

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 13 July 2017

Report submitted by: Head of Service, Public and Integrated Transport

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
Burscough & Rufford;
Skelmersdale Central;
Skelmersdale East;
Skelmersdale West; West
Lancashire East;

Review of Tendered Bus Services in Skelmersdale (Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

This report recommends revisions to the tendered bus services in the Skelmersdale area to maintain a public transport service for the Birch Green and Ashurst area.

Recommendation

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the proposed revisions to the tendered bus service in West Lancashire as set out at Appendix 'A';
- (ii) Request that officers undertake the necessary contract variation process to allow the service revisions to commence on 24 July 2017.

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 revised tendered bus service network will commence on 24 July 2017.

Background and Advice

In April 2017, Arriva Merseyside advised the county council that they had given the statutory notice to the North West Traffic Commissioner to withdraw local bus service 313, which serves the Ashurst and Birch Green areas of Skelmersdale with effect from 23 July 2017.

The impact for Lancashire residents is that this will remove all local public transport service journeys linking Skelmersdale with the Birch Green and Ashurst areas of the town.

Service 313 operates on a wholly commercial basis by Arriva and is outside the influence of the county council. Arriva have advised this service is no longer commercially sustainable for them to operate.

As a result, there would be no alternative public transport service available in these areas of Skelmersdale.

Assessment and Priority Policy for Public Transport Services

Service 313 currently operates every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday daytime, between around 0700 and 1900.

According to ticket machine data and on-bus surveys there are approximately 85,000 annual passenger trips (280 per day) made on the route.

Following discussions with other bus service providers, none are willing to provide a replacement bus service on a commercial basis.

With the withdrawal of the Service 313, there would be no alternative service available to allow residents to either make the same journey or a comparable journey to suitable alternative key destinations, such as Skelmersdale Town Centre for employment, local amenities and shopping as well as onward access to other employment areas, health and education facilities.

Based on the current level of passenger journeys accessing bus services in Ashurst and Birch Green, the needs of the local community would not be met if no alternative transport for the area was available. A high number of these residents in the areas affected are particularly reliant on public transport services.

Using the county council's policy for the consideration of tendered bus services it has been assessed that a public transport service can in principle be justified.

Proposal

It is proposed to provide a replacement tendered bus service for the Ashurst and Birch Green area.

The proposed replacement services would incorporate the existing tendered bus Service 3A route, currently operating between Burscough, Skelmersdale and Appley Bridge, with the proposed new routes and timetables as follows:

Service 312 Skelmersdale – Appley Bridge – Wrightington Hospital

It is proposed to introduce this service to retain the existing level of service between Skelmersdale and Appley Bridge on the same route as the current Service 3A, but the revisions will enable the extension of the route, reinstating the service through to

Wrightington Hospital. On route the service will maintain public transport service links to Tanhouse, Hall Green and Roby Mill.

The service will operate every hour during Monday to Saturday daytime. In conjunction with the Service 313, the cross town link to Asda will be maintained.

Service 313 Skelmersdale – Ashurst – Parbold – Burscough

It is proposed to introduce this service to retain the existing level of service between Skelmersdale and Burscough as the current Service 3A, but to additionally serve Birch Green and Ashurst to replace the withdrawal of Arriva's commercial bus service. On route the service will maintain public transport service links to Asda, Newburgh and Parbold.

The service will operate every half hour, between Skelmersdale and Ashurst, extending every hour through to Burscough during Monday to Saturday daytime.

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

Consultations

The divisional County Councillors have been advised of the proposed revisions to the public transport services in Skelmersdale and have indicated their support for the proposals.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Without the proposed revisions to the network of tendered bus services in Skelmersdale it would leave a large population of Skelmersdale without access to a public transport service.

Financial

The estimated net cost of providing an additional single vehicle replacement during Monday to Saturday daytime, to maintain the half-hourly service link between Ashurst, Birch Green and Skelmersdale, is approximately £40,000 per annum. This will be met from the Transitional Reserve in 2017/18 and adjusted for in the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2018/19 in line with the budget amendment covered in a separate report.

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 – '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