



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

THURSDAY 25TH AUGUST 2011, AT 5.30 P.M.

THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

The attached papers were specified as "to follow" on the Agenda previously distributed relating to the above mentioned meeting.

3. Review of Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group Report (Chairman: Councillor Sean Shannon) (Pages 1 - 24)
4. The Reduction In Bus Services Task Group Report (Chairman: Councillor Chris Bloore) (Pages 25 - 56)

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

The Council House
Burcot Lane
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B60 1AA

19th August 2011

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

25th August 2011

RECREATION ROAD SOUTH CAR PARK TASK GROUP

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mike Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Was informed the Task Group had been set up.
Relevant Head of Service for Overview and Scrutiny	Claire Felton – Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	All Ward Councillors were invited to join the Task Group
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny investigation undertaken by the Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are requested to:
- (a) consider and approve the report and recommendations attached at Appendix 1 and
 - (b) submit the report and recommendations to the Cabinet for approval.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision making process and enables non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

Financial Implications

- 3.2 These are detailed within the attached report.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 These are detailed within the attached report.

Service/Operation Implications

- 3.4 These are detailed within the attached report.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.5 N/A

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 N/A

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group
Report

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

See attached report for details.

7. KEY

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Overview and Scrutiny Board

Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group

AUGUST 2011

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

Supporting Officer: Amanda Scarce



Bromsgrove

District Council

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 An Overview and Scrutiny Proposal Form (Appendix 1) relating to Recreation Road Car Park South was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 11th July 2011, by Councillor S. P. Shannon.
- 1.2 The Board was informed that complaints had been received from individual taxi drivers and the Chairman of the Taxi Drivers Association in respect of the time limit set for the pick up of passengers at Recreation Road South Car Park.
- 1.3 The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural and Environmental Services advised Members during the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting that an extension, from 10 to 15 minutes, of the drivers' pick up/drop time was being considered. The Board made a recommendation to Cabinet that the drivers' pick up/drop off time limit be extended to 15 minutes with immediate effect. At the Cabinet meeting held on 20th July 2011 the recommendation was accepted.
- 1.4 Another issue which had been raised referred to the strict manner in which attendants issued Excess Charge Notices for vehicles parked incorrectly and the appeal system that was in place. Councillor Shannon had informed the Board that he had both written and verbal evidence to substantiate the claims. Other Members commented that they had also received complaints from residents along similar lines.
- 1.5 Members were also advised that the drainage/flooding issue raised in the Topic Proposal had been reported to Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and the problem had been addressed.
- 1.6 Although the Overview and Scrutiny Topic Proposal only covered the pick up/drop off system for taxi/private hire operators and the flooding/drainage issues at the Market Street site of the car park, following discussion it was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board that a Task Group would be established to scrutinise the operation of the Recreation Road South Car Park and that Councillor Shannon would be appointed Chairman.

2. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1	That a PR exercise be carried out to promote the Recreation Road South Car Park (and all other car parks) and to highlight the qualities of the car parks and the benefits of the Pay on Foot system.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Recommendation 2	That the standard letter templates used by the Car Parking Team be reviewed to ensure they are in line with the Customer Service Strategy guidelines.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Recommendation 3	That the Pay on Foot system be expanded to other car parks wherever possible.
Financial Implications	The only car parks that could feasibly accommodate Pay on Foot would be School Drive/Dolphin Centre (if joined) and the Hanover Street car park. The estimated cost of which would be between £200k and £230k.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Recommendation 4	That free car parking be provided (in all car parks) all day on a Sunday in order to encourage people to visit the town centre.
Financial Implications	The <u>estimated</u> cost to introduce free Sunday parking would be £70k i.e. annual loss of revenue.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Recommendation 5	That free car parking be provided (in all car parks) after 7.00 p.m. in the evening in order to encourage people to visit the town centre.
Financial Implications	The <u>estimated</u> costs of introducing free evening parking would be £140k i.e. annual loss of revenue.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Board Inquiry/Task Group Procedure Guidelines (endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at the meeting held on 1st March 2011) following the meeting held on 11th July 2011 copies of the completed Topic Proposal Form were circulated amongst non-Cabinet Members for consideration, with the request that Members interested in participating in the Task Group contact the Committee Services Officer by 10.00 a.m. on 18th July 2011. Membership of the Task Group is detailed below:

Councillor S. P. Shannon (Chairman)
Councillor C. J. Bloore
Councillor R. Laight
Councillor P. Lammas
Councillor P. M. McDonald
Councillor L. Mallett

- 3.2 There were a total of four Task Group meetings. During the first meeting held on 21st July 2011 an Overview and Scrutiny Exercise Scoping Checklist, which included the terms of reference of the task group (Appendix 2), was completed and the following areas of investigation were agreed:

- ❖ A comparison of usage, income and penalty charges on Recreation Road South Car Park for 2008/09 and 2010/11.
- ❖ The role of the Civil Enforcement Officers and the guidelines they adhered to.
- ❖ The penalty charge appeals process and the Standard letter templates used.

4. SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS

- 4.1 The Task Group Members had all experienced negative comments from residents in respect of the operation of the car parks throughout the district and from the limited knowledge that they had, felt some sympathy towards the car park users. The verbal feedback they had received included the stringent manner in which excess parking charges were issued and the way in which appeals against these charges were handled, both verbally and in writing. The Task Group was concerned that this negative attitude, which was often well publicized in the local press, was affecting the use of the car parks and the reputation of the Council.

The Task Group therefore requested the following information at the meeting held on 21st July 2011:

- ❖ Civil Enforcement Officer Guidelines
- ❖ Excess Charge Appeal Standard Letter Templates
- ❖ Income from parking charges on Recreation Road South Car Park
- ❖ Total income from parking compared with excess charge revenue on Recreation Road South Car Park.
- ❖ Comparison with other Councils regarding enforcement activities on Pay on Foot car parks.
- ❖ Reasons for excess charges on Recreation Road South Car Park

Pay on Foot Car Parking

- 4.2 From the evidence received at the meeting held on 8th August 2011 (see Appendix 3) the Task Group were able to ascertain that the number of excess charge notices issued had decreased from 0.35% of overall ticket sales in 2008/09 to 0.08% in 2010/11. Although this meant a reduction in revenue to the Council it showed that the Pay on Foot system reduced the opportunity for a car park user to receive an excess charge and was therefore more “customer friendly”. This was confirmed by further evidence provided by the Car Parks Manager, who informed the Task Group that a recent customer satisfaction survey carried out by the Car Park Team showed a satisfaction rate with Pay on Foot parking of approximately 91%. The survey also showed that nearly 99% of those asked preferred a Pay on Foot system.

The Task Group was concerned that from the statistical evidence provided there was a reduction in tickets sales in comparison to 2008/09. Officers informed Members that this was in line with the national trend, which was due to the current economic downturn. Although it was accepted by the Task Group that there was a national downturn in car park usage, it was felt that every endeavour should be made to encourage residents and visitors to use the Council's car park facilities, which would in turn assist with encouraging economic growth within the town centre.

The Task Group was also concerned that charging for car parking up to 10.00 p.m. and on a Sunday also contributed towards the negative image of car parking in the District, as in many areas this was either free or provided at a reduced rate. Again, the Task Group Members agreed this did not encourage visitors to the town centre. It was felt that free parking after 7.00 p.m. and on a Sunday would be more acceptable and appreciated by residents and visitors. The Task Group was made aware of the legal implications of any changes, as the Car Parking Order which was a legal document would need to be amended and the loss of income against operational costs of the car parks would also need to be taken into consideration.

The Car Park Manager explained to the Task Group that to monitor and compare the Council's car parking service he regularly attended the Midlands Car Parking Forum, where he was able to discuss specific issues and make comparisons with other car parks managers across the region. However, it was difficult to make some comparisons in respect of the pay on foot scheme as very few authorities operated a car park adjacent to a major supermarket using this system.

The Task Group visited the Recreation Road South Car Park and reported that they found it of high quality, well illuminated and with good CCTV coverage and with clear well positioned signage, giving clear guidelines on using the car park. It was felt that this should be promoted to encourage an increased use of this and other car parks throughout the District.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<u>Recommendation 1</u>	
That a PR exercise be carried out to promote the Recreation Road South Car Park (and all other car parks) and to highlight the qualities of the car parks and the benefits of the Pay On Foot system.	
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

<u>Recommendation 3</u>	
That the Pay on Foot system be expanded to other car parks wherever possible.	
Financial Implications	The only car parks that could feasibly accommodate Pay on Foot would be School Drive/Dolphin Centre (if joined) and the Hanover Street car park. The estimated cost of which would be between £200k and £230k.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

<u>Recommendation 4</u>	
That free car parking be provided (in all car parks) all day on a Sunday in order to encourage people to visit the town centre.	
Financial Implications	The <u>estimated</u> cost to introduce free Sunday parking would be £70k i.e. annual loss of revenue.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

<u>Recommendation 5</u>	
That free car parking be provided (in all car parks) after 7.00 p.m. in the evening in order to encourage people to visit the town centre.	
Financial Implications	The <u>estimated</u> costs of introducing free evening parking would be £140k i.e. annual loss of revenue.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Excess Charge Notices

- 4.3 As detailed in section 4.1 of this report, the Task Group Members had all experienced negative and critical comments from residents in respect of the operation of the car parks through out the district and from the limited knowledge that they had, felt some sympathy towards the car park users.

The Task Group questioned the Environmental Business Development Manager and the Car Parks Manager on the manner and the circumstances in which Excess Charge Notices were issued. The Task Group was concerned that the Civil Enforcement Officers were given targets to reach in respect of the issue of these Notices. Both the Car Parks Manager and Environmental Business Development Manager assured the Task Group that this certainly was not the case and provided the Task Group with a copy of the Civil Enforcement Officer Training and Development Manual. From this document it was clear that the Civil Enforcement Officers were provided with detailed information on what was expected of them and clear guidelines on how to carry out their duties. The Car Parks Manager informed Members that the Civil Enforcement Officers' role did not merely involve enforcement, but covered the Shop Mobility scheme, dealing with general enquiries and problems with both the pay and display and pay on foot car parks and a lot of interaction helping people, by providing directions for example. During the meeting held on 8th August 2011 the Task Group asked for clarification on several areas of contention and was provided with the following responses:

- ❖ A vehicle wheel/tyre had to be completely over the white line of a parking bay before an Excess Charge Notice was issued.

- ❖ There was a small element of “discretion” for time limited tickets (although not relevant to Recreation Road South Car Park as it was Pay on Foot).
- ❖ Appeals made in respect of Excess Charge Notices were dealt with sympathetically (approximately 42% being overturned).

The Task Group was also given detailed information on the three stages of the Excess Charge Notice appeal process.

Councillor Shannon provided the Task Group with a copy of a standard letter a resident had provided him with in respect of an appeal against an Excess Charge Notice and which the Task Group felt could have been worded in a more appropriate manner. The Task Group therefore requested sight of the standard letter templates used at each stage of an appeal against an Excess Charge Notice. These were provided at the meeting held on 8th August 2011 and although adequate, the Task Group felt that they would benefit from a review in order to ensure they were in line with the Council's general guidelines.

The Task Group therefore recommends:

Recommendation 2	
That the standard letter templates used by the Car Parking Team be reviewed to ensure they are in line with the Customer Service Strategy guidelines.	
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

THE TASK GROUP ASKED FOR THE FOLLOWING TO BE NOTED AND FOR PROGRESS UP DATES TO BE GIVEN TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD:

- (a) During the Task Group meeting held on 8th August 2011, Members were asked to note that the issue of drainage/flooding at Recreation Road South Car Park had not been resolved (as noted in section 1.5 of this report) as first thought and officers would continue to work with Worcestershire County Council to resolve this issue.
- (b) Although not included within the terms of reference of the Task Group, Members attention was drawn to a small area of the car park (believed to be by/near the shopping trolley area) which also flooded and asked that this be noted and investigated through the car park maintenance programme.
- (c) Members were also advised at the meeting held on 8th August 2011 that letters would be sent out w/c 8th August 2011 to all taxi drivers in respect of section 1.3 of this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Having considered the evidence provided by officers, Members had gained a good understanding of the operation of the car park and the role of the Civil Enforcement Officers.

The Task Group acknowledged that:

- ❖ The car park was of good quality (well illuminated and covered by CCTV).
- ❖ Signage was clear and well placed (Members had visited the site).
- ❖ The Pay on Foot system had reduced the number of penalty charges issued (2008/09 2,273 and in 2010/11 462).
- ❖ The customer satisfaction rate for the car park was high (approximately 91% following a recent survey conducted by the Car Parks Manager. The survey also showed that almost 99% of asked preferred a pay on foot system).
- ❖ A vehicle tyre had to be completely over the white line of a parking bay before a penalty charge notice would be issued.
- ❖ There was a small element of “discretion” for time limited tickets (although not relevant to Recreation Road Car Park South as it was pay on foot).
- ❖ Appeals made in respect of penalty charges were dealt with sympathetically (with approximately 42% being overturned).

- 5.2 The Task Group Members were unanimous in the conclusion that the Pay on Foot system at Recreation Road South Car Park was beneficial to car park users as it reduced the number of penalty charges issued, enabled users to only pay for the amount of time they spent in the car park and had clear signage to assist them.

- 5.3 Task Group Members conceded that they had begun the Task Group with a preconceived view of Recreation Road South Car Park and car parking facilities generally provided by the Council. However, after hearing and looking at the evidence provided by Officers it was agreed that the negative view was incorrect and that appropriate work needed to be carried out to change the perception of residents and visitors to the area in order to increase use of the car parks.

6. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 6.1 The Task Group wishes to acknowledge, in particular, the assistance received from the Environmental Business Development Manager for his help and support with the Task Group from the start of the investigations and all the way through to the end of the investigation when this report was finalised.
- 6.2 The Task Group also wishes to thank the Car Parks Manager for providing written evidence and attending the Task Group meeting on 8th August to give evidence.

7. **SUPPORTING BACKGROUND PAPERS**

BDC Civil Enforcement Officer Training and Development Manual

BDC Car Parking Charter

Excess Charge Notice Appeal Standard Letter Templates

Data from Car Parking Customer Satisfaction Survey



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

Name of Proposer: Sean Shannon	

Tel No: _01527 878736 / 07790707622_____ Email: s.shannon@bromsgrove.gov.uk_____	
Date: _12/6/2011_____	
Title of Proposed Topic:	Review of Recreation Rd parking operations
Specific subject areas to be investigated:	1 Entry/exit system for taxi/private hire operators. 2 Flooding/drainage issues Market St side of car park.
Reasons why this subject should be considered:	Both problems long standing and unresolved, generating complaints from car park users, pedestrians, town centre visitors and taxi & private hire operators.
Evidence to support the need for this particular investigation:	Verbal from Taxi operators and Taxi Operators Association. Photographs. Correspondence between S.Martin & S.Shannon
Council priorities it links to:	Promote town centre as nice place to visit and good place to do business.
Possible key outcomes: (i.e. what do you anticipate could be achieved?)	Introduce change to Taxi /P.H. access arrangements. Installation of drainage system to Market St side of car park to halt illegal discharge of surface water on to Market St pavements.

Please indicate if any of the following apply to the proposed subject area:

CRITERIA	NO	YES	Why?
Is it a priority issue for the Council or the Local Strategic Partnership?		y	<i>Inaction over both issues has generated complaints and adverse comments from taxi trade and town centre visitors</i>
Is it an important issue for local residents?		y	Affects taxi users and town centre visitors in wet weather.
Is it a topic where Overview and Scrutiny could feasibly and constructively make recommendations?		y	Surely this is main function of the Board
Is it a topic where external review would		y	Broader input of opinion would be

be helpful?			beneficial.
Is it a topic where a review could be made in time to make recommendations for the executive decision making process?		y	Would assume this is possible.
Is it a poorly performing service?	*	*	This car park produces large cash income for the Council but also generates large number of complaints.
Is it a review that could render significant savings or value for money?		n	Value could be gained from reduction of conflict situation. Shoppers who have had their taxi journeys disrupted or visitors to town centre who have been “soaked to the skin” while waiting to use Market St pedestrian crossing might return to Bromsgrove.
Is the topic strategic in scope?		n	Both issues could be more accurately described as “retrospective correction” than strategic.



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EXERCISE SCOPING CHECKLIST

This form is to assist Members to scope the overview and scrutiny exercise in a focused way and to identify the key issues it wishes to investigate.

- Topic: **Review of Recreation Road Car Park**

- Specific subject areas to be investigated:

- The issue of penalty notices and enforcement guidelines
- The Three Stages of the Appeals process
- Standard letter templates used
- Comparison of penalty charges and overall charges before and after installation of the pay on foot system.

- Possible key outcomes:
 (i.e. please state what Members hope to achieve through this investigation)

That a review of the civil enforcement officers' guidelines, standard letter templates in all 3 stages of the appeal system and a review of the signage at the Recreation Road Car Park be undertaken to assist in the improvement of the Council's perception by residents and visitors to Bromsgrove.

- Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence?
YES/NO*

- Which officers should be invited to give evidence?
 (Please state name of officer and/or job title)

Head of Environmental Services
 Car Parks Manager

- Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **NO***
 If so, who and from which organisations?

- What key documents/data/reports will be required?

Data in respect of income and expenditure for car park together with usage and a comparison with other a similar car park from another authority.
Civil Enforcement Officers' Guidelines
Standard Letter Templates

- Is it anticipated that any site visits will be required? **YES**
If so, where should members visit?

Visit to Recreation Road South Car Park to look at the signage.

- Should a period of public consultation form part of the exercise?
YES/NO*

If so, on what should the public be consulted?

Insufficient time to carry out a consultation. However, an article has appeared in the local paper inviting comments from residents.

(Please Note: A separate press release requesting general comments/suggestions from the public will be issued in the normal way at the beginning of the investigation if appropriate.)

- Have other authorities carried out similar overview and scrutiny exercises?
YES/NO*

If so, which authorities?

Not as far as we are aware.

- Will the investigation cross the District boundary? **NO***
If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate?

YES/NO*

If yes, please state which authorities:

N/A

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group/Board whilst the Overview and Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **NO***

If so, who and from which organisations?

- What do you anticipate the timetable will be for the Overview and Scrutiny exercise?

In order for the task group report to feed into the Shared Services Business Plan (which goes to Cabinet on 7th September 2011) it will need to be completed by 18th August 2011.

Appendix 3

Number of customers receiving excess charges as a percentage of overall usage:

<u>2010/2011</u>		<u>2008/2009</u>	
Tickets issued on RRS:	611834	Tickets sold on RRS:	656088
Excess charges issued:	462	Excess charged issued:	2273
Percentage:	<u>0.08%</u>	Percentage:	<u>0.35%</u>

Income from parking charges on Recreation Road South:

<u>2010/2011</u>		<u>2008/2009</u>	
Excess charge revenue:	<u>£15,305</u>	Excess charge revenue:	<u>£65,213</u>

Total income from parking compared with excess charge revenue on Recreation Road South:

<u>2010/2011</u>		<u>2008/2009</u>	
Excess charge revenue:	£ 15,305	Excess charge revenue:	£ 65,213
Ticket sales (net):	£512,774	Ticket sales:	£579,772
Total revenue:	£528,079	Total revenue:	£644,985
Percentage:	<u>3%</u>	Percentage:	<u>10%</u>

Additional Information

Reasons for excess charges on Recreation Road South

<u>2008/2009</u>		
No blue badge displayed	62	3%
Expired ticket	904	40%
No ticket	1110	49%
Expired permit	1	0%
Wrong use of space	18	1%
Exceeded time limit	1	0%
Not wholly in a bay	176	8%
Not listed	1	0%
	<u>2273</u>	

<u>2010/2011</u>		
No blue badge displayed*	288	62%
Expired ticket	0	0%
No ticket	4	1%
Expired permit	0	0%
Wrong use of space	5	1%
Exceeded time limit**	82	18%
Not wholly in a bay***	83	18%
Not listed	0	0%
	<u>462</u>	

*Officers have doubled in number, and the Duty Officer will patrol the pay on foot car parks when three officers are in. The opportunity to park without displaying a valid blue badge has been significantly decreased.

** Exceeding the maximum time is now carried out automatically and all offences are detected.

*** A number of vehicles were previously booked for parking on zig-zags at the front of the store – the need for drivers to do this has diminished as drivers pay when they leave.



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Bromsgrove, tel.: 01527 881288

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پر رابطہ کریں



**Bromsgrove
District Council**

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**EQUALITY
FRAMEWORK
FOR LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
ACHIEVING**

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

25th August 2011

REDUCTION IN BUS SERVICES TASK GROUP

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Margaret Sherrey
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service for Overview and Scrutiny	Claire Felton – Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	All Ward Councillors were invited to join the Task Group
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny investigation undertaken by the Reduction in Bus Services Task Group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are requested to:
- (a) consider and approve the report and the recommendations attached at Appendix 1; and
 - (b) submit the report and recommendations to the Cabinet for approval.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision making process and enables non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

Financial Implications

- 3.2 These are detailed within the attached report.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 These are detailed within the attached report.

Service/Operation Implications

- 3.4 These are detailed within the attached report.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

3.5 N/A

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 N/A

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Reduction in Bus Services Task Group Report

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

See attached report for details.

7. KEY

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Amanda Scarce – Committee Services Officer
E Mail: a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881443



Overview and Scrutiny Board **Reduction in Bus Services Task Group**

AUGUST 2011

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

Supporting Officer: Amanda Scarce



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 - Appendix 3** – Sample emails from residents
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1. CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

This cross-party investigation has sought to identify the potential shortfall in public transport provision due to the cuts in bus subsidies proposed by Worcestershire County Council.

At the time this task group was convened major concerns were expressed by residents about the viability and lack of clarification on the future of bus services across the district. This task group has confirmed that bus services in the district are a key way of residents getting to and from work, for businesses attracting customers, children getting to school and college safely and ensuring elderly and vulnerable residents are not left housebound and cut off from friends and family.

There can be no doubt that the people of Bromsgrove care deeply about their bus service as evidenced by the overwhelming response to the investigation. It is the importance of these services to our residents that led this investigation to cover the response and processes followed by this Council to represent its residents concerns over cuts to bus subsidies.

These services are vital to the day to day lives of the residents we serve and there can be little doubt that the future prosperity and regeneration of the Town Centre depend on us working together to address the real shortfalls in services that this report has identified.

I would like to put on record my thanks to all those who have contributed to this report including Councillors, Bus Operators and members of the public.

I hope the conclusions and recommendations of this report will be the first step in addressing some of the real concerns that still exist over the future of some bus services.

Councillor Chris Bloore
Chairman
Reduction in Bus Services Task Group

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 An Overview and Scrutiny Proposal Form (Appendix 1) relating to the Reduction in Bus Services was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 11th July 2011, by Councillor C. J. Bloore.
- 2.2 Councillor Bloore said he had been contacted by many residents who were concerned at the proposed cut in services from Worcestershire County Council (WCC). He was of the view that when a decision is being made by another body and which has a serious impact on the District as a whole, the Council should act on the residents' behalf and put forward the concerns they had. In this case the removal of key public transport services could also have a detrimental effect on the economic growth of the District.
- 2.3 Councillor Bloore also informed Members that the matter needed to be investigated urgently as it was likely that WCC would make a decision on the reduction in bus services as early as September 2011.
- 2.4 Following discussion it was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board that a Task Group would be established to scrutinise the Reduction in Bus Services and that Councillor Bloore would be appointed Chairman.

3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1(a)	That the Cabinet be requested to clarify what the procedure is for responding to consultations from Worcestershire County Council and whether that procedure was followed in respect of the bus consultation; and
Recommendation 1(b)	That if there is no established procedure in place, then an appropriate, open, transparent and inclusive (i.e. cross party) procedure be put in place in order to ensure that any future consultations undertaken at County Council level receive a co-ordinated response from the Council (including checking that an impact assessment has been carried out by WCC and including, where appropriate, consultation with the Economic Development team and the Strategic Planning Officer).
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Recommendation 2	That the Council support Worcestershire County Council by contacting the bus operators, Black Diamond and Johnsons Coaches, to make representations for the 204 service to be reinstated and for clarification on the future of the X50 service.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Board Inquiry/Task Group Procedure Guidelines (endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at the meeting held on 1st March 2011) following the meeting held on 11th July 2011 copies of the completed Topic Proposal Form were circulated amongst non-Cabinet Members for consideration, with the request that Members interested in participating in the Task Group contact the Committee Services Officer by 10.00 a.m. on 18th July 2011. Membership of the Task Group is detailed below:

Councillor C. J. Bloore (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs. M. Buxton
Councillor P. M. McDonald
Councillor L. Mallett
Councillor L. J. Turner
Councillor S. P. Shannon

- 4.2 There was in total five meetings of the Task Group. During the first meeting held on 19th July 2011 an Overview and Scrutiny Exercise Scoping Checklist which included the terms of reference of the task group (Appendix 2) was completed and it was agreed, that the Task Group would concentrate on particular bus service routes within the District:

- ❖ 144 (Worcester to Birmingham)
- ❖ 178 (replaced with X50 and S7 Wythall)
- ❖ 202/204 (Cofton Hackett)
- ❖ 318 Stourbridge

It was also agreed that the following people would be called as witnesses to give evidence:

- ❖ WCC Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.
- ❖ Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People.
- ❖ Parish Council representatives
- ❖ The Bus Operators who covered the services in question.

With a view to the possible key outcome being:

“The successful maintaining of key routes throughout the district in order to allow residents to go about their daily lives.”

Following the meeting held on 28th July 2011 it was also agreed that the terms of reference would be amended to include:

- ❖ 140/141 (The Stokes to Bromsgrove/Droitwich)

5. SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS

- 5.1 At the first meeting of the Task Group (19th July 2011) Members all had concerns about particular services that affected their individual Wards, but were equally concerned about the effect the reduction in bus services would have on the District as a whole, and in particular on the District's economic development. The aim of the first meeting was to establish the terms of reference and agree witnesses to be invited to give evidence and the type of questions that needed to be asked of those witnesses.

Specific services were highlighted and Members agreed that the bus operators for those services should be invited to attend a Task Group meeting in order to put forward their views. Example questions were also provided when the invitations were sent out. The following bus operators were invited to attend the meeting held on 8th August 2011.

- ❖ Diamond Bus Company
- ❖ Hansons Local Buses
- ❖ Johnsons Coaches
- ❖ First Midland Red

In order to ensure an inclusive approach, the Task Group agreed to invite representatives from all Parish Councils to either attend a Task Group meeting, or where this was not possible, due to the short space of time available to complete the investigation, provide written comments to be included within the evidence gathering process.

Verbal evidence was received from the following Parish Councils:

- ❖ Belbroughton
- ❖ Clent
- ❖ Lickey & Blackwell
- ❖ Stoke
- ❖ Wythall

Written evidence was provided by the following:

- ❖ Bourneheath
- ❖ Lickey & Blackwell (Blackwell area specifically)

The Task Group recognised that the reduction in bus services was a decision made at county council level and that there was no relevant portfolio holder or head of service at Bromsgrove District Council (BDC). However, as Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People it was felt that Councillor Mrs. M. Sherrey would be the most relevant Portfolio Holder as it was likely that the changes would have a particular effect on older people, and the young and vulnerable people. The Portfolio Holder duly agreed to attend a Task Group meeting.

The Task Group also wished to meet with the WCC Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport to find out the following:

- ❖ How was it agreed as to which services would be reduced?
- ❖ On what basis were these decisions made?
- ❖ What impact assessments had been done to support the decisions being made?
- ❖ His general view on the future of public transport throughout the County.

Unfortunately the WCC Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport was unavailable on the dates provided by the Task Group.

Bus Operators Evidence

- 5.2 Representatives from Hansons Local Buses and First Midland Red attended the Task Group meeting held on 8th August 2011. They responded positively when questioned by Members about the affected services. Members agreed that both operators had showed vision and forethought in dealing with the changes that faced them.

Hansons Local Buses, who provided the 318 service, advised the Task Group that they were aware of how important this route was, particularly for those members of the village communities who would be completely isolated without the service. The Task Group was informed that the school service would remain unchanged and the day time service would be every 2 hours and the route had been extended to cover Sidemoor and Bromsgrove Train Station. On its arrival in Stourbridge it had now been timed to link up with a service they also provided to Merry Hill.

First Midland Red explained that for the 144 service which they provided, only the Monday – Thursday service was contracted to WCC, the Friday and Saturday service was completely commercial and would remain unchanged. The Task Group was given background information on the service provided and details of the service which would come into effect from 4th September 2011 and the Task Group agreed, that although not ideal were a significant improvement on those first put forward. First Midland Red also provided the Task Group with an insight into how the bus operators work along side WCC.

Parish Council Evidence

- 5.3 Representatives from 5 parish councils attended the Task Group meeting held on 28th July 2011 and were given the opportunity to pass on concerns from the residents in their parish. Several parish councils had held public meetings for residents and articles had frequently been included in various parish magazines in order to encourage residents to

respond to the WCC consultation. Wythall Parish Council had been particularly proactive and had called a public meeting which over 200 people attended. The WCC Head of Integrated Transport and County Councillors had attended this meeting. The Wythall Parish Council representative gave a detailed account of the actions they had taken to date. The WCC Head of Integrated Transport had also attended a Stoke Parish Council meeting and had explained how the decisions had been made and how WCC had arrived at the decision to cut the subsidies to the buses.

An overriding issue was how isolated many of the changes would leave those residents who did not have their own transport and the problems for young people either attending college or school.

The Stoke Parish Council representative was particularly concerned about the 140/141 service and the Task Group agreed to amend the terms of reference to include this service.

The representative from Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council said there was great concern over the 202/204 service as this was a vital service, there was very few facilities for residents in the parish, for example the Post Office had recently been closed, and again the elderly would be particularly isolated without this service and it would also have an affect on 16 to 18 year old young people attending college in Bromsgrove.

Responses from Members of the Public

- 5.4 The Task Group Members were pro-active in gathering evidence and the response from all those contacted was welcomed. Following a letter to the local newspaper from the Chairman and several subsequent articles published, a significant number of members of the public responded with their concerns about the impending changes to the services.

A sample of these responses is attached at Appendix 3 of this report.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<u>Recommendation 2</u>	
That the Council support Worcestershire County Council by contacting the bus operators, Black Diamond and Johnsons Coaches, to make representations for the 204 service to be reinstated and for clarification on the future of the X50 service.	
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People

- 5.5 The Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People attended the meeting held on 28th July 2011 and confirmed that the Council was also concerned about the cuts, in areas where elderly and young people would be most affected. The Portfolio Holder understood that Councillors had been encouraged to respond individually to the consultation and that the Council had contacted WCC through County Councillors (who were also District Councillors) at both consultation stages, but had not received a great deal of information from WCC on the services to be cut/withdrawn.

There were several points raised which the Portfolio Holder was unable to answer and following the meeting the Portfolio Holder contacted the Chairman of the Task Group with a written response (Appendix 4) to advise that concerns over the cuts had been discussed at a Conservative Group meeting as far back at January 2011 and that County Councillors had been very active during the extended consultation period. The Portfolio Holder also pointed out to the Task Group that when the BOLD programme was carried out by WCC, in Bromsgrove, transport came low on the priorities amongst those residents that had attended the sessions organised by WCC. The written response did not however address all issues raised at the meeting, for example whether an impact assessment had been completed at either District or County Council level. The Portfolio Holder was therefore invited to attend a further meeting of the Task Group but was unable to attend due to prior commitments.

Following further investigation, the Task Group was able to ascertain that impact assessments had been completed by WCC.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<u>Recommendation 1(a)</u>	
That the Cabinet be requested to clarify what the procedure is for responding to consultations from Worcestershire County Council and whether that procedure was followed in respect of the bus consultation; and	
<u>Recommendation 1(b)</u>	
That if there is no established procedure in place, then an appropriate, open, transparent and inclusive (i.e. cross party) procedure be put in place in order to ensure that any future consultations undertaken at County Council level receive a co-ordinated response from the Council (including checking that an impact assessment has been carried out by WCC and including, where appropriate, consultation with the Economic Development team and the Strategic Planning Officer).	
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this.
Resource Implications	Officer time will be required to ensure this recommendation is carried through.

POINT TO BE NOTED:

The Task Group was concerned the effect of a reduced bus service would have on the environment, as there were several areas within the District which had been designated Air Quality Management areas. These areas are continuously monitored by the Environmental Health Team and the air quality could be reduced if the traffic (i.e. an increase in private cars use) was to significantly increase.

Transport-related air quality management measures reduce the impacts of traffic on areas where poor air quality exists. These schemes can assist towards the achievement of good air quality across Worcestershire for all residents and visitors. Where motorised traffic is reduced and sustainable transport modes are promoted, this can enhance accessibility for all, but especially young people and elderly, who often do not have access to personal motorised transport.

Transport-related air quality management measures can help protect the natural environment and the historic fabric of our towns and cities, by reducing the adverse effects of otherwise unsustainable traffic growth and promoting responsible and efficient travel choice.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Task Group was proactive in its approach to the work that it needed to undertake in a short period of time. The response from witnesses at such short notice also highlighted and reiterated the concerns felt by Parish Councils and residents in particular.
- 6.2 Whilst the Task Group was completing its investigation WCC announced that, after consideration, some of the vital services, which had been discussed at Task Group meetings, would not now be withdrawn or the changes would not be as significant as originally anticipated. This related in particular to the evening bus service to Worcester and Birmingham. The new bus timetables would come into effect from 4 September 2011.
- 6.3 The Task Group was concerned that there was little or no written evidence to substantiate any response from the Council or individual councillors to the WCC consultation and was keen to ensure that this should not happen again. A clear audit trail should be available in future to ensure the Council is open, transparent and inclusive (for example through a task group being set up, an informal meeting being held for all Members, through Cabinet setting up an informal group or at a meeting of the full Council) in dealing with issues that may have a significant impact on residents within the Bromsgrove District.
- 6.4 From the evidence provided, the Task Group concluded that the role in consulting with residents was taken by parish councils rather than the District Council. The Task Group Members agreed that by not providing a “united” response to the consultation, opportunities had been missed to influence the form in which the bus services to the District were provided.
- 6.5 Whilst acknowledging that the issue was a County Council decision, the Task Group concluded that a key lesson learned was that a more proactive/co-coordinated response which was inclusive and transparent from the Council at an earlier stage, would not only have helped to influence changes, but also acknowledged to residents that the Council was acting on the issue.
- 6.6 The Task Group was of the view that the reduction in bus services does not only impact on residents, but could have a detrimental effect on the following areas:
- ❖ Environmental (air quality due to increased traffic)
 - ❖ Town Centre Regeneration (for example visitors to the town centre)
 - ❖ Local Development Framework (issues around housing developments due to lack of transport infrastructure)

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7.1 The Task Group wishes to acknowledge and thank, in particular, the attendance of representatives from Hansons Local Buses and First Midland Red for taking the time to attend and give evidence at short notice.

7.2 The Task Group also wishes to thank the following Parish Council representatives who also attended a task group meeting, at short notice, to share their concerns over the reductions in bus services:

Belbroughton
Clent
Lickey & Blackwell
Stoke
Wythall

7.3 Thanks also go to Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey for attending in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People.

8. SUPPORTING BACKGROUND PAPERS

Indicative List of Proposed Local Bus Service Revisions due to WCC Budget Cuts.

WCC Proposals for Reducing Subsidised Bus Services Consultation papers.

WCC Bus Service Review – Additional Consultation papers.

WCC Local Bus Service Revisions in Worcestershire from 4th September 2011.



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

Name of Proposer: CHRISTOPHER BLOORE

Tel No: 01527 877398 Email: C.BLOORE@BROMSGROVE
.GOV.UK

Date: 5/7/11

Title of Proposed Topic:	INVESTIGATION INTO THE EFFECTS OF BUS SUBSIDY CUTS IN BROMSGROVE
Specific subject areas to be investigated:	THE EFFECT ON STUDENTS, WORKERS, TRADERS AND ELDERLY RESIDENTS BY SERVICE CUTS.
Reasons why this subject should be considered:	MAJOR ISSUE OF CONCERN TO ALL RESIDENTS AND TRADERS IN BROMSGROVE.
Evidence to support the need for this particular investigation:	VERBAL FROM BUS USERS AND LOCAL TRADERS/STUDENTS. VERBAL/Written EVIDENCE FROM COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICERS AND BUS OPERATORS.
Council priorities it links to:	ENSURING BROMSGROVE IS A NICE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND ATTRACT INVESTMENT.
Possible key outcomes: (i.e. what do you anticipate could be achieved?)	IDENTIFY KEY AREAS OF CONCERN AND WHAT SERVICES COULD BE SAVED WITH COOPERATION FROM STAKEHOLDERS. POSSIBLE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC.

Please indicate if any of the following apply to the proposed subject area:

CRITERIA	NO	YES	Why?
Is it a priority issue for the Council or the Local Strategic Partnership?		✓	IT IS A PRIORITY FOR RESIDENTS AND TRADERS AND THEREFORE THE COUNCIL.
Is it an important issue for local residents?		✓	YES.
Is it a topic where Overview and Scrutiny could feasibly and constructively make recommendations?		✓	IT IS THE ROLE OF THE BOARD AND CLRS TO ENSURE PUBLIC CONCERNS ARE HEARD.
Is it a topic where external review would be helpful?	✓		HAVE CONFIDENCE IN BOARD TO CONDUCT THROUGH INVESTIGATION.
Is it a topic where a review could be made in time to make recommendations for the executive decision making process?		✓	THERE IS CURRENTLY A 6 WEEK GAP BEFORE POSSIBLE NOTIFICATION OF REMOVAL OF SERVICES.
Is it a poorly performing service?	✓		NO. BUT THESE CUTS COULD MAKE IT A POOR SERVICE.
Is it a review that could render significant savings or value for money?		✓	INVESTIGATING THE ISSUE NOW COULD ENSURE VALUE FOR MONEY.
Is the topic strategic in scope?		✓	THE REMOVAL OF PUBLIC

TRANSPORT COULD LEAD

Please return completed forms to: Committee Section, BROMSGROVE TO BECOME
Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council A LESS DESIRABLE
Email: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk Page 43 PLACE TO LIVE.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EXERCISE SCOPING CHECKLIST

This form is to assist Members to scope the overview and scrutiny exercise in a focused way and to identify the key issues it wishes to investigate.

- Topic: **Reduction In Bus Services**

- Specific subject areas to be investigated:

The reduction in specific services to areas within Bromsgrove District and in particular the services provided by bus nos. 140/141 (The Stokes to Bromsgrove/Droitwich), 144 (Worcester to Birmingham), 178 (replaced with X50 and S7 Wythall), 202/204 (Cofton Hackett) and 318 (Stourbridge).

- Possible key outcomes:
 (i.e. please state what Members hope to achieve through this investigation):

The successful maintaining of key routes throughout the district in order to allow residents to go about their daily lives.

- Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES**
- Which officers should be invited to give evidence?
 (Please state name of officer and/or job title)

Portfolio Holder for Community Services

- Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **YES/**
 If so, who and from which organisations?

- Representatives from the bus companies who provide the services
- Relevant Portfolio Holder from WCC
- Head of Integrated Transport (WCC)
- Possibly local residents who use the services

- What key documents/data/reports will be required?

Information from WCC including the Consultation Reports

- Is it anticipated that any site visits will be required? **NO ***
If so, where should members visit?

No

- Should a period of public consultation form part of the exercise? **NO***
If so, on what should the public be consulted?

Consultation already undertaken by WCC. In sufficient time to complete further consultation at District level.

(Please Note: A separate press release requesting general comments/ suggestions from the public will be issued in the normal way at the beginning of the investigation.)

- Have other authorities carried out similar overview and scrutiny exercises?
YES/NO*
If so, which authorities?

RBC O&S did short review including consultation. Notice of Motion by cross party members at full Council for representations to be made to WCC.

- Will the investigation cross the District boundary? **YES/NO***
If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate? **YES/NO***
If yes, please state which authorities:

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group/Board whilst the Overview and Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **YES/NO***
If so, who and from which organisations?

- What do you anticipate the timetable will be for the Overview and Scrutiny exercise?

Report needs to be presented to a special meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Board to be held on 25th August 2011.

Amanda Scarce

APPENDIX 3

From: Christopher Bloore
Sent: 11 August 2011 14:57
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW: bus cuts

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 August 2011 23:24
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: RE: bus cuts [REDACTED]

Dear Cllr Bloore,

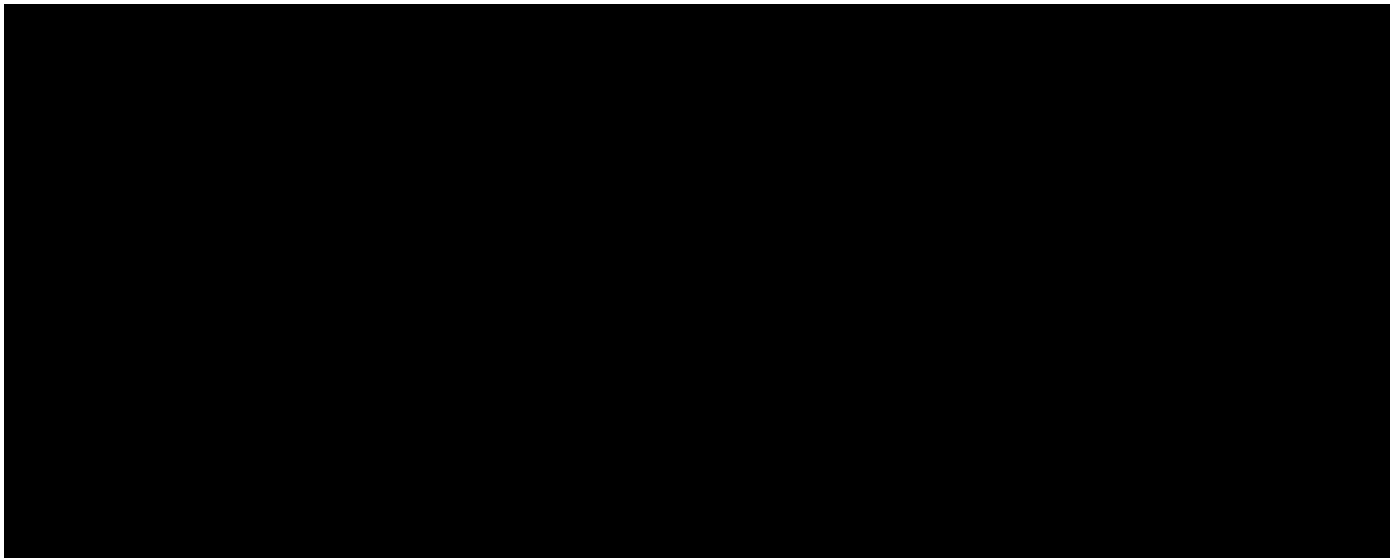
Thank you for youre reply and [REDACTED], thats great news, i get the 144 into Worcester reguarly for N A it leaves Bromsgrove at approx 1900 hrs and departs for my home journey at 2155 from Worcester bus depot for Birmingham meetings 1800 and return 2100hrs

thankyou for representing the people of the County and youre ward

Best Wishes [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: bus cuts
Date: Mon, 8 Aug 2011 10:45:00 +0100
From: c.bloore@bromsgrove.gov.uk
To: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sun 07/08/2011 22:56
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: bus cuts

Dear Councillor Bloore, i am mailing you as i am going to be effected by the proposed bus cuts, i am recovering addict of four years clean and sobre and this recovery from what is a life threatening disease, has only been possible through the fellowship of NARCOTICS ANOYMOUS, which gives me a daily reprieve from active addiction. these meetings are in birmingham and Worcester and i rely on the later running buses to attend meetings 3-5 times a week 144 indigo line-my life line. I need to attend these meetings to be amongst other recovering addicts and get so much mutal support-i am in isolation in Bromsgrove-and although i carry a message of recovery to the still suffering addict-i know of no one else in the town who is in recovery. However i have many supportive friends and family and proffessionals who give valuable support, and feel blessed to have a life now,and be a productive and valuable member of society at last.

I believe without N A i would be dead, i spent 25 years in active addiction which took me to jails and instutions, alcohol and drug addiction is chronic, progressive, and fatal as i am sure you are aware, i have still got permanent residule health problems which is a consequence of my years in active addiction. if the buses go i will find a way but it will make things much more difficult for me, other essential services i accessed have already fallen foul to the cuts. I am sorry if i have gone on, i dont like to complain, but wanted you to know things from my perspective. i apologise for the spelling and grammer. Thankyou please will you respect my anonimity

yours sincerely, [REDACTED]

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Amanda Scarce

From: Christopher Bloore
Sent: 11 August 2011 14:56
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW: Bus service in Co ton Hackett

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 July 2011 21:14
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: Bus service in Co ton Hackett

Dear Cllr Bloore,

I am a pupil at Waseley Hills High School and I live in Cofton Hackett. I am really worried that in September I will have no bus transport to get me to and from school. Last year was very difficult as the Diamond 202 service timetable could not be relied upon to get me to school on time, after our school timetable had been changed (The year before, when I was in year 7, it was great to travel on the school bus which I could get for approximately £5 per week).

Unfortunately this past year I have not been able to go home with my friends who live at Lickey & Marlbrook as I am not allowed to buy a ticket on their bus. We have always gone to each others houses on nights that we go to football, and other activities. This caused a lot of problems for all of us.

Luckily for me, my mum was able to take me to school, and at exam time, she took other pupils who were worried they would miss the start of their GCSE'S. However she wants to go back to work as a nurse but is too worried how I will get to school. My Dad works away so he cant take me.

We are constantly being told that our generation needs to use public transport and to keep car journeys to a minimum (to save our planet). It is also good to feel independent as we grow up. I liked to use the school bus. The walk to school is too far and too difficult. There is not a safe place to cross on Groveley Lane or when you get to Leach Green Lane and Eachway there are no pavements. I don't want to walk in the Lickey Woods by myself but I know this would be quicker. I have to carry books, PE Kit, musical instruments and sometimes cooking ingredients to school. We don't have school lockers or anywhere to hang a coat so everything has to be carried around with us all day. Living in Cofton Hackett is too far away to carry all this stuff and keep it dry when it is bad weather. If I was to walk to school in the rain, I would be wet all day, and when I am older, my GCSE work would be ruined..

My friends that live in Lickey and Marlbrook have the Swan Street Coach take them to school, this is a free service for them. I would like this coach to change its journey slightly and come into Cofton (like the old bus used to) and I could then get safely to school with my friends and we could go home together. I don't mind paying for a ticket if I have to, as long as the price is reasonable. I have heard that other buses may only go to The Hare and Hounds in the future. This means that Cofton Hackett is being by-passed for some reason.

There are a lot of families and school children who live in Cofton. Waseley Hills High school is our designated school. We did not have any other choice of school (as other schools are in the "three tier system", and we all go to Lickey Primary, so we go to senior school when we are 11). We did not qualify to go to Colmers High School as this comes under Birmingham and we are all Hereford and Worcester. Now we cant even get to the school that we are told we have to go to!

I hope that people really realise how difficult and dangerous walking to school will be if we don't have a school bus in Cofton Hackett. I am a fit person who plays lots of sports including football, cycling, golf, snowboarding, skateboarding etc.(cycling to school is not appropriate because of the difficult route and traffic), so I am not an unfit kid who sits on the sofa and hates the thought of walking. I just want to get to and from school safely, concentrate on my lessons and not worry about being hurt on the way home or walking in the cold,dark winter.

I hope that you can help Cllr.Bloore,

Thank you for reading this email

[REDACTED] 12 years old
 (I will be in Year 9 in September, at Waseley Hills High School)

[REDACTED]

Amanda Scarce

From: Christopher Bloore
Sent: 11 August 2011 14:54
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW: 144 bus service etc

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 July 2011 21:25
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: 144 bus service etc

Dear Councillor Bloore,

As promised, I am writing to you regarding the proposed changes to bus services to and from Bromsgrove, in particular the 143 and 144.

I use both of these services and their curtailment at 6pm and 7pm/8.36pm will severely restrict my ability to visit friends and family in Redditch, Birmingham and Worcester.

In addition, in the current economic climate, it would seem likely that this is the first in a series of cutbacks to public transport services, and shows a level of shortsightedness by Worcestershire CC that verges on negligence. Fuel prices will continue to rise. More and more people will be turning to a public transport system that is slowly being eroded and it is therefore unlikely to be fit for purpose. Many people will be stranded at work. Families will become unable to see each other.

For environmental, sustainability and energy-resilience purposes, WCC should be building our public transport system up so that people want to use it more. They need to be asking why people don't use it and taking steps to rectify this. Personally, as an environmentally aware resident, I would happily travel to work by bus, but there is no convenient service between Bromsgrove and Redditch at the time that I require. I often cycle the distance, though. It's no wonder that other, less aware, people don't bother with using the services and continue to use their own cars.

Perhaps Worcestershire CC should be looking at the example set in the West Midlands. There, services are frequent, regular and cheap. As a result of this they are used.

I hope this helps!?

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

BSc (Hons) Environmental Health, PGDip Acoustics and Noise Control, PGCE Secondary Biology.

[REDACTED]

Amanda Scarce

From: Christopher Bloore
Sent: 11 August 2011 14:54
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW:

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 July 2011 17:20
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject:

Dear Mr Bloore,

I am writing to you as I understand that you are the leader of a task group looking at the implications of the proposed cuts in bus services in the region.

I am an 80 year old resident of [REDACTED]. Unfortunately, I have not been able to drive for the last two years and now realize what an essential life-line the 202/204 bus service is for people living along the Old Birmingham Road. For those not able to walk to the A38 to access the 144 bus service which I understand is being retained, it is the only means of reaching the shopping and other facilities of Bromsgrove or Rubery. Bromsgrove is, of course, an essential hub if one wishes to reach the Alexandra or Princess of Wales Hospitals, or other shopping centres in Redditch or Worcester. From [REDACTED] it is nearly a mile to the 144 bus stop at the Marlbrook Pub, a 20- 25 minute walk, depending on age and fitness. From further up the Lickey, it would be an even longer walk. Many of the 202 bus passengers are elderly and would find the walk to the Marlbrook Pub virtually impossible. I might add that I am quite capable of a 20 minute walk, but many of the elderly users of the 202 service may not be. The difficulty of a 1 mile walk, however, increases quite rapidly with age for those in the 80+ age bracket!

I very much hope that the 202/204 bus service can be retained.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Amanda Scarce

From: Christopher Bloore
Sent: 11 August 2011 14:53
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW: The death of the 144

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 July 2011 09:30
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: The death of the 144

Dear Mr Bloore,

I for one am disgusted that WCC have chosen the 144 to be part of its cost cutting exercise. I had lived in Birmingham for 30 years, I work there and I have many friends there. When my wife and I decided to move to a more rural environment we chose Bromsgrove because of its proximity to our old friends and activities and it's bus connection between Birmingham and Worcester. I will no longer be able to visit those friends unless I get the car out. Another consideration in choosing Bromsgrove was that I would be able to commute to work using the bus if the car failed for any reason. This would have required an early start and a late finish but it was 'do-able'. With the proposed cuts this will not be a viable option. I do have a bus pass but I would willingly pay to retain this service and I am sure others would do so too. I am beginning to feel 'trapped' in Bromsgrove as its world contracts around it. Please do what you can to get the 144 service retained in the early mornings and evenings.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Amanda Scarce

From: Christopher Bloore
Sent: 11 August 2011 14:52
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW: The Proposed Changes to the 144 Bus Service

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 July 2011 20:50
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: The Proposed Changes to the 144 Bus Service

Hi Chris

I am totally disgusted at the plan to cut the early morning and evening 144 bus service. When I chose to move to Bromsgrove 4 years ago I picked a house on the bus route so that I did not have to rely on travel by car. I am now faced with Bromsgrove being totally isolated after 7pm. This is a terrible state of affairs for those who cannot afford a car.

No thought appears to have been given to those working in retail/hospitality where evening hours are a necessity. Removing evening buses will result in many losing their jobs. Also, it will make life very difficult for students and anyone going to night school. Anyone who wants to reach the nightlife of Birmingham and Worcester has to get an expensive taxi home late at night. In future they will also have to get a taxi there as well which means that an evening out will be prohibitively expensive.

I am alarmed to be faced with living in a 'ghost town' as nobody will be able to reach Bromsgrove in the evenings. Surely this is going to hit the pubs and eateries in Bromsgrove as people just won't be able to afford taxis and nobody wants to drink and drive. For instance, anyone living in Catshill, Droitwich or Rubery just won't be able to reach Bromsgrove and this will have a clear impact on the already struggling Bromsgrove pubs and clubs.

I was alarmed to find out after I moved here that there is absolutely no transport available to get to the Alexandra Hospital in the evenings. Although difficult, it was just possible to reach the hospital by travelling to Birmingham and from there to Redditch, albeit a long and difficult journey. If the evening 144 service is removed anyone without a car will be totally unable to reach the hospital if they have a sick relative unless they are wealthy enough to afford taxis. I find it a disgrace that there is no bus directly to the hospital from Bromsgrove at ANY time and that the Redditch bus does not run in the evenings.

No plans have been made for any sort of compromise, such as a limited service to Longbridge where you could pick up an alternative bus on the Bristol Road or even a shuttle bus to Bromsgrove Station. At present the distance to the station makes it an impossibility for many Bromsgrovians. It would be 40 minute walk for me!

I have written to my MP, Sajid Javid and have had a reply from Andy Baker, Sustainable Transport Manager at Worcs County Council. This reply does not address any of the questions I asked. Basically, I am told that most people would prefer cutting fewer services with reductions elsewhere. This man does not seem to realise that the 144 service is absolutely vital as it is a lifeline to the outside world. Does he really think that non car owners should stay in their houses after 7pm? The evening service is bad enough as it is, running only every hour and a half and to stop it completely is to deny Bromsgrovians any freedom at all. No alternative has been considered, such as charging more. I am sure concessionary passengers, such as myself (due to disability) would be prepared to pay in full or even more, rather than to be housebound after 7pm. I realise that cutting the daytime services to save money is not appropriate as it is only the evening/early bus services that are subsidised.

I would urge you to protest in the strongest terms on behalf of Bromsgrove residents. Sadly, although many are very unhappy at the proposals, they are somewhat apathetic and are not prepared to make their feelings public! To lose the 144 service in the evenings/early mornings will be catastrophic!

[REDACTED]

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From: Margaret Sherrey
Sent: 08 August 2011 15:42
To: Amanda Scarce
Subject: FW: Bus services task group

Appendix 4

From: Margaret Sherrey
Sent: 08 August 2011 15:41
To: Christopher Bloore
Subject: Bus services task group

Good Afternoon Christopher

Replies to some of the questions I was asked at the meeting on 28th July.

Our concerns were discussed with our group as far back as January 2011.

Our concerns were taken back to the County Council by our County Councillors who have been very active during the extended consultation.

There have been some changes thanks to our Conservative County Councillors.

As Cllr P McDonald is a County Councillor I would have thought he would know if the County had carried out an impact assessment as this would surely be part of the process as well as a equality assessment.

When the Bold Program was carried out in Bromsgrove transport came low on priorities with the public that attended.

The removal is of subsidies not bus services by Worcester County Council. The bus companies are responsible for the actual services.

Sorry for delay in replying but we have been with friends over the weekend.

Regards

Margaret



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01527 881288 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ

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