

## **Executive Member Decision Session**

**12 April 2018**

Report of the Corporate Director of Economy and Place  
Portfolio of the Executive Member for Transport and Planning

### **Local bus services to Wheldrake and villages to the South East of York**

#### **Summary**

1. This report responds to a decision taken by East Yorkshire Motor Services to discontinue route 18, a local bus service linking York city centre to Wheldrake, a number of rural villages and Holme on Spalding Moor.
2. The report asks the Executive Member to give their consideration to options for the replacement of this service with the intention of retaining local bus links between these villages and York City Centre.

#### **Recommendations**

3. The Executive Member is asked to:
  - a) Agree to the award of a short term (3 month) contract for the service outlined at option B
  - b) Undertake a full procurement exercise to secure best value for money from the service and to ensure that it is delivered with a vehicle meeting the latest emissions standard. If this is beyond the current budget it will be brought to a future decision session.
  - c) Agree to the use of a Euro IV emissions vehicle for the short term contract, in light of the short notice and duration of this contract.

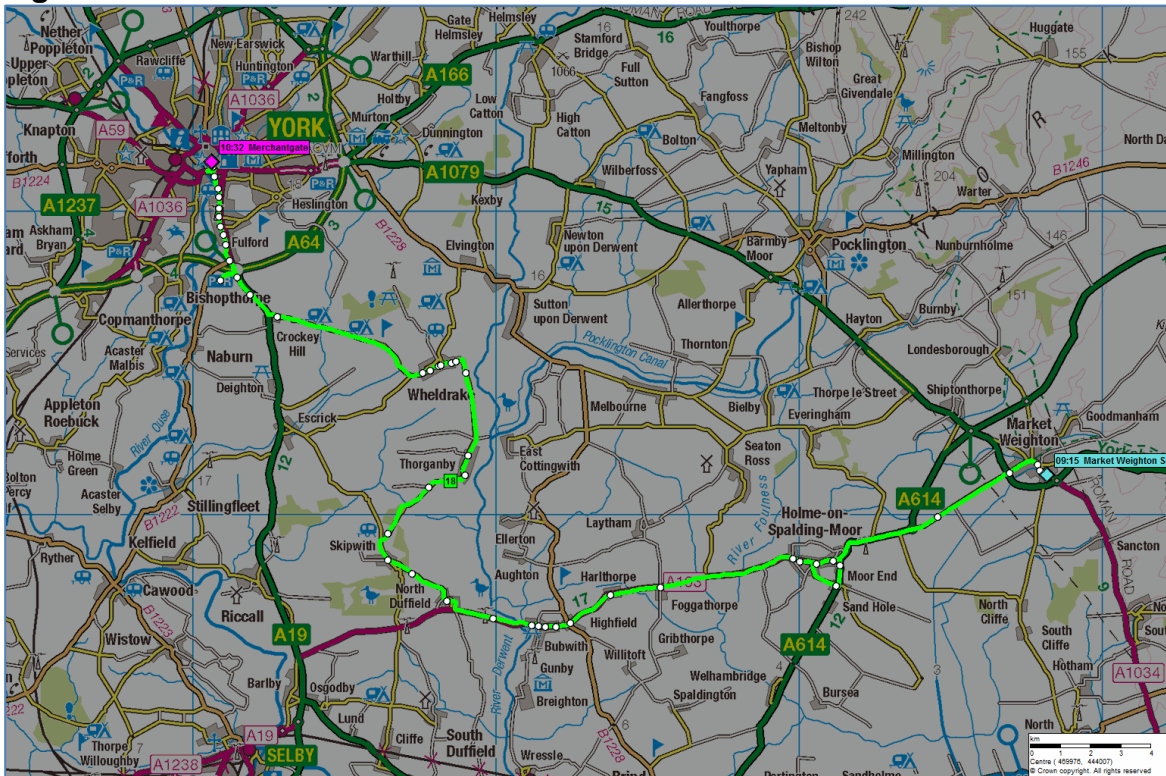
Reason:

To ensure the continued operation of a local bus service to Wheldrake and other villages to the south east of York.

## Background

4. Route 18 is a local bus service which from Monday – Saturday provides a two hourly frequency between Market Weighton and York via Holme on Spalding Moor and the villages of Bubwith, North Duffield and Wheldrake.

Figure 1 – Route 18



5. In addition to the daytime journeys, there are two evening return journeys on Friday and Saturday evenings between Holme on Spalding Moor and York city centre.
6. Over the past decade, the service has been provided by four different local bus operators. Two of the operators have run the service on a largely commercial basis, two under contracts and with financial support from City of York, North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire councils.
7. The service is reasonably well used, but never quite well enough to have made it fully commercially viable without financial support from the local authorities. This is largely because, whilst the various settlements along the route generate reasonable patronage numbers, there are significant sections of countryside in between where no passengers board or alight. This results in comparatively high fuel and labour costs for the number of passengers carried.

8. The most recent operation, since 2014, has been provided by East Yorkshire Motor Services. Most of the journeys provided are operated without Council subsidy with the exception of the 0715 departure from Holme on Spalding Moor and the 1640 departure from York. Table 1 below indicates the level of subsidy invested currently by each of the three local authorities and the level invested prior to the current operation, when the service was operated under contract.

**Table 1 – financial support by route invested by local authority**

	<b>York</b>	<b>North Yorkshire</b>	<b>East Riding</b>	<b>Total</b>
2012/13	£14,100	£9,700	£15,000	<b>£38,800</b>
2013/14	£28,600	£19,600	£30,100	<b>£78,300</b>
2014/15	£23,500	£2,000	£11,000	<b>£36,500</b>
2015/16	£15,600	£2,000	£11,000	<b>£28,600</b>
2016/17	£10,700	£2,000	£11,000	<b>£23,700</b>
2017/18	£7,000	£2,000	£11,000	<b>£20,000</b>

9. When a contract has been in existence for route 18, this has been procured and managed by City of York Council (CYC) with support from East Riding of Yorkshire (ERYC) and North Yorkshire County (NYCC) councils. A competitive procurement exercise in 2013 led to a significant increase in the overall cost of service provision. This was rectified by EYMS's decision to provide the service on a largely commercial basis the following year.
10. Both neighbouring local authorities have indicated that they are content for CYC to continue to take a leading role in the engagement with operators. They have also confirmed that they are committed to continue their current financial contribution for the route in to the next financial year (2018/19). NYCC has indicated that it is unlikely that there would be an opportunity to increase its financial contribution to route 18. ERYC has indicated that any financial increase would require further consideration.

11. A copy of the current route 18 timetable is included at Annex A to this report. Average annual passenger numbers per departure are included at Annex B to this report.
12. Analysis shows 28% of users in the York bound direction board in Wheldrake, with 30% boarding at either Market Weighton or Holme on Spalding Moor. It is worth noting that East Yorkshire Motor Services (EYMS) have registered a new bus link commencing at Holme on Spalding Moor to operate via Market Weighton and Pocklington in to York. This is a commercially operated service so any decision to provide a subsidised service which could potentially undercut the EYMS service could potentially be open to legal challenge (or would result in the withdrawal of the commercial service). The existence of this new EYMS link will, however, reduce the commercial viability of the full length of route 18 and CYC's ability to procure a replacement for the existing service.

## **Consultation**

13. CYC has undertaken pre-supplier engagement with a number of bus operators to establish whether any of the companies would be willing to take on the existing route 18 (or a variant thereof) on a fully commercial basis – i.e. without any direct financial subsidy from the local authorities. Unfortunately none of the companies approached has expressed an interest in operating the service without subsidy. Two companies did, however indicate that operation of a level of service could be achieved with a relatively modest subsidy.
14. CYC has received correspondence from residents and bus users living in the Wheldrake and Thorganby areas (including from Thorganby parish council). In addition, ERYC representatives attended a meeting of Bubwith Parish Council at which an estimated 200 people were present. Most of those in attendance were users of the peak time services in to York. ERYC report that most of the attendees accepted that the current level of service was potentially greater than that required and that one peak time journey in the morning peak and one back to Holme on Spalding Moor in the evening peak might meet their needs.
15. The level of interest from Wheldrake residents is probably lower than it has been in the past due to the continued operation of route 36 (linking Elvington to York via Wheldrake). Route 36 only operates on an off-peak

basis, however, so there is a need to provide a peak service link between Wheldrake and York.

## **Options**

16. The following options are presented for the Executive Member's consideration:

### ***Option A***

Procure a service replicating the majority of route 18 including:

- One peak time journey between Bubwith and York in each direction.
- One off-peak journey between Bubwith / Foggathorpe and York in each direction.
- Not less than three return journeys between North Duffield and York and a two-hourly service between Wheldrake and York.
- One Friday / Saturday evening journey between York and Bubwith.

### ***Option B***

Procure a reduced service including:

- One peak time journey between Bubwith and York in each direction.
- Not less than three return journeys between North Duffield and York and a two-hourly service between Wheldrake and York.

### ***Option C***

Do not replace route 18 unless this can be achieved within the existing cost envelope (i.e. £7k p.a. contribution from CYC).

## **Analysis of options**

### ***Option A***

17. This option is the most expensive as it will almost certainly require more than one bus to operate the additional off-peak journeys to Bubwith and Foggathorpe. It is expected this option will cost in the region of £20,000 for the three month contract (£80k full-year equivalent). ERYC and NYCC are likely to continue their current contribution if this option is chosen.

18. It is worth noting that this option will see a significant reduction in service for the village of Bubwith and Foggathorpe. ERYC have indicated that they will consider whether additional links between both Bubwith and Foggathorpe are required separately to this exercise.

### ***Option B***

19. This option is likely to be much more affordable as it should be possible to operate using a single bus. There is flexibility in the timetable specification to allow an operator to make additional use of a vehicle currently engaged in school service work. It is expected this option will cost in the region of £7,500 for the three month contract (£30k full-year equivalent) if a vehicle can be used in this manner. NYCC are likely to continue their current funding if this option is chosen. ERYC may opt to reduce their funding as the service level to Bubwith and Foggathorpe will be significantly reduced.

### ***Option C***

20. Under this option, services to the North Yorkshire and East Riding villages would most likely cease. An early and late journey between Wheldrake and York may be affordable utilising a vehicle which is also engaged on school service work.

## **Council Plan**

21. The plan is built around 3 key priorities:

**Working together**, continuing to work with neighbouring authorities, bus operators to retain local bus service links to rural areas.

**We improve**, by ensuring that we deliver value for money for York's residents.

**We make a difference**, by assisting people living in rural communities to retain their ability to make sustainable travel choices which wouldn't be available to them without the existence of these services. Some of the current users of route 18 would not be able to access employment and amenities without the existence of the service.

### ***A prosperous City for all***

Looking after the City's rural residents: enabling them to access key services, employment and shopping opportunities.

### ***A focus on Frontline Services***

Some people would not be able to access employment were it not for the Council's investment and input.

### ***A Council that listens to residents***

Residents of York, North Yorkshire and East Riding have registered their views concerning the future provision of this service.

22. **One Planet Aims** – This local bus service is the most viable sustainable travel option linking the villages served to both the York Designer Outlet and York city centre.

## **Implications**

### **Financial –**

#### ***Option A***

This option would require an estimated sum of £80,000 across the three contributing local authorities. Only £20,000 of this is currently allocated to supporting route 18. The burden of additional funding required would be likely to fall almost entirely on CYC as the neighbouring authorities have indicated that they are unwilling to increase their contribution.

#### ***Option B***

This option would require an estimated sum of £30,000 across the three contributing local authorities. Only £20,000 of this is currently allocated to supporting route 18. Due to the significant reduction in service level to Bubwith there is a likelihood that ERYC will not continue with their full contribution of £11,000 were this option to be selected. It is therefore anticipated that an additional sum of £15,000 p.a. would be required from CYC. This sum can be found from within the existing local bus budget for 2018/19.

#### ***Option C***

This option would either cost nothing (if no bidders are forthcoming) or up to £7,000, which is the existing sum allocated each year by CYC towards this route.

### **Human Resources – N/A**

**Equalities** – Please see the attached Communities Impact Assessment Annex C

### **Crime & Disorder N/A**

**Information Technology** N/A

**Property** – N/A

**Other Physical** N/A

## **Risk Management**

23. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the risks arising from the recommendations have been assessed, as below 16 and therefore require monitoring only.

### Contact Details

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**Dept Name**

Transport

**Report**

**Approved**



**Date**

4 April 2018

**Tel No.**

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### **Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

None

### **Wards Affected:**

Wheldrake, Fulford, Fishergate, Guildhall and wards within the North Yorkshire & East Riding of Yorkshire council administrative areas.

**For further information please contact the authors of the report**



## **Annexes**

**Annex A** – Timetable for the current service 18

**Annex B** – Average passenger loadings for current service 18

**Annex C** – Communities Impact Assessment