRST CYMRU	36	Bridgend to Cymmer, Evenings (Monday to Saturday)
200-210	FIRST CYMRU	14	Bridgend to Blaengarw, Evenings (Monday to Saturday)
205-210	EASYWAY	16	Bridgend to Blaengarw via Heol-y-Mynydd & Braichcymmer, Daytime (Monday to Saturday)
210-210A	FIRST CYMRU	15	Bridgend to Betws, Evenings (Monday to Saturday)
305-210	EASYWAY	128	Betws to Nantymoel, Daytime (Monday to Friday)
317-210A	EASYWAY	37	Maesteg Parc Estate, Daytime, (Monday to Saturday)
405-210A	FIRST CYMRU	46/46	Bridgend to Talbot Green via Heol-y-Cyw, Daytime and Evening, (Monday to Saturday)
500-210A	FIRST CYMRU	63B	Bridgend to Porthcawl, Early morning and Evening (Monday to Saturday)
520-210A	EASYWAY	52	Bridgend to Broadlands, Daytime (Monday to Saturday)
600-210A	FIRST CYMRU	1/2	Bridgend to Cefn Glas, Early morning and Evening (Monday to Saturday)
605-210	EASYWAY	51	Bridgend to Oaklands Road, Daytime, (Monday to Saturday)
152-210*	TRAVELFINAL	152	Sarn to Aberkenfig Schools, (Schooldays Only) Figure based on 191 School Days in a year (38.2 Weeks)
730-210	EASYWAY	73	Pyle to Fforddygyfraith, Tue & Fri only
803-210	TRAVELFINAL	803	Danygraig to Porthcawl - Monday to Saturday
DC810-210	EASYWAY	81	Bridgend to Pen-y-Fai via Brackla & Coity Morning & Afternoon (Monday to Friday)
DC500-210	FIRST CYMRU	63B	Service No. 63B, diverting through Mawdlam & Kenfig (Monday to Saturday)
DC505-210	FIRST CYMRU	X2	Bridgend to Porthcawl, Evenings (Monday to Saturday) X2 Service
DC607-210	FIRST CYMRU	56/61	Porthcawl Local / Brynteg Sch / Additional Penyfai
DC815-210	FIRST CYMRU	3	Bridgend to Sarn, Mon-Sat, Mornings & Evenings
DC062-210	FIRST CYMRU	62	Bridgend to Pencoed - 2 No. Evening Journey's - Monday to Saturday
DC004-210	FIRST CYMRU	4	Bridgend to Aberkenfig via Pen-y-Fai - (Monday to Saturday)
DC011-210	FIRST CYMRU	11	Bridgend to Bettws, Vale View Diversion (Monday to Saturday)