

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

9 MARCH 2016

WINCHESTER EVENING BUS SERVICES UPDATE

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENT)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF216– Winchester Evening Bus Services Update – 11 March 2015

WTF179 – Winchester Night Bus – 12 September 2014

WTF194 – Winchester Evening Bus Service – 11 September 2013

WTF201 – Winchester Town Evening Bus Service – 12 March 2014

WTF203 - Winchester Town Evening Bus Service Update - 25 June 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the meeting held on 25 June 2014 the Town Forum resolved to support the continuation of the evening bus service beyond September 2014 for a further period of 2 years. An up-date on the use of the service was also considered in March 2015 (WTF216).

This report further updates the Forum on the Patronage and use of the late evening bus service linking the City Centre with Badger Farm, Stanmore, Weeke and Harestock (the night bus) Thursday to Saturday. The existing contract is due to expire in September this year so the Forum needs to decide whether in principle it wants the service to operate after this date by continuing to support it financially. The Town Account agreed at the last meeting in January (WTF236) makes provision to do this with a budget of c£13.8k for 16/17.

When considering the merits of supporting the night bus the Forum needs to come to a view as to whether continuing to support it financially is the best use of its resources bearing in mind the budget challenges the Forum faces over the next few years.

In the event the Forum resolves in principle to continue to operate the night bus it is recommended that Hampshire County Council be authorised to tender the service based upon the service in the current contract for a period of 2 or 3 years. Once the tendering process has been completed, and the costs of operating the service are known, a final decision will need to be made by the Forum in the summer as to whether to continue running the service after September this year.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Forum:

- 1      Considers the operation of the service to date in terms of the number of passengers using the night bus to decide whether in principle to continue to support the service beyond September 2016 when the current contract expires.
- 2      In the event the Forum decides to continue to support the service in principle beyond September 2016 Hampshire County Council be authorised to tender the service for 2 or 3 years based upon the service provided by the current contract.

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### WINCHESTER EVENING BUS SERVICES UPDATE

#### REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENT)

##### DETAIL:

##### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Town Forum originally decided in 2012 to support an evening bus service between the city centre and Badger Farm, Stanmore, Weeke and Harestock on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and made provision for this in its budgets for 12/13 and 13/14.
- 1.2 In March 2014 the Forum resolved to support, in principle, the continuation of the service for a further 2 year period (beyond September 2014) and asked Hampshire County Council (HCC) to tender the service on this basis and in June 2014 the Forum agreed to run the service for a further two years from September 2014 and accordingly budget provision was made in the Town Account.
- 1.3 In January 2015, following a review of the bus service subsidy by Hampshire County Council, financial support was withdrawn from a number of bus services in the city. This resulted in the loss of most evening bus services in Winchester after 19.30. However, later in 2015 Stagecoach reintroduced most of the lost services on a commercial basis, this included evening services to Stanmore & Winnall (Service 1), Harestock (Service 3), Badger Farm (Service 5) and Kings Worthy (Service 'Spring'). This is of particular relevance as in March 2015, when the night bus service was last considered by the Forum, it was resolved that a meeting be arranged with the parishes immediately adjoining the town to look at a collaborative approach to operating two hour mid evening bus services. However this has been overtaken by events given the reintroduction of a number of services by Stagecoach towards the end of last year.
- 1.4 The Winchester late evening service has now been in operation for over three years. Detailed passenger numbers up to the end of January 2015 are included at Appendix A. It carried 5560 passengers in 2013 and 6213 passengers in 2014, with an average loading of six passengers per bus trip with the most popular four services being run on Friday evenings. Average passenger numbers per journey range from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 10. Overall the service 5A averages 7 passengers per journey compared to 5 passengers for service 3.

- 1.5 A further monitoring exercise was carried out over an eight week period over Winter 2015/16. This showed no discernible changes to the patronage levels; Average passenger numbers per journey range from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 7, over that period the service 5A averaged 6 passengers per journey compared to 5 passengers for service 3.
- 1.6 Whilst there was an 11% increase in numbers from 2013 to 2014, the low overall loading figure means that the service is never likely to cover its costs and become commercially viable. The cost per passengers' journey decreased slightly in 2014 (£2.16) compared with 2013 (£2.37) and 2012 (£2.31). Despite this trend the data suggests that the service is unlikely to develop to a point where it attracts enough passengers to be commercially viable and will no longer require a subsidy.
- 1.7 It is not possible to meaningfully evaluate the full year 2015 data as this would most likely have been adversely affected by the loss of the supported mid evening services for much of the year. It is also not possible to evaluate the use of the newly introduced evening services run by stagecoach as this would be of a commercially sensitive nature. However, based on the sample data over the 8 week period, it is evident that patronage has not changed significantly and reflects historical levels of patronage. .
- 1.8 As these services are night buses the main usage is for social purposes (82%). Most of the other journeys were for employment purposes (17%) with educational use at just 1%. Most passengers (86%) were travelling out from Winchester, with 9% travelling into Winchester and 5% of passengers travelling between the outlying estates.
- 1.9 In conclusion therefore the patronage of the night bus has probably reached its level and it is unlikely to increase significantly even if the service operates after September this year. It is also unlikely to ever reach a point where it would be able to operate commercially and therefore without subsidy. Passenger numbers are relatively small but operating the service does contribute to the success of the city's evening economy as it provides a useful link between the centre and the outlying areas of Winchester. Clearly the loss of the night bus would inconvenience those who use it as they would have to find other modes of transport if they could no longer use this service which has operated since 2012. The Forum therefore needs to decide whether continuing to support the night bus financially is the best use of its resources bearing in mind the budget challenges it faces over the next few years.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

##### 2 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 The service will contribute towards Community and Economic objectives by providing a service which local people can use to access restaurants and

Public Houses thus benefitting the evening economy and improving accessibility.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 A c£13,800 budget has been approved for the night bus service in the Winchester Town Account budget for 16/17. The contract would run for two or three years from September 2016(unless either party decides to terminate early) and will be subject to inflationary uplifts which are already included in the Town Account budget projections beyond 2016/17.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 Discontinuing the service could impact upon the city's night time economy and users of the service; albeit the impact is likely to be low given the limited use the service.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Winchester Night Bus Patronage - September 2012 to January 2015

Appendix A (revised)- Winchester Night Bus Patronage - September 2012 to February 2016

**Summary Statistics – September 2012 to February 2016**

76 maximum passengers carried in one day (all services)

26 maximum passengers carried - any one service

7 minimum passengers carried in one day (all services)

38 Average daily passengers carried (all services)

**5560 Total passengers carried in 2013**

**6213 Total passengers carried in 2014**

**5317 Total passengers carried in 2015**

7 average passengers carried per bus

5 average passengers carried on No. 3 service

8 average passengers carried on No. 5A service

Summary by Service	Service No. 3			Service No. 5A		
	2210	2310	0010	2135	2235	2335
<b>September 2012 to January 2016</b>	<b>2215</b>	<b>2315</b>	<b>0015</b>	<b>2140</b>	<b>2240</b>	<b>2340</b>
Average Thursday passenger numbers	5	4	2	7	5	4
Average Friday passenger numbers	7	7	4	9	7	10
Average Saturday passenger numbers	6	4	4	8	7	7
Average No. of passengers per week	18	15	9	24	19	21
Average No. of passengers per bus	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>