
Decision Session
- Executive Member for City Strategy

5th October 2010

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Petition to First West and North Yorkshire bus company concerning changes made to route 13

Summary

1. The report considers a petition presented to the Council in July 2010 requesting that First West and North Yorkshire continue to operate the route 13/13a bus service which operates between Monks Cross and Copmanthorpe via Heworth/Bell Farm, York, York College/Askham Bar and Copmanthorpe.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member for City Strategy is recommended to:
 - i) Note the content of the petition.
 - ii) Support option b, 'to accept the commercially registered service registered by First West and North Yorkshire, namely a daytime service no longer linked to the Monks Cross area of York'.
 - iii) Propose to First Group that the route 13 should be operated in a bi-directional loop around Elmfield Avenue – Dodsworth Avenue.
 - iv) Further investigate how best to offer a link between Dodsworth/Elmfield Avenue and Monks Cross as part of the ongoing review of the tendered bus network.

Reason: The proposed, subsidised, extensions to the commercial route can be accommodated within the budget for this year. It is highly likely, however, that the public transport budget will require re-evaluation following the Government's comprehensive spending review and would not be a priority area for expenditure when compared to other supported bus routes. The discontinued section of route (and hours of operation) can be accommodated in the review of subsidised bus services to be undertaken later this year. The bi-directional route is proposed as this is felt to best serve the needs of the Dodsworth Avenue/Elmfield Avenue residents and the commercial needs of First West and North Yorkshire.

Background

3. Route 13 has operated on a commercial basis (without Council subsidy) on Monday to Saturday daytime and evenings for a number of years. A variant of route 13 (13a) was introduced in 2009 to serve the residents of the Woodlands Grove area. Route 13a operates on an hourly basis. The Sunday service has for a number of years been operated with financial support from the Council and operates on an hourly frequency. A copy of the timetable operating prior to August 2010 is reproduced as Annex A to this report.
4. In Spring 2010 First West and North Yorkshire expressed concerns regarding the ongoing commercial viability of route 13/13a in its present form to Council officers and advised that the Monks Cross – Heworth section of the route was particularly at risk. No specific details were tabled at this point.
5. In June 2010 the Council was provided with copies of the registration of changes to routes 13/13a, sent to the Traffic Commissioner. The changes were due to come in to force on Sunday 8th August. The principal changes involved a complete withdrawal of early morning and evening services (Monday – Saturday) and removal of the link to Monks Cross. A copy of the proposed, revised timetable is reproduced as Annex B to this report.
6. The Council was not, at this stage, in a position to make a decision as to whether it should step in to subsidise the journeys which were to be withdrawn. A decision was therefore taken that the Council would, within the overall existing budget for subsidised bus services, support the existing route 13/13a route and timetable for a temporary period of four weeks (enabling surveys to be undertaken during June/July 2010 before the 56 day deadline required by the Traffic Commissioner for any change to bus services) until 4th September.
7. In July, Yorkshire Coastliner took the decision to register additional journeys on their route 844 at largely similar times to three of the journeys to be withdrawn on First route 13 and have operated since 8th August between Copmanthorpe and Ashley Park, Heworth via York.
8. The surveys conducted by the Council identified that whilst a number of the journeys earmarked for discontinuation by First carried low levels of passengers, there were a small number which carried in excess of ten passengers. Specifically, the last buses from Monks Cross shopping centre (after the last Park & Ride service back to York) carried a number of shop workers, all of whom were travelling back to York City Centre (rather than to points along route 13).
9. The Council gave notice to First to withdraw the journeys which carried very few (and in some cases no) passengers and agreed, subject to the findings of this report, that the last four journeys currently running dead from Monks Cross shopping centre on route 9 (Park & Ride), should run in service back to York city centre to provide a minimal cost solution for the passengers referred to in paragraph 8 above.

10. The cost of continued operation of the full Monday - Saturday operation of route 13/13a for the 4 week August period was £1634 per week (as per Annex A). The cost of providing the reduced timetable (predominantly covering the cost of the link to Monks Cross, which requires an additional vehicle be utilised over and above what would be used for First's commercial operation) is £923 per week. The current timetable is reproduced as Annex C of this report.
11. The average subsidy per passenger for option A (as outlined at paragraph 23 below) is £8.01 and £4.52 for option D to continue the elements of the route and timetable which would otherwise be withdrawn. The Council works to a policy of questioning support for any route (or section thereof) costing more than £2 per passenger subsidy.
12. A petition containing 169 signatures arrived with the Council in July 2010 at much the same time as officers were working with both First and other bus operators to secure a sustainable future for bus services in the Heworth area. The title of the petition:

'We, the undersigned, object to the cutting of the number 13 bus service and call on the First York bus company to continue this much needed service.'

Consultation

13. Officers have liaised with Ward Councillors (both for Heworth and Heworth without) throughout the course of the changes and Andrew Bradley subsequently attended a residents' meeting on 21st September 2010 with Richard Harris, Commercial Director at First West and North Yorkshire to take on board the concerns and comments of residents and explain the proposed changes. Richard Harris informed the assembled company that route 13 is the worst (commercially) performing bus route in the whole of the West and North Yorkshire First Group network. He made it clear that action to address this situation could no longer be delayed.
14. 55 residents and two of the Heworth ward councillors attended the meeting which was held at St Wulstan's Church, Fossway. The residents were evenly divided between those living in the Fossway/ Dodsworth Avenue areas and Elmfield Avenue areas with a handful from the Woodlands Grove area. One resident lived on New Lane, Huntington.
15. Many comments and requests were made concerning bus services in general. The following comments were made with specific reference to the route 13 and bus services in the Heworth area. The comments of Council officers follow in italics:
 - a. Requests were made for the Monks Cross Park & Ride service to stop at Monkgate and at Laburnam Garth (adjacent to the top of Elmfield Avenue). *This may be possible subject to Council and First Group agreement but may undermine the 'express' element which makes the Park & Ride attractive.*

- b. Several requests were made for the former route 16 to be reinstated linking Monks Cross via Elmfield and Dodsworth Avenues through the city centre to Acomb via Hamilton Drive. *This operation was discontinued by First Group in 2009. First expressed no desire to reinstate such a service and would be difficult to deliver without a comprehensive revision of the full commercial and subsidised networks in York.*
 - c. First Group and the Council presented the residents with a choice of commercially achievable proposals, as shown on the map at Annex E and described at paragraph 29 below. Residents were largely not interested in either option, simply requesting that the link to Monks Cross be retained. The primary reasons given for this were shopping and employment trips. *First Group accepted the comments made by residents but repeated their view that the current service was not commercially viable due to a lack of patronage. Whilst this service could be subsidised, it is felt that it would not be sustainable in the long term especially as it exceeds the Council's criteria for service subsidy.*
 - d. Some residents expressed concern that there is no bus service through Dodsworth Avenue after 1730. *Whilst this is indeed the case, to subsidise an evening service would place considerable strain on our existing budget and is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term.*
16. Ward Councillors representing the wards which route 13 passes through have also been consulted. Cllrs Boyce and Funnell attended the residents' meeting of 21st September. In addition, comments have been received from Cllr. Reid as follows:

I have very little feedback from my residents on the use of the no 13. I suspect that is because it would only be used by people living fairly close to Tadcaster Rd and they do have a lot of options. If early morning and late evening services reduce overall then there might be concerns but if there are other options then I suspect there won't be too much concern. The top end can access P & R and the bottom end gets the FTR.
17. Significant consultation has been undertaken with representatives from First West and North Yorkshire to establish a service which will be sustainable for the future but which provides the maximum service level to the maximum number of bus users.
18. First have confirmed that they are not prepared to operate any level of service on a commercial basis beyond that outlined at Annex B. The company has outlined the necessary financial subsidy required to retain various options as below.
19. Both York Pullman and Transdev York were consulted on the publicly registered changes to understand whether they might be interested in taking over any of the journeys/sections of route which First would no longer be operating. The outcomes of this discussion are outlined at paragraph 7 above.

20. Monks Cross Shopping Centre were asked for their views on the changes and gave the following comment

'...(we) find it difficult to believe that the 13 will be cut given its usage here - this must be a small percentage of the overall use of the 13? Surely those using this service would just switch to the car for transport which would be against the overall green transport plan for York and surrounding areas.

We do not have a budget that will cover bus subsidisation but if the cut was to happen then perhaps this could be floated to all businesses benefiting from this service along its route. If that were to happen then dependent on cost our monetary input may be considered.'

21. Whilst the suggestion that all businesses along the route could be approached to make a contribution to the cost of service provision is accepted, it has not been possible to undertake this exercise to date.
22. Monks Cross have provided details of a boarding and alighting survey they undertook for two weeks during August 2010. The results are outlined at Annex D.

Options

23. The following options are presented for the Executive Member's consideration:
- a. Reinstate the full service 13/13a timetable as operated prior to First West and North Yorkshire's decision to de-register certain parts of the route/timetable, supporting the continuation of those elements with Council subsidy but without the elements outlined at paragraph 26 below.
 - b. Accept the commercially registered service registered by First West and North Yorkshire, namely a daytime service no longer linked to the Monks Cross area of York.
 - c. As per option b) above but adjusting the loop to serve the bottom end of Stockton Lane and Woodlands Grove.
 - d. Allow the cessation of the journeys as per First West and North Yorkshire's proposed commercial timetable but retain the connection to Monks Cross at the Council's cost.

Analysis

24. **Option A** would satisfy local residents and ward councillors in so far as the service which has been experienced since May 2009 would continue.
25. If the full route/timetable were to be retained, the cost of subsidising those elements of the route which First would otherwise not operate would be £1634 per week and would be subject to a competitive tender process in 2011. This

sum would be reduced were the suggestions in paragraph 26 below to be accepted.

26. A summary of Council survey data can be found as Annex F to this report and demonstrate that the subsidy per passenger on the basis of this option would be in the region of £8.01 per passenger. The surveys show that the following aspects of the route/timetable would certainly not warrant subsidy:
- a. The Woodlands Grove loop on route 13A (Woodlands Grove)
 - b. Certain early morning journeys
 - c. Subsidised journeys should not duplicate the morning and evening journeys between Copmanthorpe and York provided on a commercial basis by Transdev York (route 844)
27. **Option B** would relieve the Council of an additional cost burden and would maintain the fully commercial operation of route 13 (Monday – Saturday). Most of the areas which would no longer be served by route 13 benefit from alternative bus routes as outlined in table 1 below.

Table 1

Route number	Stopping points	Frequency
9 Park & Ride	Monks Cross shopping centre Heworth Green York City Centre	Monday to Saturday Approx. every 10 mins 0700 – 2000
55*	York City Centre Huntington Road New Lane/Jockey Lane Monks Cross shopping centre Woodlands Grove	Monday to Friday One per hour 0700 – 1900
20*	Monks Cross shopping centre Jockey Lane	Monday – Sunday One per hour

* Services operated with Council subsidy

28. Preliminary discussions have been undertaken with bus operators to understand what acceptance of tickets across routes 55, 9 and 13 might be achieved to ensure that even if passengers have to change bus, they would still be able to reach all of the destinations (most notably Monks Cross Shopping Centre) by public transport.

29. The Council has been in discussion with First Group to understand whether or not the company might be prepared to operate a two way loop around the Heworth area (as per the route shown on the map at Annex E). This would result in an hourly service running from York, turning left into Dodsworth Avenue, round the loop and back in toward York along the Malton Road, turning right out of Elmfield Avenue. There would also be an hourly service travelling from town and turning left in to Elmfield Avenue and then right back into town at the junction of Dodsworth Avenue and Heworth Green.
30. At the consultation with local residents on 21st September, of those people who responded, 18% expressed a preference for a bi-directional loop, 27% for a one way loop whilst 55% expressed no preference. We do accept that this was a very small sample of all local residents and route 13 bus passengers.
31. **Option C** - First management have indicated that they don't think that this would be possible without employing additional resource in bus/staff terms and commented as follows:

'Bearing in mind the right turn that would be necessary from Straylands Grove into Malton Road, I would estimate another 3/4 minutes would be required over & above what has been negotiated with our Trade Union for the 'Elmfield loop', which could not be accommodated into the proposed 3 bus cycle.'

This view has been confirmed by Scheduling experts within the Transport Planning Unit of the Council.

32. **Option D** would retain the direct link between Copmanthorpe, the Tadcaster Road area and Heworth with Monks Cross shopping centre. The cost of subsidising the link to Monks Cross shopping centre would be £923 per week and would be subject to a competitive tender process in 2011.
33. One of the principal concerns of the Bell Farm/Huntington Road area of Heworth is the loss of a link to the Monks Cross area. Council surveys have shown that journeys made between the Bell Farm/Huntington Road area and Monks Cross are limited and in many instances could be catered for by route 55 (Monday to Friday).
34. The outcomes of this report will be included in the review of subsidised bus services which will be brought to a meeting of the Council later in the financial year.

Corporate Objectives

35. Support for the bus services in this area would contribute to the following Corporate priorities:
 - **Sustainable City** - There is considerable scope for reducing vehicle congestion delay on the overall network through greater bus use, thereby reducing the associated adverse affects, such as air pollution.

- **Inclusive City** – The introduction of a range of sustainable bus routes across Heworth increases access to opportunities and facilities by a wider (and potentially cheaper) range of travel choices.
36. Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2): Support for the services outlined above would contribute to several of the aims of the second Local Transport Plan, namely:
- To tackle congestion
 - To improve economic performance in a sustainable manner;
 - To enhance opportunities for all community members, including disadvantaged groups, to play an active part in society;
 - To reduce the impact of traffic and travel on the environment, including air quality, noise and the use of non-renewable resources.

Implications

- **Financial**

The financial implication of option A would cost an estimated £54,000 for 2010/11. The implication of option C would cost an estimated £33,000 for 2010/11. Both of these options could be accommodated within the existing budget but could require significant scrutiny dependent on the outcome of the forthcoming Government Comprehensive Spending Review and the need to identify significant savings across the Council.

- **Human Resources (HR)**

There are no HR implications

- **Equalities**

There are no equalities issues except to note that the Council cannot force a bus operator (whether First or any other) to introduce bus services.

- **Legal**

There are no Legal implications

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no Crime and Disorder implications

- **Information Technology (IT)** (*Contact – Head of IT*)

There are no IT implications

- **Property** (*Contact – Property*)

There are no Property implications

- **Other**

There are no other implications

Risk Management

37. There are no known risks.

Contact Details

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City Strategy

Report Approved



Date 23 September 2010

Wards Affected: Heworth, Heworth Without, Huntington & New Earswick, All
Dringhouses & Woodthorpe, Guildhall, Micklegate, Rural West York

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A: Route 13/13a timetable in operation to 4th September 2010

Annex B: Route 13/13a timetable proposed by First Group

Annex C: Route 13/13a timetable currently in operation

Annex D: Bus patronage figures for two weeks of surveys at Monks Cross shopping centre

Annex E: Map showing options for route 13/13a and accompanying Heworth bus services

Annex F: Table of existing journeys on routes 13/13a showing numbers of passengers travelling solely between Heworth and Monks Cross