

Malmesbury Town Council

Report No.4

WC Stakeholder Consultation – provision of bus services

Cllr Phil Whitehead the Cabinet member responsible for Transport & Highways opened the meeting; in support were Rob Murphy and Ian White.

The purpose of the consultation was to generate ideas/options to assist in preparing the consultation document that would be circulated later in the year to receive views from Wiltshire residents on how the available bus service budget for 2016 and beyond might be used more effectively. All services being supported by varying degrees of subsidy by Wiltshire Council were under scrutiny and review, from wholly commercial through to all types of community services (strategic network, regular daytime, infrequent, evening, Sunday and PH and community transport).

The context of this consultation was explained

- Public transport plays a key role in delivering national and local objectives.
- No statutory duty to provide any specified minimum level of service.
- Pressures on local authority spending.
- Councils across the country are being forced to make ever larger cuts in public transport provision

It was explained that there were only three practical options

- Harvest more savings from bus operators but £4.5M was made in 2009 and there was little prospect of achieving much more,
- Increase income from the services but realistically this was not a practical option as the cost of any promotional work would probably outweigh any increase in revenue,
- Reductions to supported bus services
 - Continue current reviews of 'poorly used and relatively expensive' services
 - Withdraw lower priority services
 - Withdraw services with higher levels of support per trip
 - Reduce frequencies
 - Reduce length of operating day

In respect of the last bullet option, the subsidy levels for various services were provided

- | | | |
|--|------------|----------------------|
| • Daytime interurban services | £788,651 | 15% of total subsidy |
| • Daytime town bus services | £1,014,194 | 20% of total subsidy |
| • Daytime rural bus services – regular | £2,175,357 | 42% of total subsidy |
| • Daytime rural bus services – irregular | £298,513 | 6% of total subsidy |
| • Evening bus services | £685,946 | |
| • Sunday bus services | £165,177 | |

Within these figures there were some significant variations in levels of subsidy per passenger. For example

- The Connect 2 Pewsey Vale service had a £346,452 subsidy at £6.29 per pax
- The Avon & Bourne Valley community bus had a £14,000 subsidy at £7.43 per pax
- Malmesbury town bus service had a subsidy of £44,899 at £1.72 per pax

- Urchfont to Devizes service had a subsidy of £10,071 at £13.80 per pax

This illustrates some of the difficulties facing the service reduction decisions, thus more radical approaches may need to be explored and adopted which may include -

- Can more services be provided commercially?
- Can communities meet more of their own transport needs?
- Can some needs be met by means other than providing transport?

Cllr Roger Budgen
23/07/15