

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT - 6 OCTOBER 2011**

### **REPLACEMENT OF COMMERCIAL BUS SERVICES**

#### **Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Highways & Transport)**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report considers the future of two bus services which had been operated commercially but which were now subsidised under delegated powers.
2. Earlier in 2011 commercial bus service 275 (Oxford – Tetsworth – Postcombe – Stokenchurch – High Wycombe) and off-peak journeys on service X15 (Witney – Standlake – Southmoor - Marcham – Abingdon) were due to be withdrawn by the commercial operators concerned. Under delegated powers a subsidy was provided to keep the journeys operating whilst a review was undertaken.

#### **Financial Position – Current Year (2011-12)**

3. The funding available in the County Council's bus subsidy budget is as follows:

	£000's
Bus Subsidy Budget	£2,892
Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG)	£1,737

4. The combined budget total of £4,629,000 represents a cut of £268,000 from the 2010/11 budget. Next year's budget will remain the same as this year (excluding inflation) but further cuts of £250,000 in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 are scheduled. Thus, because of the length of the contracts being tendered, awards will be assessed on the available budget in 2014/15.

#### **Service 275**

5. The majority of passengers on this service actually travel to/from or wholly within Buckinghamshire and therefore it has been agreed that Buckinghamshire County Council will become lead authority for the tendering of this service. Additionally Buckinghamshire County Council has identified that cost savings can be made by diverting service 275 over the route of another bus service currently subsidised by that authority.
6. This bus service is the only regular public transport service for the villages of Postcombe, Tetsworth and Milton Common and consultation will take place with the relevant Parish Councils and local Members.

7. Following the tendering of this service Buckinghamshire County Council will seek a financial contribution from Oxfordshire County Council for the section of route within our County.

### **Service X15**

8. This new bus service commenced in 2004 as a result of a successful bid for central Government Rural Bus Service Challenge funds. It was the first direct bus service to link Witney and Abingdon and was underpinned by the movement of students between the Abingdon and Witney College's two main campuses. The service runs approximately two hourly throughout the day and has opened up new travel opportunities between Witney, Standlake, Southmoor and Abingdon.
9. Oxfordshire County Council has provided a small subsidy for some journeys between Witney and Standlake and, since September 2011, for off-peak journeys between Standlake and Abingdon previously operated commercially.
10. In order that the subsidy for the off-peak service can be rationalized it is proposed that the contract for the journeys between Witney and Standlake be terminated with effect from 2 June 2012. Additionally the current subsidy for the southern section would be extended until 2 June 2012 and then the whole off-peak service can be reviewed and tendered together as part of the review of subsidised bus services to be reported to the Cabinet Member for Transport in March 2012.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

11. **The Cabinet Member for Transport is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - (a) **authorise the Director for Environment & Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport to negotiate the best level of bus service, at the lowest cost, with Buckinghamshire County Council for the Oxfordshire villages served by bus service No. 275 following consultation with the relevant Parish Councils and local Members;**
  - (b) **terminate Contract PT/W 21 on 2 June 2012 and extend Contract PT/W 22 until 2 June 2012 and ask officers to undertake a full review of bus service No. X15 and invite bids to operate journeys on service X15 that are not commercial and report the results of that review to the Cabinet Member for Transport for decision in March 2012.**

STEVE HOWELL

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Highways & Transport)

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September 2011