
**Decision Session
– Executive Member for City Strategy**

1st March 2011

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Evening and Sunday Bus services to Rawcliffe and Skelton

Summary

1. This report is written in response to a petition received concerning planned reductions to evening and Sunday bus services in the Clifton, Rawcliffe and Skelton ward. The petition further objects to the maintenance of frequent park and ride services catering for visitors to the City at the expense of services specifically provided for local residents.
2. The report concludes that whilst effort is being made by the Council to retain a level of socially necessary (i.e. not commercially viable) bus services to all suburbs of the City, such provision of discretionary expenditure must be balanced against the general pressures on Council finances.
3. The services referred to by the petitioners are currently subsidised entirely by North Yorkshire County Council and do not form part of the Councils' procured network. Thus any adoption of responsibility for funding continuation of these journeys would require allocation of funds from our existing budget.
4. At the current time many other local authorities are considering entire, or considerable withdrawal of subsidy to their supported local bus network. City of York Council has kept its bus service cuts to a minimum, based largely on the removal of a small number of very poorly used services.

Recommendations

5. The Executive Member is asked to note the contents of this report and to:
 - 1) Agree that the level of service proposed to the affected areas following the review of the York Tendered Bus Network best matches the potential demand whilst remaining affordable.
 - 2) Take no further action beyond the approval given in December 2010, accepting that the proposed network of subsidised services is the best that can be provided within the existing budgetary restrictions.
6. Reason: The Council has undertaken a thorough review of frequencies, routings and demand for the existing procured bus network in York prior to a re-tendering exercise currently taking place as a result of the expiry of the

existing contracts. Whilst some routes will change and frequencies reduce slightly on some routes in the evenings and on Sundays, we have managed to maintain a level of service to all areas currently served within the context of a greatly reduced ability to provide funding.

Background

7. A petition containing 93 signatures was received by City of York Council in October 2010 from Ms Dee Boyle, a resident of the Rawcliffe area of the city. A copy of the accompanying letter to the petition can be found at Annex A to this report.
8. The petitioners raise objection to previous and potential cuts in bus services connecting York with Rawcliffe, Clifton and Skelton, particularly in the evenings and Sundays. They request that these cuts be reversed and that additional services are provided in the evenings. In addition the petition demands retention of Sunday services to these areas.
9. The petitioners also state that they feel it is not right “to have excellent services for visitors to York on the Park & Ride routes (not usually local council tax payers) at the cost of cutting the local bus services for the residents and council taxpayers”. The Park & Ride network does not receive subsidy from the Council. Indeed, the service generates a small surplus which is reinvested in enhanced public transport services, principally for the benefit of York residents.
10. The York bus network is made up of two distinct groups of service. Firstly those which operate on a commercial footing (without control or direct financial subsidy from the local authority) and, secondly, where commercial services don't exist and a need is identified for the Council to procure services at specified frequencies and standards.
11. Until 2008, First York provided two part-commercial services from York to Clifton, Rawcliffe and Skelton. The service to Clifton Moor was de-registered by First as uneconomic, followed shortly afterward by the service to Skelton, whereupon City of York Council procured a replacement service (route 22) under competitive tender, to operate seven days a week, including evenings.
12. Following a review of loadings and revenue undertaken by the Council it was ascertained that demand for services in the evening was very limited and did not justify provision of such.
13. The evening service was then withdrawn, leaving route 22 operating from 0600 (ex Skelton, Mondays to Saturdays); 0840 (ex York Sundays and bank holidays) until 1915 (ex York).
14. Representations were made to the Council and Ward Members for the reinstatement of an evening service on route 22. In response to this, a late evening journey, operating on Friday and Saturday nights only, was introduced. This level of service matches that provided on other procured routes in the City.
15. Usage of this additional journey has been monitored regularly since its introduction. Loadings have continually been light, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Date	Passengers on 2225 York to Skelton journey	Passengers on 2255 Skelton to York journey	Total passengers per round trip
Fri 05.06.2009	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sat 06.06.2009	Nil	4	4
Fri 24.07.2009	5	Nil	5
Fri 07.05.2010	7	0	7
Sat 08.05.2010	4	2	6
Sat 22.10.2010	1	4	5
Fri 19.11.2010	3	0	3

16. These figures give an average load of 4.75, which compares poorly with other late evening supported journeys, viz: route 11, average load 12, route 12, average load 13, route 24, average load 16, route 35, average load 15.
17. The cost of operating route 22 is 95 pence per passenger. As such, it falls within the criteria for receiving Council subsidy and has not been considered for withdrawal. The route will, however, be modified to provide improved network coverage as outlined in the following paragraphs.
18. In addition to route 22, City of York currently subsidise another route, the 14, which provides an hourly service between York and Clifton, Green Lane off-peak daytime on Mondays to Saturdays. Following the latest review of services, it is proposed to combine routes 14 and 22 into new routes 19A and 19C, providing an hourly service Mondays to Saturdays from 0600 until 1920 (ex Skelton Mondays to Saturdays), together with a late evening journey at 2230 (ex York) on Fridays and Saturdays. A map of all of the routes can be found at Annex B to this report.
19. As a result, the level of service to Clifton, Rawcliffe and Skelton will not decrease during the week; indeed, the level of service to Clifton Green will actually be increased as a result of these proposals.
20. On Sundays, it is proposed to replace route 22 with a new route, numbered 112, that will run from Bishopthorpe to Monks Cross via the City, Rawcliffe, Skelton, Clifton Moor and Haxby every two hours from 1000 until 1857. Whilst this does represent a reduction in frequency over that currently provided, our surveys suggest that this is adequate to meet demand. It also provides for new journey opportunities for residents along the line of route.
21. A number of commercial (i.e. not subsidised) services operate from York to Easingwold via the Shipton Road every hour on weekdays. In addition,

Reliance Motor Services provide a two hourly service on Sundays between the hours of 0937 and 1737 ex York.

Services identified for discontinuation

22. North Yorkshire County Council subsidise two routes operated by Hodgson & Sons, in the evenings and Sundays with times outlined at Table 2 below. These operate via the Shipton Road and are the journeys referred to by the petitioners as being under threat of withdrawal.

Table 2

NYCC supported services operating York to Easingwold	Sunday day time	Monday – Sat eve	Fri – Sat eve only
Routes 29a/31x	Two hourly 1010 - 1810	1815, 2115	2305

23. As described in paragraphs 18 and 19, routes 19A and 19C will provide journeys from York to Clifton, Rawcliffe and Skelton at 1850 and 2230 on Fridays and Saturdays, whilst route 112 will provide a two-hourly facility between 1000 and 1857 on Sundays. Thus, in effect, the only journey currently serving these areas likely to be withdrawn without replacement is the 2115 route 29A.
24. The Council currently spends c. £750,000 per annum on local bus service provision in York. As a result of a tendering process and commercial negotiations this year, this level may be reduced.
25. All local authorities throughout England have had to review the level of service they can affordably fund following the comprehensive spending review. Many have decided to abandon funding of evening and Sunday bus services entirely and it seems likely that North Yorkshire County Council will follow suit.
26. City of York Council has managed to maintain a relatively high level of funding to secure services at these times and has avoided the wholesale cuts implemented by a number of local authorities.

Park & Ride

27. Park & Ride services in York, whilst provided under licence agreement between First Group and the Council, are not subsidised by the Council. These routes, which do not operate after approximately 2000 hours, are operated on a commercial basis by First and that company pays a premium to the Council for the exclusive right to operate them.
28. Whilst it could be argued that park and ride services are targeted mainly at visitors to the City, the services are open for use by local residents and are considered to form part of the City's bus network. Further, there are two intermediate stops on the Rawcliffe Bar Park & Ride route which serve local

residents. The suggestion that the local bus network is being cut in order to provide a greater level of service for visitors is therefore incorrect.

29. The Government has indicated that, where local authorities can no longer support loss making bus services, it welcomes proposals from local communities who wish to fund alternative services themselves. Such a scheme has recently been launched in Bristol, where local residents are self funding a new bus service to serve their area.

Consultation

30. The outcome of the Councils' review of the procured local bus network was presented to the Executive Member in December 2010.
31. At this Decision Session, the Executive Member indicated his support for the Council's proposed alterations to services to cater for the reduction in available funding.
32. Details of these proposals have been available for public consultation since December 2010. As yet no adverse comment has been received.
33. The members of Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without ward have been consulted on the petition proposals. The following comments have been received:

Cllr J. Watt said "I do not support diverting CYC funds to the Easingwold service - disappointing as it will be to lose this service in the evenings. It is imperative that at least the current level of support for the no 22 service is maintained."

Cllr R. Moore said "We (City of York Council) cannot subsidise a service because another local authority has decided to remove their support. While I have every sympathy for the residents of Rawcliffe, who have seen their local services eroded ever since the Park & Ride opened, we haven't got the funding."

Options

34. The following options are presented for the Executive Member's consideration:
 - a. Require the Council to increase the level of service to Clifton, Rawcliffe and Skelton to cover the bus services identified for withdrawal of North Yorkshire subsidy.
 - b. Take no further action beyond the approval given in December 2010, accepting that the proposed network of subsidised services is the best that can be provided within the existing budgetary restrictions.
 - c. Propose that the petitioners fund their own bus service outwith of the procured network.

Analysis

Option A

35. The patronage statistics for the Shipton Road bus services on a Sunday demonstrate that the average journey carries fewer than 2 passengers per journey in the York area. Detailed patronage statistics for the evening services have not been provided by North Yorkshire County Council but usage is understood to be equally poor.
36. Within the existing budgetary limitations, services will have to be removed from one area to provide for another. It would therefore not be possible to review service levels in one area without considering the whole of the subsidised bus network.
37. Whilst not impossible to fund, the selection of this option would require that the Council reconsiders its bus tendering plans for 2011 which would prove difficult at this stage.

Option B

38. The Council makes every effort to ensure that our subsidised local bus network provides value for money and, wherever possible, to ensure that all York residents are within easy reach of a local bus service.
39. The suggestion that the areas of Clifton, Rawcliffe and Skelton are being targeted more greatly than any other for service cuts is refuted.
40. The services proposed for these areas as already presented will, in effect, lead directly to only one weekday journey being withdrawn without replacement.
41. Whilst it is accepted that the frequency of service on Sundays will be reduced, this situation will apply to other areas of York as well as those in which the petitioners are resident.
42. It is not possible to provide any increase in service levels over those proposed without directly impacting on the Council's ability to fund services to other suburbs.

Option C

43. Whilst self-funding of bus services by local residents fulfils a desire of the Government's localism agenda, it is, as yet, a relatively untried alternative that may not be sustainable in the longer term.
44. Any service so funded would be outwith of the established bus network and could lead to further de-registrations of commercial services were it to abstract traffic from them.
45. In either scenario, it would then fall upon the Council to divert already committed funds to provide some level of replacement service. Were this to occur, it is highly unlikely that a similar level of service to that currently

proposed as a result of the Council's review of the procured network could be provided.

Corporate Objectives

46. The recommendation meets the Council's objectives of encouraging use of public transport and reducing the number of private car journeys made into the City whilst also meeting the requirements to procure non-commercial services in the most cost effective and favourable manner.

Implications

- **Financial** – none.
- **Human Resources (HR)** - none
- **Equalities** - none
- **Legal** - none
- **Crime and Disorder** - none
- **Information Technology (IT)** - none
- **Property** - none

Risk Management

47. The risk of acceding to the petitioners' request could adversely impact on the Council's ability to provide a similar level of service to all residents of York.
48. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score for all risks has been assessed at less than 16. This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Contact Details

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Report Approved



Date 4.2.2011

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all*

Implication: Financial
Name: Patrick Looker
Title: Finance Manager
Tel No: 1633

Wards Affected: *Skelton, Rawcliffe & Clifton Without,*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

Annex A – Letter accompanying the petition

Annex B – Map of bus services operating in the Clifton Without, Rawcliffe and Skelton ward.