

Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Report submitted by: Head of Service, Public and Integrated Transport
Date: 5 January 2017

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Ribble Valley South West;
and Longridge with Bowland

Revision of Tendered Bus Services to Maintain Public Transport Service in Mellor

(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

This report recommends revisions to the tendered bus services in Ribble Valley West to maintain public transport service provision in Mellor.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to:

- (i) Approve the proposed revisions to the tendered bus service network in Ribble Valley as set out at Appendix 'A';
- (ii) Request that officers undertake the necessary contract variation process to allow the service revisions to commence at the earliest opportunity.

This decision should be implemented immediately for the purposes of Standing Order 34(3) as any delay could adversely affect the execution of the County Council's responsibilities. The reason for this is to ensure that the gap in public transport provision for the village of Mellor is minimised.

Background and Advice

On 15 December 2016, Darwen Coach Services advised both Lancashire County Council (LCC) and Blackburn with Darwen Council (BwDC) that they had ceased trading with immediate effect.

Whilst the impact on public transport services (PTS) is greater in the BwDC area, with Darwen Coach Services operations based in the borough, they did provide the regular scheduled bus Service D15 linking Mellor and Blackburn.

Service D15 operated generally every two hours Monday to Saturday daytime, including the extension through to Blackburn St. Wilfrid's Academy. The impact for Lancashire residents is the removal of the regular public transport link between Mellor and Blackburn.

Prior to April 2016, this section of route was part of LCC tendered PTS network and Darwen Coach Services made the decision to operate the service on a commercial basis without subsidy, at the request of LCC.

Whilst a third of the route lies within the Blackburn area, the majority of passengers impacted are on the Lancashire side of the boundary. BwDC have advised that their focus will be on the other routes in their area, which are also significantly affected by the cessation of trading by Darwen Coach Services; and they would not be in a position to provide any funding towards a replacement service for Mellor.

Following discussions with other bus service providers, none are immediately willing to provide a replacement bus service between Mellor and Blackburn on a commercial basis.

LCC purchased season tickets on Service D15 for the 8 students with a statutory entitlement, who are among the regular 20 students attending St. Wilfrid's Academy from the Lancashire section of the route. A dedicated temporary school bus journey was introduced to meet the County Council's statutory obligations to ensure these students receive home to school transport to their nearest school.

Assessment and Priority Process

According to ticket machine data there are approximately 32,500 passenger trips made (110 per day), including the St. Wilfrid's Academy students.

Whilst there are a high proportion of the total passenger trips made by English National Concessionary pass-holders (approximately 60%), the other passenger classes are a mixture of both adults and students using the service for accessing Blackburn.

It has been assessed that a PTS is in principle needed. Based on the current level of passenger journeys accessing the bus service in Mellor, a replacement service would also rank as a high priority for the consideration of a supported PTS.

As previously part of LCC's tendered PTS network, prior to April 2016, it is proposed to provide a replacement service for Mellor and Mellor Brook.

Proposal

It is proposed to revise the tendered bus services in Ribble Valley West to enable a PTS for Mellor and Mellor Brook to be provided, all as summarised below.

Service 15/15A Blackburn – Mellor – Mellor Brook – (Brockhall)

It is proposed to reinstate Service 15 to provide a replacement PTS for Mellor and Mellor Brook. Certain peak journeys (numbered Service 15A) will extend to Langho and Brockhall to maintain a service to these areas.

On Schooldays, certain journeys will extend through to and from Blackburn St. Wilfrid's Academy to ensure statutory obligations are maintained for student's home to school transport to their nearest school

The service will operate generally every 60 minutes Monday to Saturday daytime.

Service 25 Blackburn – Wilpshire – Langho – Brockhall

It is proposed to reinstate Service 25 to provide a replacement route for Langho (The Rydings) and Brockhall, removed by the re-routing of Service 35 between Longridge and Blackburn. The service will operate generally every two hours Monday to Saturday daytime. In conjunction with the Service 35, an hourly service will be provided between Salesbury and Blackburn.

Service 35 (Chipping) – Longridge – Blackburn

It is proposed to revise the route and timetable to continue providing a two-hourly Monday to Saturday daytime service between Longridge and Blackburn. In conjunction with the Service 25, an hourly service will be provided between Salesbury and Blackburn.

Service 615 Mellor – Blackburn St. Wilfrid's Academy

It is proposed this emergency dedicated school service will be amalgamated within the reinstated Service 15/15A and students will travel on this service.

As with all tendered bus services, the performance of these service revisions will be closely monitored to confirm that they are achieving their transport objectives and are delivering value for money.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is recommended to approve the proposed revisions to tendered bus services in Ribble Valley West as set out at Appendix 'A' and request that officers undertake the necessary contract variation process to allow the service revisions to commence at the earliest opportunity.

Consultations

The PTS provision for Mellor and Mellor Brook within the proposed revised services follows the requests by local elected representatives and residents for a replacement service to be provided. The proposed revisions to the routes within Ribble Valley West also incorporate certain suggestions put forward by local residents since the major service revisions in April 2016.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Without the proposed revisions to the network of tendered bus services in Ribble Valley West, it would not be possible to provide a PTS for Mellor.

Financial

The net cost of providing the emergency dedicated school bus service for the statutory Blackburn St.Wilfrids Academy students is £28,000 per annum. The estimated net cost of additional resources to provide a replacement Monday to Saturday daytime service between Mellor and Blackburn, will be a further £35,000 per annum.

Included within these figures is the projection of an additional £45,000 per annum in generated fares revenue together with the incorporation of the existing dedicated School Bus Service 615 between Mellor and Blackburn.

These revisions cannot be accommodated within existing resources, therefore this cost will initially be met from the Budget for the provision of Community Based Public Transport Services in Lancashire as detailed in Appendix 'B'. If the revisions are approved, ongoing assessment of the PTS will take place to explore if alternative funding can be secured.

Procurement

A framework agreement is in place for the procurement of Local and School Bus Services in Lancashire. All contracts are procured under this Framework by mini-competitions. This revision will be contained within an agreed individual contract variation in accordance with the terms of the Framework Agreement.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport - 'Revised Criteria for Assessing Subsidised Bus Services'	9 December 2014	Dave Gorman/ (01772) 534261
Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – 'Recommendations of the Cabinet Working Group on Bus Services - Bus Service Replacement Proposals '	8 March 2016	Dave Gorman/ (01772) 534261
Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – 'Assessment and Priority Policy for Public Transport Services in Lancashire'	12 December 2016	Dave Gorman/ (01772) 534261

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A