

Public Transport

Keynsham Civic Centre, Market Walk, Keynsham, BS31 1FS
Minicom: 01225 394166 Council Connect: 01225 39 40 41
www.bathnes.gov.uk

Date: 15th August 2016
Our ref:
Direct line: 01225 477604
Fax:
Email: richard_smith@bathnes.gov.uk

Stakeholder Consultation
Bath and North East Somerset

Dear Sirs

Re: Forthcoming tenders for supported bus services

The Council is considering changes to supported bus services to be implemented from May 2017. In advance of inviting tenders for replacement services, we are therefore inviting the views of Councillors, Parish and Town councils, operators, and other stakeholders affected by these services, before the contract specifications are finalised.

The services concerned are:

- Service 20A/C:** Bath Circular services
- Service 267:** Evening Services between Bath and Frome
- Service 665:** Keynsham and Saltford local service

A separate schedule is provided for each service. Contracts are either net subsidy contracts where revenue is retained by the operator; or gross cost contracts where the Authority retains the revenue. In each case the net cost to the Authority is quoted, along with patronage and revenue data where available. The revenue data is based on the actual cash revenue and an approximation of the concessionary revenue from the Diamond travelcard scheme.

Specific issues in respect of each service are detailed in the individual schedules. All consultees are invited to submit their views on these specific issues, as well as to timetabling, routing, frequency, or any other matter affecting one or more of the individual services. Whereas bus operators are under no obligation to consult users before making changes to their commercial network, the Council is keen to hear the views of users on the services it supports financially, to help inform its decisions

The Council has not commenced its budget round for 2017/18 and there can be no certainty as to whether all or any of the services will be able to be afforded from May 2017.

Please could you submit any comments, proposals, or suggestions not later than **Friday 16th September 2016**, to me at the above address, so that these can be considered when we draw up the detailed contract specifications.

As a result of all these consultations the detail of the contracts to be let may differ from the services in operation at present. It is anticipated that the formal Invitations to Tender will be published in October, with contract award notifications before Christmas.

I look forward to receiving your advice and suggestions. Please note that this consultation will also be published on the Council website, and advertised on vehicles operating the services where this is practicable.

Yours faithfully

Richard Smith
Senior Public Transport Officer
Public Transport

Service 20A/C: Bath Circular services

The route map and current timetable are at: [B&NES service 20A/C.pdf](#). The service is operated by Wessex under the terms of a net subsidy contract.

The Council supports an hourly service around the entire route in each direction (Monday – Saturday). This is supplemented by an additional vehicle that increases the frequency of service to half hourly between Twerton Parade and Bath University on weekdays. There is no evening or Sunday service. This service requires 4 buses in total.

The service is supplemented at peak school times by a further additional vehicle linking Ralph Allen school to Twerton; other journeys have their route and timing adjusted to fit with school times. From September 2016 the main school journeys will be operated separately from the contract, increasing capacity for students travelling to the school. These school services do not form part of this consultation.

Contract Net Cost 2016/17*	£291,869
Passenger revenue	£171,961
Annual Patronage	194,187
Concession journeys %	27%
Cost per passenger journey	£1.50

*Before school service changes from September 2016

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall from 2016/17 onwards. It is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs. The 20A/C contract is the largest single financial commitment to supported bus services made by the Council and options are therefore being considered as to how the overall cost could be reduced.

One option would be to separate the service into smaller elements more related to passenger usage of the services. This might include:

- A half hourly service between the University and Twerton
- A reduced frequency of service (every 90 minutes rather than hourly) on Widcombe Hill, Julian Road and Weston Road.
- Removal of services between Twerton and the RUH where there are commercially operated alternatives

This would reduce the number of vehicles required to operate the service, reduce costs, and improve reliability on individual sections of route as the impact of delays on one section of route would be localised, and not impact on services that may be operating on the other side of the city.

Surveys of passenger boarding and alighting will be undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 267: Bath – Frome evening service

The route map and current timetable are at: [First service 267.pdf](#).

The Council supports evening journeys from Bath at 21:10 and 23:10 and from Frome at 20:00 and 22:00 (Monday –Saturday). These journeys are operated by First under the terms of a net subsidy contract. Daytime services are operated commercially by First (267 Monday – Saturday) and Faresaver (X67 Mon-Fri). Sunday services are operated commercially by First.

Contract Net Cost 2016/17	£19,076
Passenger revenue	£14,832
Patronage	10,084
Concession journeys %	21%
Cost per passenger journey	£1.89

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall from 2016/17 onwards. It is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs, and is considering the withdrawal of the service.

The service provides evening journeys uniquely to Midford and Hinton Charterhouse within Bath & North East Somerset, but residents of these parishes make up only a small percentage of the users of the service. When surveyed in July 2013 only 1 of 42 trips observed on these journeys was made to or from Hinton Charterhouse or Midford. B&NES Council does not receive a contribution from Somerset Council towards the cost of the service; they withdrew their contribution in 2011.

The Council recognises that there may be benefits to the Bath evening economy from providing this facility, but direct rail services operate between Bath and Frome in the evenings, and may be an option for many of the passengers on the service.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 665 Keynsham and Saltford local services

The route map and timetable are at [B&NES 665 leaflet.pdf](#). The service is operated by the B&NES Passenger Services fleet (Monday-Friday) and by CT Coaches (Saturdays) under the terms of gross cost contracts.

The service operates only during off-peak periods, serving areas away from main bus routes in Keynsham and Saltford, offering hail and ride services along sections of route without fixed stops. There is no service on Sunday.

Contract Net Cost 2016/17	£39,755
Passenger revenue	£16,859
Annual Patronage	18,640
Concession journeys %	94%
Cost per passenger journey	£2.13

Consultation Issues

Keynsham is undergoing significant expansion from development sites at Somerdale and along Charlton Road. Of these only Somerdale has a bus service at present - from September this will be an hourly link to the town centre on the First service 17. The market for bus services from these developments will take some time to develop, as occupation of the sites increases.

The Council is therefore considering revising the 665 service to:

- Operate more extensive hours of operation including morning and afternoon peaks
- Retain links to Saltford and Gaston Avenue in line with demand
- Improve services through the Chandag Estate, providing more regular links to Keynsham
- Remove duplication of services 38 and 349 in the Park Estate.
- Link new development areas to the town centre, railway station, and schools.

It is certain that a more extensive service will involve a higher cost of operation, and the Council will seek to use current and future developer (s106) contributions to support the enhanced service. It is recognised that any solution implemented in May 2017 may be only an interim step towards meeting the demands of current and future residents.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.