

**CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT - 29 MARCH 2007**

**BUS SERVICE SUBSIDIES**

**Report by Head of Transport**

**Introduction**

1. This report and the associated Annexes deal with the following which now need decisions to be made by the Cabinet Member for Transport:-
  - (a) the Review of Subsidised Bus Services in the Wheatley, Thame and Watlington area,
  - (b) other bus subsidy contracts elsewhere which, if awarded, will be effective from 3 June 2007, and
  - (c) future policy on fares.
2. Background information on items (a) and (b) above are included at Annex 1 together with a summary of the relevant points from the responses received through local consultation. It is necessary to cross-reference this report with Annex 1 for full information on each of the contracts considered within these pages. Section A of Annex 1 deals with Wheatley, Thame and Watlington area services under review, Section B deals with other services elsewhere in the County and Section C details other community contracts to be discussed in the Banbury and Kidlington areas.
3. Annex 3 reports further on the proposed changes to community services in the Banbury and Kidlington areas operated by the Banburyshire Community Transport Association (the detailed information on these services is contained in Section C of Annex 1). Annex 4 reports on the investigations into simplifying and standardising fares charged on supported bus services within the County.
4. Tender prices obtained for contracts specified in paragraph 1 will be contained in a confidential Supplementary Exempt Annex 2, to be circulated later.

**Reasons for Exempt Annex**

5. This item should be considered in exempt session because its discussion in public might lead to the disclosure to members of the public present of the amount of any expenditure proposed to be incurred by Oxfordshire County Council and/or other local authorities and organisations under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority).

6. The costs contained in Annex 2 must be treated as strictly confidential since they relate to the financial and business affairs of the operator. All prices must be treated as strictly confidential until such time as the Decision Meeting decides whether or not to provide financial support for each service. Revealing operators' prices before then would prejudice the County Council's position if tenders or propositions had to be sought again for any of the services. Prices remain confidential after the date of this meeting for 10 days (until 8 April) under the objection period specified in the Public Contract Regulations 2006.

### **Subsidy Prices**

7. Tender prices will not be available until shortly before the meeting and will therefore be reported separately as Supplementary Exempt Annex 2 together with my recommendations. Until all tender prices and 'de minimis' propositions received have been analysed, I will not know what the overall impact on the Public Transport budget is likely to be. Local Members will be advised in writing of recommendations affecting their Divisions at least one week before the meeting that considers this report and their written comments sought. Any responses received will be included in the Supplementary Exempt Annex 2.
8. If further support for any contract is not agreed at the meeting on Thursday 29 March 2007 (except where they have been replaced by alternative arrangements or contracts) then the service or journey(s) concerned will cease after operation on Saturday 2 June 2007. The only exception to this may be if a settlement will be left with no other form of public transport. In such cases, I may recommend that existing contract arrangements be extended until December 2007 to allow time for alternative facilities such as voluntary community transport to be explored.

### **Exemption from Call-in**

9. The Council's Constitution makes provision for decisions by the Cabinet or by an individual member or by a Decision Meeting of the Cabinet to be called in and considered by the relevant Scrutiny Committee. In the past this has caused problems in relation to decisions relating to the award of bus service contracts because of the special circumstances which apply to those decisions. Legal requirements lay down a maximum period of three months between the receipt of tenders and the subsequent introduction of the new bus services, whilst a minimum of eight weeks notice is required to register a new or revised bus service with the Traffic Commissioners. The timetable for call-in does not allow for that procedure to be invoked without causing the suspension of the contracts awarded which could then result in the withdrawal of the bus services concerned from the expiry date of current contracts. This would have been unacceptable to passengers who would have been left with no bus service to access vital amenities. Within the time constraints mentioned above it is not possible to allow both one week for consultation beforehand and a further week after the date of the meeting for a possible

call-in, before operators are notified of the contract awards. Because of those circumstances it has been necessary on a number of occasions in the past for the former Transport Implementation Committee to seek suspension of the call-in period under the rules of the Constitution, which applied at that time.

10. That situation was far from satisfactory and on 10 January 2006 Council agreed an amendment to the Constitution which means that the County Council's call-in procedure should not apply to any decision on the letting of a contract arising from termination of an existing contract if the time available is such that allowing for call-in would result in service discontinuity, provided that all members of the relevant Scrutiny Committee had been informed of the circumstances of the decision to be made and had had an opportunity to make representations to the decision maker about it.
11. With regard to that provision local members and Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee Members will be advised of the recommended contract awards as contained in Supplementary Exempt Annex 2, at least one week before the date of this Meeting which will allow them the opportunity to put their comments in writing or arrange to speak at the meeting.
12. The above arrangements are separate from the provisions of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 which allows a 10 day call-in period for contractors who have any grievance with regards to the tender awards or processes. Successful tenderers will be advised of the outcome as soon as is practicable after the meeting, so that they will be in a position to register services with the Traffic Commissioners before the end of the 10 day period if necessary. Because of this it will not be possible to disclose any information to the public in respect of the tender awards until before Tuesday 10 April 2007 (the day after the Easter Public Holiday).

## Financial Position

### Current Year (2006/7)

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

	<u>£000's</u>
Main Budget 2006/7 (excluding carry forward)	3,357
Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) for 2006/7	1,517
Base budget available	<u>4,874</u>
Carried forward from 2005/6	10
Total available for 2006/7 (see note 1)	<u>4,884</u>
Expected turn-out 2006/7	4,760

14. The bus subsidy budget is now on track for a £120,000 under-spend in the current financial year. This is due to the lack of commercial withdrawals –

from an average of 12 per year between 2000 and 2005, the rate of commercial withdrawals has declined to only one this year so far. The slack in the budget maintained to cover the expected cost of replacing withdrawn commercial services has thus been barely called upon this year.

**Forthcoming Year (2007/8)**

	£000's
Bus subsidy element of budget agreed by Council	3,756
Rural Bus Subsidy Grant	<u>1,553</u>
Total	5,309

- 15. In 2007/8, as in recent years, the bus subsidy budget has benefited from a previously agreed Policy & Budget Plans increase for abnormal inflation. Notwithstanding the efficiency saving applied to the budget, this has resulted in an increase – in money terms – from 2006/7 to 2007/8. However, in future years this Policy & Budget Plan increase will not apply, whilst efficiency savings targets are expected to increase. In preparation for this, it is recommended that savings of 5-10% should be sought on contracts under review at this meeting.

**Contract Numbering**

- 16. Contracts subsidised largely by the RBSG funding from the Government have, until recently, been distinguished by being allocated a serial number in the '100' series. This distinction is being phased out as contracts expire. Therefore, to avoid confusion when cross-referencing, all contracts are referred to in this report by the new numbering system even though some are currently numbered in the '100' series. For the avoidance of doubt, the contracts affected are PT/S3 (currently PT/S103), PT/S5 (currently PT/S105), PT/S8 (Currently PT/S108) PT/S11 (currently PT/S110), and contract PT/S20 (currently PT/S120).

**A. Review of Subsidised Bus Services in the Wheatley, Thame and Watlington Area**

**Background**

- 17. Subsidised bus services in the Wheatley, Thame and Watlington area are due for their regular four-yearly review, and tenders have been invited for new contracts from 3 June 2007 to run until 4 June 2011. 12 contracts currently operating in this area are included in this review plus one which is contracted by a neighbouring authority (Buckinghamshire County Council) but which has also been included within the scope of this review to see if some economies can be achieved. In addition two of the Oxfordshire contracts also have annual contributions from Buckinghamshire; for serving the old A40 corridor from Stokenchurch and for serving the villages of Northend and Turville Heath (which are within Buckinghamshire but only served by an Oxfordshire bus route). Two other contracts serving areas outside the review area are also

due for re-tendering or extension. These are dealt with separately later in this report.

18. Details of all of the services concerned together with information on the present subsidy cost and patronage data are contained in Annex 1 (Section A). A total of 42 Parish/Town Councils were consulted, along with Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxford City Council and Buckinghamshire County Council. A number of parties were also consulted in the course of this review including Bus Users UK and the Chilterns Conservation Board. Notices were placed on buses operating the routes concerned and at major bus stops. As a result views were also received from representative bodies such as the Stokenchurch & Radnage Community Action Forum. Comments received from the consultees, including any particular requests for new services or variations to existing routes, are also summarised under the respective contract headings at Annex 1.

### **Services under Review**

19. The network of services under review can best be described by reference to the respective areas that are served (N.B. some routes serve more than one of the review areas). Full details of all the contracts involved can be found at Annex 1 (Section A) which is tabulated in contract number order. The current operator is also listed below:-

#### **Wheatley area**

##### South Otmoor services

Heyfordian service 14 (PT/S 108) – Buckinghamshire C.C. contract with OCC contribution.

Thame – Oakley – Horton cum Studley – Oxford

Whites Coaches service 108 (Contract PT/S103)

Oxford – Forest Hill – Wheatley

##### Inter urban route with connections to Hasleys / Miltons

Thames Travel service 103 (PT/S 105)

Oxford – Horspath – Wheatley

Thames Travel services - Taxibus TB103/104 (PT/S 110)

Wheatley – Great Milton – The Haseleys – Stadhampton or  
- Cuddesdon – Garsington.

#### **Thame area**

##### Inter urban routes

Arriva the Shires services 231, 232 (PT/S 12)

Thame – Chinnor – Princes Risborough

Arriva the Shires service X32 (PT/S 13)

Thame – Chinnor – High Wycombe

Red Rose service 275 (PT/S 2)

Oxford – Wheatley – Tetsworth – Stokenchurch – High

Wycombe

##### “Market day” services

Red Rose service 111 (PT/S 10)

Chalgrove – Great Milton – Thame  
Red Rose services 122, 124 (PT/S 9, PT/S 29)  
Watlington – Thame

**Watlington area**

Inter urban routes

Thames Travel services X39 and 102 (PT/S 120)  
Oxford – Chalgrove – Watlington  
(Note: Excludes the Oxford – Wallingford section of X39)  
Motts Coaches service M1 (PT/S 25)  
Watlington – Nettlebed – Reading

“Market day” service

Red Rose service 124 (PT/S 28 and PT/S 29)  
Watlington – Henley

Taxibus service

Walters Limousines service TB1 (PT/S 21)  
Watlington – Lewknor – Chinnor

20. For all of the above contracts, officers have, (as a basic specification), sought tenders for the current level of service. However, as usual, various alternative options have also been specified for many contracts at either a lower level of service, or for a combination of existing routes in order to achieve savings.
21. 25 responses were received from Parish, Town and District Councils as a result of the public consultation exercise. In addition 12 of these undertook specific “travel needs” surveys assisted by the Rural Transport Adviser at Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. Most made suggestions for additional journeys or variations to services, although it was made clear at the commencement of the consultation process that spare funds for significant improvements were likely not to be available at this time. However, prices have been sought for route diversions or other realistic improvements where suggested.
22. This review has been complicated by a number of additional factors which have had to be taken into consideration. These include:-
  - (a) Contract S2 (service 275) is enhanced by commercially operated end to end journeys or sections of journeys by the current operator - Red Rose. This option has been included in the specifications circulated to tenderers and Red Rose has indicated that it would possibly continue some or all of these journeys if it were successful in retaining this route
  - (b) Cross-boundary issues relating to the operations within Buckinghamshire and the desires and aspirations of that authority (explained in more detail below)
  - (c) Discussions with Education Transport regarding the carriage of scholars.

## **Accessibility studies - How the project supports LTP2 objectives**

23. Buses are at the heart of the County Council's 2<sup>nd</sup> Local Transport Plan. The Bus Strategy, as part of the LTP, describes how the County Council creates the conditions in which commercial bus services can thrive, whilst ensuring that subsidised services are provided where necessary to supplement the commercial network and which best meet local needs and provide best value for money.
24. The bus services considered in this report are some of these subsidised services and contribute towards meeting the shared priorities of delivering accessibility and, to a lesser extent, tackling congestion.
25. For the first time, as part of this review, the area covered was assessed for accessibility using the modelling system developed for LTP2. This looks at levels of access to major centres, education and skills, employment, health facilities and food premises. Whilst the system has some limiting parameters, the main conclusions drawn were:-
  - (a) "Access seems to be poor for a number of settlements in the review area with particularly slow connections from some smaller villages and from Chinnor.
  - (b) Chinnor seems to have particularly poor access for a settlement of its size (pop 2001 census – 5857; Watlington – 2403). It appears to have poor connectivity to services even when the small villages on the B480 and A329 have relatively good connections. This is despite Chinnor's larger size and proximity to Thame and the major centre at High Wycombe".
26. A further study by Oxford City Council identified the Headington Quarry area and parts of Old Headington as having relatively poor access. This is relevant to this review as one of the routes (service 108 operated by Whites coaches) currently diverts to serve parts of Headington Quarry. Public transport facilities to this area are discussed further below.

## **Developer Funding – Section 106 Monies**

27. Only two small contributions to bus services were identified in the review area.
  - (a) £25K from the developers of the Rycote College site in Thame for improvements to the evening service on route 280 (Arriva). This route is almost wholly commercial but any proposed changes may be introduced in June 2007 in line with this review.
  - (b) Chinnor cement works site. This "brownfield" development might provide a so far unidentified sum from the redevelopment of the former site and could contain a substantial number of houses. It is unlikely however to be progressed until at least midway through the duration of any contracts awarded in 2007.

## **Commercial Operations**

28. All existing contractors were approached regarding the declaration of any route or section of route currently supported by the County Council as being “commercial”. None were forthcoming but Red Rose Travel did offer to continue to extend certain journeys from Stokenchurch to High Wycombe (wholly within Buckinghamshire).and run additional through journeys on route 275 (as they do now) if they were successful in retaining this contact. Actual provision would be subject to discussion (if relevant) after awards were known.

## **‘Cross-Boundary’ Services**

29. Four contracts in this review currently have sections within Buckinghamshire and discussions have taken place with that authority as to their requirements. They have at the same time been undertaking consultations on service changes in their own area at Stokenchurch and Bledlow with a view to tendering a number of current services to these places within broadly the same timescale as Oxfordshire. The four cross-boundary routes concerned are:-

*(S2) Route 275 Oxford – High Wycombe via Stokenchurch*

30. As already mentioned above the contractual arrangements for this service are rather complex. Buckinghamshire County Council only contribute towards one peak hour bus to/from Oxford as there are a number of regular cross-boundary commuters from the Buckinghamshire section. They have no desire to support the rest of the journeys that currently run between Stokenchurch and High Wycombe and with their own proposals for providing a new direct service over this route (outlined below), the need for the extra 275 journeys would be significantly reduced. Indeed the prime function of the 275 route (within Oxfordshire) is to serve the villages of Milton Common, Tetsworth, Postcombe and Aston Rowant on the old A40 road. With the current operation, these villages get a very limited service on Tuesdays and Thursdays when the main 275 bus is deployed on other routes (mainly the 124 to either Thame or Henley).
31. Tetsworth responded to consultation to the effect that a regular link to Thame (i.e. the 124 route) running five or six days per week might be preferable to the 275, and more memorable to users than the present irregular operation. This option has therefore also been explored in the tender specifications (S9 and S16). If either of these contracts are awarded then only the peak 275 journeys would remain, although there is a regular two-hourly National Express coach service direct from Oxford to High Wycombe via the M40 that runs daily (route 737)



*(S8) Route 14 Thame – Oxford via Horton cum Studley*

32. A Buckinghamshire contract (retendered in 2006) to which Oxfordshire makes a proportional contribution. This was considered at the former Transport Implementation Committee on 27 April 2006 when it was recommended to:-  
  
“Advise Buckinghamshire that a continued subsidy for a six day per week operation on service 14 is unjustified and to ask Officers to explore alternative low cost options and authorise the Head of Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet spokesman for Transport to agree any future subsidy required for service 14 in the light of officer findings and taking into account any relevant consultation and passenger surveys”.
33. A further meeting was held on the 11 July 2006 at which the Cabinet Member for Transport decided to “pay Buckinghamshire County Council a maximum gross revenue amount of £273.00 per week adjusted to take into account on-bus revenue and concessionary fares contributions received. This agreement would only last until the Thame area review on 2 June 2007. Officers to write to Parishes served warning them that this service was at risk next June due to low patronage and further on bus survey would be conducted in autumn 2006.
34. Buckinghamshire County Council duly gave 120 days notice of termination of this contract to the existing provider (Heyfordian Travel) on 2 February 2007. Part of the reason for continuing the six day per week operation was that the allocation of revenue back into the contract would reduce the amount OCC contributed, to nearer the pre-June 2006 level. Whilst the final invoice from Buckinghamshire has not yet been received (inter authority payments tend to be only balanced once per year at the end of the financial period) current expectations are that the revenue contribution is considerably less than anticipated by the tenderer.
35. Further options have therefore been considered including combining with service 108 (which serves Forest Hill and Beckley) to form one route covering all of the South Otmoor area. Buckinghamshire are not averse to a reduction to three days per week operation within their area and for the route to commence in Oakley rather than in Thame. Consultation highlighted specific concerns regarding the level of service provided at Hornton-cum-Studley (currently just the one shopping journey each way on six days per week on route 14). Some 40% of residents responded to the travel survey, much higher than some of the other parishes. Many requested a peak hour link to Oxford /Thornhill/ Headington although there was no consensus as to the exact times that such a service should run. It will however be very difficult to meet these requests due to the isolated location of Hornton-cum-Studley and the best suggestion is that some form of community service could perhaps be explored.

*(S12, S13) Routes 231/232 Thame – Chinnor – Princes Risborough*

36. The background to the current arrangement on these routes is also rather complex. Historically there had always been a bus service between Thame / Chinnor and High Wycombe, which ran via the most direct route over Bledlow Ridge and in latter years this was jointly funded by both authorities. In 2002 Buckinghamshire received specific “Rural Bus Challenge” funding from Government for an experimental Dial a Ride operation which included Bledlow Ridge within its orbit. Consequently the County Council stated that they would no longer contribute to the through service nor did they wish to see a wholly Oxfordshire funded service run via the Ridge either. Consequently Oxfordshire County Council paid all the costs (for a few months) of a through service running from Thame via Chinnor and Princes Risborough to High Wycombe.
37. This was difficult to justify, so that at the 2003 area review the service was cut back to terminate in Princes Risborough (route 232) where passengers now have to change to a frequent Arriva commercial service to/from Wycombe (route 300) Currently, the Risborough service is every two hours off-peak whilst the villages of Sydenham, Kingston Stert and Kingston Blount also get a two hourly local service (route 231) the two routes combining to give an hourly bus from Thame to Chinnor. At peak times buses just run up and down on a direct route between Thame and Chinnor only giving roughly a half-hourly frequency. There is no doubt that there has been a decline in usage of the service since the through link was severed. One shopping bus to/from High Wycombe was however maintained – service X32 which runs on a Saturday morning only (contract S13).
38. The lack of a through link to High Wycombe has caused ongoing complaints, which have increased since the introduction of the revised concessionary fare arrangements in April 2006. The South Oxfordshire District scheme permits free travel to/from Wycombe (for which they make an extra payment) but for Chinnor residents this involves a journey on another bus wholly within Buckinghamshire (Risborough to Wycombe). Despite the company accepting this as a valid journey, Oxfordshire residents are often refused free travel by route 300 drivers. This will of course be resolved in April 2008 when the concessionary scheme is expanded nationally.
39. Buckinghamshire County Council has been conducting their own review in the Stokenchurch area and are proposing a new regular direct link from there to High Wycombe (Route “Line 340”). Following discussions and as part of their tendering exercise, one option is to extend Line 340 to Thame via Aston Rowant, Kingston Blount and Chinnor on the regular hourly headway. This has a number of advantages including restoration of the through link jointly funded by both authorities and meets the concerns highlighted by the accessibility studies. A number of parishes expressed support for this option during the consultation exercise. Prices will be sought by Buckinghamshire for this proposal but acceptance will, as always, be dependent upon the bids received. If acceptable Oxfordshire would pay a proportional share based on mileage operated within each County. Their tendering exercise is following

broadly the same timescale as the Oxfordshire area review and I shall report orally at the meeting on the outcome of this joint pricing exercise in respect of Line 340. Prices have however also been sought to continue the current 231/232 and X13 services with some minor modifications in the light of current operational experience.

40. Whilst the 340 would be hourly, in order to maintain the half-hourly Thame – Chinnor peak frequency on Mondays to Fridays, a separate tender under reference S15 has been issued to cover these. These would have to be wholly funded by Oxfordshire, so a further option (S16) would combine these extra 340's with an enhanced off-peak service on route 124 (as described under route 275 above) in order to give a days utilisation for a bus/driver. Carriage of scholars on the peak 340's is also being explored (see below).
41. One consequence of the award of the Line 340 contract (which would essentially replace routes 231/232, X13 and 275) would be an improved service to Aston Rowant and Kingston Blount although the off-peak Chinnor – Risborough link would be severed (Chiltern Railways funded rail-link 320 runs at peak times between these points). Also Kingston Stert and Sydenham village would lose their services (but 340 would still serve the Sydenham Turn – this is however more than 400 metres from the further end of the village). It may be possible to run one journey on the 'enhanced 124' service via Sydenham on one or two days per week but not on Tuesdays – the most popular day due to Thame market – otherwise the 124 would not serve its main pick-up points of Tetsworth and Postcombe.

*(S28, S29) Route 124 Watlington – Henley*

42. These Thursdays and Saturday only routes serve the villages of Christmas Common, Stonor and the Assendons within Oxfordshire and on route also pass through North End and Turville Heath which are in Buckinghamshire. As this is the only public bus service to these villages, Buckinghamshire makes a small contribution to the operation. Use of the 124 service on both days is low although there are regular users from North End to/from Watlington (despite the timetable being designed for shopping trips to/from Henley). Buckinghamshire has no major concerns regarding their villages as they currently run a dial-a-ride type service in the Hambledon Valley area to/from both Henley and Marlow and this could possibly be extended to embrace North End and Turville Heath.
43. In 2006 Oxfordshire Rural Community Council brokered a partnership of parishes in the Swyncombe area (covering Cookley Green, Pishill, Stonor and Highmoor) to run and fund a dial-a-ride service to/from Henley on Thursdays and this has proven to be popular. An option is to explore whether the scope of this service could be extended (with a possible small County Council contribution) to include pick-ups in Assendon parish although any extra passengers would need the deployment of larger vehicles than the 8 seater used at present. This could replace, in part, the Thursday service on 124 (contract S29) although members may wish to consider the option of continuing the Saturday bus (contract S28) in broadly its present form in

order to maintain the existing links on at least one day per week. Prices obtained for these options will be shown in supplementary Annex 2.

### **Headington Quarry**

44. This area is currently served by diverting three off-peak journeys on contract S3 (route 108), to serve western parts of the Quarry area but the roads that could be served have been hampered by parked vehicles prohibiting use of large sized buses. The 108 diversion was introduced in 2004 as something of an expedient following the withdrawal of the more frequent City route 107 round this area. It has always been viewed as a slight deviation by travellers from the outer end of the 108 route at Forest Hill and Stanton St John. Options investigated therefore include continuing the present arrangement or providing a separate service with could use a smaller vehicle (up to 12 seats) and which could reach points such as School Place.

### **Discussions with the Integrated Transport Unit (Education Transport) - Carriage of scholars**

45. In accordance with normal practice, officers from Public Transport and the Integrated Transport, Education Transport team have worked together to identify any opportunities to carry entitled schoolchildren on public bus services, as well as to integrate education and public transport contracts as recommended in the Best Value Review. Officers did identify a small number of flows that could possibly be transferred from Education Transport to public bus services but the majority of schools within this review area are large secondary establishments that involve very large flows of pupils. Most of the public transport contracts under review now normally only require a maximum of around 30 seat capacity even for the busiest journeys so are unable to cater for these flows

### **Identification of Flows of Non-Entitled Schoolchildren**

46. Officers have not been made aware during the consultation process of any new significant flows of non-entitled schoolchildren (either for journeys of under 3 miles or to schools of parental choice).

### **Use of Social & Health Care and Community Transport vehicles**

47. Officers considered the possible use of County Council-owned Social & Health Care vehicles in the context of this review, and the Integrated Transport Unit was consulted on whether there was any scope for the use of their vehicles.
48. The County Council also have a number of 8 and 12 seat vehicles that were purchased for government funded "Challenge" services that have recently been discontinued. Further 8 seat buses will be made surplus if the contract for the Lewknor Connection taxibus (S21) is not re-awarded. The larger (12

seat) buses could be deployed on services such as the Swyncombe Link and the stand-alone Quarry operation mentioned above. The 12 seat vehicles are however all currently in storage and will require expenditure on them so as to become road-worthy. No mention was therefore made of the possibility of using County Council provided buses on these contracts (which might have resulted in lower prices) but it may be possible to explore this further when the award of tenders has been considered.

### **Consultation During Review**

49. Extensive consultation has been carried out during the course of this review, although only about half the consultees responded. A brief summary of all the comments received is set out at Annex 1 under their respective contracts.
50. In addition, afternoon and evening public meetings were held, one in the Town Hall, Thame and Council Offices in Watlington in November June 2006 to which all consultees were invited and at which various proposals were outlined.

### **B. Contracts for subsidised bus services elsewhere expiring 2 June 2007**

#### **Contract PT/W20:- Service X15 (Witney – Abingdon – Berinsfield)**

51. This contract was awarded to Thames Travel for a three year period from July 2004 until 2 June 2007. A completely new route, it was funded by a partnership of the County Council, Abingdon-Witney College (whose pupils extensively use the route) and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council. However, roundly 50% of the cost (covering the first three years of operation) came from a one-off grant from the government under its Rural Challenge funding for which Oxfordshire County Council made a successful bid in 2003. The contract was awarded on a “kick-start” declining subsidy basis with the view that the level of commerciality after the three years would significantly reduce the level of subsidy required by the time the route was retendered.
52. The Government grant included a sum for monitoring the service and students from Brookes University were commissioned to undertake two periodic surveys during the period of the contract. Every journey was surveyed on two separate occasions in May 2005 and May 2006. The total number of passengers using the service showed a 26% increase during the course of the year and certain heavily used journeys require the use of a double-deck bus to carry all the students.
53. The X15 route uses the A415 road between Kingston Bagpuize and Standlake crossing the Thames at Newbridge, the first bus service to do so. However in the latter part of 2006 the County Council’s bridge engineers started to express concerns as to the structural integrity of Newbridge due to the continual pounding from traffic – it already has an 18 tonne maximum gross weight limit imposed but this is well above the weight of a fully laden

double-deck bus (at around 13 tonnes). At one point it was suggested that a 7.5 m.g.w. limit might have to be implemented at short notice if deterioration became rapid. This would have precluded even the smallest type of conventional bus from crossing the bridge with passengers on.

54. Further detailed discussion within Oxfordshire Highways has however raised the suggestion that the limited number of buses on service X15 crossing the bridge might be given a "permit" granting exemption from the lower limit. Current indications are that it may even be possible to continue to use double-deck buses on some journeys. Engineers are able to build in a known quality into their risk assessments by this method rather than the more continuous use by heavy vehicles permitted at the moment. Tenders have therefore been drawn up on this basis, for a three and a half year contractual term until the next Witney area review in December 2010.
55. As with all contracts with elements of external funding, issues arise when that source of funds comes to an end. Unfortunately, very few of the services for which the County received Government Urban Challenge funding have reached anywhere near commerciality at the end of the grant period (although X15 has performed better in this respect than many others), so it is then left to the County Council to make good any funding deficit from the main bus subsidy budget. Whilst this route has undoubtedly proved to be popular, and this has elicited a number of letters and comments during the consultation period as it was hinted that there might be a possible curtailment of the route/frequency, it does nevertheless have a considerable resource requirement to meet the peak school and college movements. Discussions have been held with both the Abingdon-Witney College and the European School at Culham as to their level of contributions to the service but inevitably some lower cost options have had to be included within the revised specifications for member consideration.

**Contract PT/C20: Services B10 / B11 (Banbury – Hanwell Fields Estate)**

56. This service commenced in July 2004 serving new development along the northern boundary on Banbury, north of the established Hardwick estate. Initially serving just the western development off the Warwick Road, it then developed into a horseshoe loop covering additional new building at the eastern end off the Southam Road as well. The route eventually joined along the spine road to form an alternate clockwise / anti-clockwise loop during the summer of 2006.
57. Funding throughout has been from the S106 monies obtained from the various developers' engaged on the Hanwell Fields site. I have now been advised that all S106 monies from Hanwell Fields has now been spent and therefore, unless funded from the main bus subsidy budget, this service will be withdrawn from 2 June 2007.

### **Replacement of Cherwell District Council – funded bus services by dial-a-ride enhancements (Annex 3)**

58. A separate paper, attached at Annex 3 discusses the financial and operational implications of the proposal by Banburyshire Community Transport Association to convert a number of existing scheduled bus services around the Banbury and Kidlington areas into dial-a-ride operations. These services are currently funded entirely by Cherwell District Council. Full details of the services are contained at Annex 1. Financial information on the provision of possible extra services will be given in the Supplementary Exempt Annex 2.

### **Simplification and standardisation of fares (Annex 4)**

59. The Bus Strategy contained a proposal (arising from consultation) that fares on subsidised services might in future be standardised and the number of increments simplified. This report (attached at Annex 4) summarises the consultation undertaken on this proposal, the comments received and draws an initial conclusion based on the data received so far. Tenders requesting the review area route specifications have also received sample fare-charts drawn up on the simplified basis and have been asked whether charging these scales would materially affect the bids prices quoted for that contract. An oral report on the outcome of this exercise will be given to the meeting on 29 March 2007.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

60. **The Cabinet Member for Transport is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) note the financial information contained in the introduction to this report;**
  - (b) note the comments of Parish and Town Councils and Parish Transport Representatives and others made in response to the consultation exercise as part of the review and detailed at Annex 1 to this report;**
  - (c) make its decisions on subsidy for the services described in this report on the basis of the tender prices (and the periods of time) as set out in Exempt Annex 2 to be reported subsequently;**
  - (d) record that in the opinion of the Cabinet Member for Transport the decisions made in (c) above are urgent in that any delay likely to be caused by the call in process would result in service discontinuity and in accordance with the requirements of Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17(b) those decisions should not be subject to the call in process;**

- (e) in respect of Annex 3 to:**
  - (i) welcome the proposal by BCTA and Cherwell District Council to convert the Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services to dial-a-ride;**
  - (ii) consider whether any replacement scheduled bus services are required for any parish or group of parishes consequent upon the conversion to dial-a-ride;**
  
- (f) in respect of Annex 4 to:**
  - (i) instruct officers not to further progress any move towards simplified and “unified” fares structure on County Council supported bus services until such time as a much simplified fares structure had been introduced widely on commercial bus services in the County;**
  - (ii) instruct officers not to accept any of the ‘shadow’ tenders offered on the basis of the simplified “unified “ fares structure in the current tender round but to continue the present policies in relation to bus fares on supported services.**

STEVE HOWELL  
Head of Transport

Background papers: Correspondence with Local Councils, Parish Transport Representatives, Transport operators and other bodies (refer to contact officers).

Contact Officers: Dick Helling (Tel: Oxford 815859): Financial Information  
John Wood (Tel: Oxford 815802): Wheatley, Thame and Watlington area review  
Allan Field (Tel: Oxford 815826): Other services

March 2007



**Section A - WHEATLEY, THAME & WATLINGTON AREA REVIEW CONTRACTS**

Contract Ref:	Service No.	Terminals	Days of Operation	Service Description	Current Operator	Page No
S 2	275	Oxford – High Wycombe	Mon-Sat (Variable)	4 jnys e.w.	Red Rose (Part Commercial)	3
S 3 (103)	108	Oxford – Holton	Mon-Sat	7 jnys e.w.	Whites Coaches	4
S 5 (105)	103	Oxford – Wheatley	Mon-Sat	Hourly daytime	Thames Travel	5
S 9	122 124	Watlington – Thame	Tues	Shoppers service 1 jny e.w.on each route	Red Rose (with S2)	6
S 10	111	Chalgrove – Thame	Tues	Shoppers service 1 jny e.w	Red Rose (with S2)	7
S 11 (110)	TB103 104	Wheatley – Stadhampton / Garsington	Mon-Sat	Alt hourly	Thames Travel (with S5)	8
S 12	231 232	Thame – Chinnor – Princes Risborough	Mon-Sat	Alt Hourly	Arriva the Shires	9
S 13	X32	Thame – High Wycombe	Sat Shoppers	1 jny e.w.	Arriva the Shires	10
S 20 (120)	X39 102	Oxford - Watlington	Mon-Sat	Hourly Daytime	Thames Travel	11
S 25	M1	Stokenchurch – Reading	Mon-Sat	Shoppers service 2 jnys e.w.	Motts Coaches	12
S 28	124	Thame – Henley	Sats	2 jnys e.w.	Red Rose (with S2)	13
S 29	124	Watlington – Henley	Thurs	Shoppers service 1 jny e.w.	Red Rose (with S2)	14

**Contract extended from 27 January 2007 to 2 June 2007**

S 21	TB1	Lewknor – Watlington / Chinnor	Mon-Fri Peaks	5 jnys AM and PM peak only	Walters limo's	15
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**Contracts administered by Buckinghamshire County Council**

S 8 (108)	14	Thame – Oxford	Mon-Sat	Shoppers service 1 jny e.w.	Heyfordian	16
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**SECTION B – OTHER CONTRACTS WITH SAME TERMINATION DATE.**

W20	X15	Abingdon – Witney	Mon-Sat	Hourly M-Sa 2 jnys e.w. Sundays (Commercial)	Thames Travel	17
C20	B10/ B11	Banbury – Hanwell Fields Estate	Mon-Sat	Ever 40 mins alternately each way round	Grayline	18

**SECTION C – OTHER CONTRACTS TO BE DISCUSSED**

CDC	51	Banbury – North Aston (Circular)	Monday	2 jnys	B.C.T.A.	19
	53	Banbury – Hornton	Tuesday	2 jnys		20
	54	(Circular)	Tuesday	1 jny e.w.		21
	55	Mollington – Banbury	Wednes- days	2 jnys		22
	57	Banbury – Hook Norton (Circular)	Saturday	2 jnys		23
CDC	Kidling- ton Lynx	a) Kidlington – Church	Monday	2 jnys	B.C.T.A.	24
		Hanborough (Circular)	Monday	2 jnys		25
		b) Kidlington – Bletchingdon (Circular)	Tuesday	1 jny e.w.		26
		c) Kidlington – Steeple Aston – Bicester.	Thursday	1 jny e.w.		28
		d) Kidlington – Bletchingdon - Bicester				

These services are funded by Cherwell District Council

**SECTION A - WHEATLEY, THAME & WATLINGTON AREA REVIEW CONTRACTS**

**Note:** Where a parish is listed as served below but is shown in a (bracket) then the route concerned passes through that parish but does not serve the main centre of population.

**Contract S2: Service 275 Oxford – High Wycombe**

<b>Description</b>	Inter-urban service between Oxford and Stokenchurch / High Wycombe serving villages on the old A40
<b>Operator</b>	Red Rose Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday to Saturday
<b>Frequency</b>	Peak hour jny each way between High Wycombe and Oxford, Mon-Sat, jointly funded by Buckinghamshire C.C. and Oxon. Three return jnys off-peak throughout route on Mon/Wed/Fri, wholly funded by Oxon Only one journey in each direction Oxford – Stokenchurch, Tues/Thur/Sat (funded by Oxon) plus one journey in each direction throughout route provide commercially by operator
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	10 – Aston Rowant, (Forest Hill with Shotover), Great Haseley, Great Milton, Lewknor, Oxford City, (Risinghurst & Sandhills), Tetsworth, Waterstock, Wheatley.

**Alternative services.**

- a) Oxford to Wheatley has 6 buses per hour on Stagecoach Brookes Bus U1 and Arriva 280, also hourly route 103/TB103/104 and journeys on route 108.
- b) Arriva 280 also serves the southern end of Wheatley, Wheatley Services and Waterstock Turn.
- c) Milton Common has a Tuesday Market bus to/from Thame
- d) Tetsworth and Postcombe have Tues/Sat buses to Thame and Watlington
- e) Lewknor has the 24hrs per day, 7days per week, 365 days per year Tube service from the M40 interchange to Oxford and London, whilst this point is also served at present by the Connection taxibus service to/from Watlington the X32 shopper bus to/from High Wycombe on Saturdays and route M1 to Reading.
- f) Stokenchurch has regular services into Wycombe seven days per week funded by Bucks C.C. (routes 340/342)
- g) National Express route 737 operates every two hours for most of the day, every day, direct from Oxford to High Wycombe via the M40

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £76,773 (Combined with S9, S10, S28 & S29)  
£182.29 per day (Est.)

**Average passengers per day:** - 14 (solo Oxon/cross boundary)  
23 (whole route)

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £13.02 (based on those users with no alternative service)

**Comments from consultation:-**

*Tetsworth:-* Retain commuter journeys and occasional “shopping” journeys to High Wycombe. Switch resource to 124 Route (Tetsworth – Thame).

*Great Milton:-* No comment but would wish to see route retained

*Wheatley:-* 275 is very little used by Wheatley passengers but does provide link to Wycombe – hope can be supported  
*Stokenchurch & Radnage CA Forum:-* Allow possible commercial extensions to Wycombe (as now). If curtailed at Stokenchurch must connect with “Line 340”

**Prices sought:-**

Note:- The Specification requires only the peak buses to go through to High Wycombe. Off-peak options terminate at Stokenchurch with timed connections with other service although the successful tenderer could run through on a commercial basis if desired (as happens under the current contract).

- S2A Regular service (peaks plus 3 off-peak jnys e.w)
- S2B Regular service (peaks plus 2 off-peak jnys e.w)
- S2C Current level of service (peaks plus two off-peak jnys e.w - days of off-peak operation vary)
- S2D Reduced service - Peak jnys only.

S1 S2D Above combined with contract S25B

**Contract S3 (was 103): Service 108 Oxford – Forest Hill – Wheatley**

<b>Description</b>	Regular service (currently seven journeys per day) to the villages on the southern Otmoor linking them to both Oxford and Wheatley.
<b>Operator</b>	Whites Coaches
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday to Saturdays
<b>Frequency</b>	Approx hourly at peaks, two-hourly off-peaks
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	8 – Beckley with Stowood, Forest Hill with Shotover, Holton, Oxford City, (Risinghurst & Sandhills), Stanton St. John, Waterperry, Wheatley.

**Alternative services**

- a) Service 14 provides an off-peak service to Beckley
- b) Services 261, 275, 280 and U1 serve stops on the A40 near Forest Hill
- c) These routes also serve the Holton Turn and provide frequent services to Wheatley.
- d) Arriva service 261 covers the eastern end of Holton village and Waterperry

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £74,774

**Average passengers per day:** - 71

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £3.45

**Comments from consultation:-**

- Cllr Liz Brighthouse:-* Small number from Quarry use 108 – if discontinued look at taxi tokens supplied by City(?)
- Cllr Roz Smith:-* City survey shows Quarry as area of deprivation. Need service levels as now..
- Beckley:-* Peak hour 108 timings not convenient. AM bus too early and more PM jnys. needed. Residents drive to Barton or Thornhill (shuttle service already suggested) - no link to doctors in Islip.
- Forest Hill with Shotover:-* Maintain connection to/from Wheatley for doctors/shopping but discontinue Holton & Waterperry. Put Headington Quarry diversion on another contract and also serve Shotover. Not sure of merging 108 with 14 route if decrease level of service to Forest Hill
- Risinghurst & Sandhills:-* No service from the Sandhills estate for 7 years; cause of major dissatisfaction. At least twice weekly service sought. High proportion of elderly and negotiating underpass difficult.
- Stanton St John:-* Discontinue Quarry, Holton and Waterperry. Provide extra Lunchtime jny instead. Divert evening Brookes Bus to serve villages (?)
- Wheatley:-* Essential for Forest Hill./ Stanton St John passengers

**Prices sought:-**

- S3A - Existing level of service (including Quarry diversion)
- S3B – Existing level of service (excluding Quarry)
- S3C - Oxford – Forest Hill service only (with City - Quarry as separate journey)

S17 - Quarry – Headington local service.

Also see contract S8 (service 14)

Award of S3C would sever the Forest Hill – Wheatley link although options under contract S5D or S11 (Wheatley Wanderer) would offer a replacement facility.

**Contract S5 (was 105): Service 103:- Oxford – Horspath - Wheatley**

<b>Description</b>	Regular service exiting Oxford via the Cowley Road
<b>Operator</b>	Thames Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday to Saturday
<b>Frequency</b>	Hourly, daytimes
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	3 – Horspath, Oxford City, Wheatley.

**Alternative services**

- a) Route follows very frequent services between City Centre and Cowley centre
- b) X39 and 12B also serve Oxford Business Park and Watlington Road
- c) This is the only route to the outer section of Horspath Road beyond the Ring Road and to Horspath and Littlemore villages
- d) Wheatley is served by regular services on routes U1, 261, 275, 280.

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £245,459 (Combined with S110, S120)  
£255.90 per day (estimate).

**Average passengers per day:** - 191 (solo sections)

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £1.34 (Estimate)

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**Comments from consultation:-**

*Horspath:-* Last bus from Oxford (18.30 except Fri/Sat when it is 23.15) is too early. Run 23.15 every night. Routing required to get residents to Headington hospitals(?).

*Wheatley:-* Very successful service – extend to Asda with interchange with TB103/104 within Asda. Agree with extension to Great Milton for same reason. Support continuation.

**Prices sought:-**

S5A – Existing timetable hourly to Wheatley then either a through or a connectional facility to Stadhampton or Garsington (every two hours alternately) (would also cover S11)

S5B – Hourly service Oxford – Great Milton

S5C – Hourly through service Oxford – Greta Milton then two hourly alternately to Little Milton/Garsington (replaces S11)

S5D – As 5C but included two round trips Wheatley – Forest Hill for shopping purposes (vice service 108)

**Contract S9: Service 122 – Watlington – Stoke Talmage – Thame**  
**Service 124 – Watlington – Lewknor – Thame**

<b>Description</b>	Shopping service to Thame Market
<b>Operator</b>	Red Rose Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Tuesdays only
<b>Frequency</b>	One journey in each direction on route 124 AM, One journey in each direction via 122 PM
<b>Towns/Parishes served:-</b>	9 - Adwell, Lewknor, Pyrton, Shirburn, Stoke Talmage, Tetsworth, Thame , Watlington, Wheatfield

**Alternative services**

- Watlington has regular links to Oxford and Reading (M-Sat) and a shoppers service to Henley on Thurs and Sats. The Taxibus Connection currently runs Mon-Fri peaks to Lewknor/Chinnor and there are other daytime buses to/from Stokenchurch and Wallingford
- Lewknor has the 24/7, 365 days per year Tube service from the M40 interchange to Oxford and London, whilst this point is also served at present by the Connection taxibus service to/from Watlington (which also serves Pyrton and Shirburn)
- Lewknor is also served by the X32 shopper bus to/from High Wycombe on Saturdays and route M1 to Reading/Stokenchurch .Additionally route 275 also serves the Lambert Arms with links to Oxford and High Wycombe.
- Tetsworth and Postcombe are also on the 275 route.
- This is the only service to South Weston, Stoke Talmage and Wheatfield

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £76,773 (Combined with S2, S10, S28 and S29)  
£100.72 per day (estimated)

**Average passengers per day:** - 122 – 14, 124 - 34

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £2.10 (estimated)

**Comments from consultation:-**

*Cllr David Turner:-* Explore radial links between towns Thame – Wallingford – Didcot/Abingdon

*South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that 122 is only bus to Stoke Talmage and Wheatfield.

*Lewknor:-* If pressed for choice, priority to preserve 124 over M1 and 275. Disappointed to see further reductions.

*Tetsworth:-* Switch resource from 275 to 124 route (Tetsworth – Thame) instead of the 275 service. Current service unsatisfactory – morning shopping bus to Thame required. Possible ‘commuter’ service  
Alternative circular Thame – Chinnor – Postcombe – Tetsworth – Thame route

*Watlington:-* Well used, should be retained. Not averse to all following 124 route if no users of 122 variation

**Prices sought:-**

S9A - Regular service M-F (4-5jny)

S9B - Regular service M-F (but includes S10 – service 111 on Tuesdays) (as now)

S9C - Two jny each way Tuesdays only (122/124) – current service

S9D - One jny each way, Tuesdays only (Reduced service)

S16 - S9A or S9B above combined with S15 (Peak hr jny on route 340)

The award of S9A or S9B would provide a replacement service to Tetsworth and Postcombe if the 275 service (PT/S 1 or PT/S 2) is reduced to peak hour jny only.

**Contract S10: Service 111:- Chalgrove – Thame**

<b>Description</b>	Shoppers service for Thame Market.
<b>Operator</b>	Red Rose Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Tuesdays only
<b>Frequency</b>	One journey in each direction
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	6 – Chalgrove, Great Haseley, Great Milton, Little Milton, Stadhampton, Thame, - also serves Morton.

**Alternative services:-**

- a) Chalgrove and Stadhampton are served by the regular X39 service (Oxford \_ Watlington). Chalgrove also has a Friday market bus to Wallingford
- b) Stadhampton, the Haseley's and the Milton's have the TB 103 service Mon-Sat to Wheatley, with onward connections to Oxford.
- c) Milton Common is served by the 275 route to Oxford/High Wycombe.
- d) This is the only service to the village of Morton.

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £76,773 (combined with contract S2, S9, S28 and S29)  
£50.36 per day (Estimated)

**Average passengers per day:** - 17

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £2.96 (estimated)

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**Comments from consultation:-**

- Cllr David Turner:-* Service well supported – should be retained
- South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that is only bus to Morton.
- Great Haseley.:-* Needs survey showed Thame as most popular shopping destination – retain 111
- Great Milton:-* Popular service - wish to see route retained.
- Little Milton.:-* Needs survey undertaken. All users of the 111 were identified as also able to drive!

**Prices sought:-**

- S10A - One jny each way, Tuesdays (current service)
- S16 - Above combined with S9 (124) and extra jnys on 340 (S15)  
Can also be inter-worked with contract S9B or S9C

**Contract S11 (110):- Service TB103 Wheatley – Stadhampton**

**Service 104: - Wheatley – Garsington**

<b>Description</b>	Connectional taxibus service based on Wheatley with guaranteed connections with full sized bus on route 103 to/from Cowley and Oxford. Previously ran as a through service. Serves two separate routes linking a number of small settlements although both routes serve Great Milton.
<b>Operator</b>	Thames Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday to Saturday daytime only 07.30 – 18.00
<b>Frequency</b>	Broadly hourly departures from Wheatley by either route giving two frequencies to the minor villages off-peaks. One 104 peak bus runs through to/from Oxford
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	7 - Cuddesdon & Denton, Garsington, Great Haseley, Great Milton, Little Milton, Stadhampton, Wheatley

**Alternative services**

- a) The Haseley's and Milton's have a Tuesday shopping service to Thame market (S10 above).
- b) Garsington and Stadhampton are on the hourly X39 (Oxford – Watlington) service Mon-Sats.
- c) There are regular services 7 days per week to Wheatley on routes 103, 108, 261, 275, 280 and U1.
- d) This is the only service ton Denton and Cuddesdon – villages that only attained a regular bus service at the previous review..

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £245,459 (Combined with S105 and S120)  
 TB103 - £132.59 per day 104 - £130.64 per day (Estimated)

**Average passengers per day:** - TB 103 – 36, 104 – 32

**Cost per passenger journey:** - TB103 - £3.68, 104 - £4.08 (estimated)

**Comments from consultation:-**

- Cllr David Turner:-* Requests for more buses to Kings Copse Caravan site, Garsington  
 Link villages with Thornhill Park & Ride for onward connections  
 TB 103 continue as now, linking with 103  
 104 has had encouraging results and should continue as now
- South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that 104 is only bus to Cuddesdon & Denton.
- Cuddesdon & Denton PC:-* Essential for village, continue same route and frequency as now.
- Great Haseley.:-* Needs survey had poor response but bus users go to Wheatley for shopping and GP. Journey to Oxford considered slow and disliked need to change in Wheatley.
- Great Milton:-* Popular – keep minimum of two hourly. Link to Cowley Centre for shopping. Also agree link to Thornhill P & R would be useful.
- Little Milton.:-* Needs survey showed services from Little Milton not well used but important that they continue. Support extension of TB103 to Thornhill. Awareness of services in village is poor. Main centre for shopping & doctors is Wheatley but dislike change to get to Oxford.
- Stadhampton:-* Used to doctors in Wheatley.
- Wheatley PTR:-* Extend 103 to Asda with interchange with TB103/104 within Asda
- Wheatley PC:-* Divert 104 into Asda site eastbound

**Prices sought:-**

S11A – Two hourly off-peak service Wheatley – Little Milton / Forest Hill / Garsington

S11B – As S11A but includes a peak hour jny from Cuddesdon to/from Oxford (as now)



**Contract S12: Service 231 Thame - Chinnor**  
**Service 232 Thame – Princes Risborough**

<b>Description</b>	Regular link between Chinnor and Thame with some jnys to Princes Risborough for connections to High Wycombe. Certain off-peak buses serve Cotmore Gardens in Thame
<b>Operator</b>	Arriva the Shires
<b>Days of operation</b>	Mondays to Saturdays
<b>Frequency</b>	Hourly off-peak (two hourly to Princes Risborough) with peak hour shuttle Thame – Chinnor direct every 40 mins.
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	6 – Aston Rowant, Chinnor, Crowell, Sydenham, Thame, Towersey

**Alternative services**

- Chinnor has one School-day only bus direct to High Wycombe (route 331) via Bledlow Ridge wholly funded by Bucks C.C. There is a “with the flow” link to Risborough Station (Mon-Sat) – route 320- funded by Chiltern Railways. Service X32 (below) offers Saturday morning shoppers bus to High Wycombe
- This is the only bus service to Sydenham, Kingston Blount, Kingston Stert and Towersey
- Thame has regular services to Aylesbury and Oxford (the former connecting to/from Haddenham & Thame Station) plus a number of market day services from outlying villages mainly on a Tuesday

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £86,291

**Average passengers per day:** - 124

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £2.28

**Comments from consultation:-**

*South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that is only bus to Sydenham, Kingston Blount, Kingston Stert and Towersey.  
*Towersey:-* Would like hourly service during peaks and .Tuesdays for market – off peak could stay at 2 hourly as now  
*Stokenchurch & Radnage CA Forum:-* -Urge introduction of through Wycombe – Thame route. New stops would be needed at A40/B4009 junction for Lewknor Interchange.

**Prices sought:-**

S12A – Exiting service

S12B – Off-peak reduction to two-hourly throughout route (serving all villages)

S12C – OfF-peak maintained at hourly Thame - Chinnor. Princes Risborough link severed

S14 – Through service (hourly) Thame – Chinnor – High Wycombe (joint with Bucks C.C.)(Line 340)

Note: If awarded Sydenham Village and Kingston Stert would lose their services. Hourly service from Sydenham turn maintained.

S15 – Additional peak jnys Thame – Chinnor (M-F) to maintain existing level of service

S16 – S15 extra jnys on Line 340 (above) combined with Service 124 (S9A or S9B options)  
 (possibility to provide limited replacement to Sydenham village and Kingston Stert on S9 option)

**Contract S13: Service X32: Thame – Chinnor – High Wycombe**

<b>Description</b>	Shoppers service
<b>Operator</b>	Arriva the Shires
<b>Days of operation</b>	Saturdays only
<b>Frequency</b>	One journey in each direction giving 2¾ hours in High Wycombe for shopping
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	6 – Aston Rowant, Chinnor, Crowell, Lewknor, Sydenham, Thame

**Alternative services**

- a) This is the only direct bus from Thame/Chinnor to High Wycombe without changing other than a schooldays only route 331 (Chinnor – Wycombe Schools via Bledlow Ridge)
- b) Thame is linked by daily services to Aylesbury and Oxford
- c) The only other service to Chinnor is the regular 231/232 above

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £.8,700.

**Average passengers per day:** - 18

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £9.33

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**Comments from consultation:-**

*South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that is only the bus directly linking Chinnor with High Wycombe.

**Prices sought:-**

S13A – Current Service

S14 if awarded (see above S12) then this would replace this contract.

**Contract S20 (was 120) Service X39 (Part) Oxford - Watlington**  
**Service 102 Oxford – Watlington**

<b>Description</b>	Regular inter-urban service between Oxford and Watlington and the prime bus route to Watlington. Exits Oxford via the Cowley Road
<b>Operator</b>	Thames Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	X39 – Mondays to Saturday's daytime 102 – Fri/Sat evenings
<b>Frequency</b>	Hourly Mon-Sat daytime 102 runs Fri-Sat eves only with one jny to Oxford arriving 20.00 and return at 23, 15 102 diverts via Horspath village offering an evening facility on route 103 on these nights
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	7 – Chalgrove, Cuxham with Easington, Garsington, Horspath (102 only), Oxford City, Stadhampton, Watlington.

**Alternative services:-**

- a) Watlington has infrequent Mon-Sat links to Reading, Stokenchurch and Wallingford and has the peak-hour shuttle taxibus service to Lewknor interchange. Buses run to markets in Thame on Tues & Sats, and Henley on Thurs and Saturdays.
- b) Cuxham, Chalgrove and Stadhampton have a Friday market bus to Wallingford
- c) Stadhampton is on the TB103 route to/from Wheatley
- d) Garsington is on the 104 route to/from Wheatley.
- e) There are very frequent parallel routes along Cowley Road in Oxford.

**Current subsidy per annum** :- £245,459 (Combined with S105 and S110)  
X39 - £278.33 per day, 102 - £22.55 per day (Estimated)

**Average passengers per day:** - X39 – 337, 102 – 20

**Cost per passenger journey:** - X39 - £0.83 102 - £1.13 (Estimated)

**Comments from consultation:-**

- Cllr David Turner:-* Retain current service levels. Also costs of a) Sunday service, b) later bus from Oxford and later evening journeys to/.from Oxford (all nights rather than just Fri/Sat)  
Examine a through Henley service from Chalgrove / Stadhampton.  
Requests for more buses to Kings Copse Caravan site, Garsington
- Chalgrove:-* Petition received from resident August 2006 requesting eves and Suns service.  
Hourly X39 vital; support the petition for improved eves and new Sunday service on X39
- Garsington:-* Well supported Needs survey undertaken. Request for evening and Sunday services. Also the lack of service to Kings Copse.
- Stadhampton:-* Doctors in Wheatley or Berinsfield but X39 is a key service for commuting, shopping and leisure.  
Evening and Weekend jnys. would be useful. Needs survey undertaken.
- Watlington:-* Essential service and must be maintained. Improve service weekdays eves or add second later trip on 102 on Fri/Sat. Possible Sunday service (every 2 hours). Extend to Lewknor vice TB1 service?

**Prices sought:-**

- S19A – One return journey (eves) (Current level of service)  
S19B – More frequent service (up to five jnys)
- S20A - Existing service  
S20B – Two hourly service
- S22A - Sunday service – two hourly 09.00 – 17.00  
S22B – Sunday service - two hourly 09.00 – 19.00  
Note Sunday service would follow 102 route serving Horspath

**Contract S25: Service M1 Watlington – Reading**

(Extended commercially to Stokenchurch)

<b>Description</b>	Main link along the B481 road from Watlington into Reading via Nettlebed
<b>Operator</b>	Motts Coaches
<b>Days of operation</b>	Mondays to Saturdays
<b>Frequency</b>	Two jnys each way morning /early afternoon One southbound jny does not serve Kidmore End
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	12 – Highmoor, Kidmore End. Nettlebed, Rotherfield Peppard, Sonning Common, Swyncombe, Watlington Lewknor, Pyrton, Shirburn on extension to Stokenchurch

**Alternative services**

- a) Watlington has a regular service to Oxford and other links (Mon-Sat) to Wallingford and Lewknor interchange. Buses to Thame on Tues & Sats and Henley on Thurs and Sats
- b) The new 'Swyncombe Lifeline' serves Swyncombe, Park Corner and Cookley Green on Thursdays on a community Dial-a Ride type service to Henley.
- c) Nettlebed is on the regular daily 139 route (Wallingford – Henley) which is extended through to Oxford on Sundays
- d) Sonning Common has a 30 minute service (Mon-Sat daytime) to/from Reading on commercial Reading Buses routes 137/138
- e) This is the only service to Satwell, Highmoor, Kidmore End and Chalkhouse Green
- f) Numerous local services run parallel between Emmer Green, Caversham and Reading Station.

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £28,416

**Average passengers per day:** - 34 (2003 – 20)

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £2.74

**Comments from consultation:-**

*South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that is only bus to Satwell, Highmoor, Kidmore End & Chalkhouse Green.

*Highmoor:-* Needs survey showed Henley as most popular destination for shopping, Leisure and education – no link at present from Highmoor. Many respondents not aware of present M1 service.

*Kidmore End:-* Reluctant to lose service but accepts usage is low  
Suggests peak hour bus to/from Reading for commuters / schoolchildren.  
Need not be this route serving Kidmore End – could divert X40 from Cane End

*Watlington:-* Usage increasing - suggest later return jnys on Saturdays. Kidmore End loop should be dropped to the benefit of through users.

*Stokenchurch & Radnage CA Forum:-* Allow 'commercial' extension to Stokenchurch as now

**Prices sought:-**

S25A – Increased service (4 jnys each way including peaks)

S25B – Increased service (3 jnys each way)

S25C – Current level of service (2 jnys each way)

Options included reducing and or the withdrawing the diversion via Kidmore End – other options being explored (including scope of extending scheduled "Readibus" Dial-a-Ride network

**Contract S28: Service 124 Thame – Watlington – Henley**

<b>Description</b>	Saturday through route linking routes that on other days run separately – Thame To Watlington (Tues) and Watlington – Henley (Thurs)
<b>Operator</b>	Red Rose Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Saturdays only
<b>Frequency</b>	Two journeys throughout at an interval of three hours and an additional working form Watlington to Thame in the morning
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	10 - Adwell, Bix & Assendon, Henley on Thames, Lewknor, Pishill with Stonor, Pyrton, Shirburn, Tetsworth, Thame, Watlington. (Also operates in Bucks serving Northend and Turville)

**Alternative services: -**

- a) Watlington has regular links to Oxford and Reading (M-Sat) and a shoppers service to Henley on Thurs and Sats. The Taxibus Connection currently runs Mon-Fri peaks to Lewknor/Chinnor and there are other daytime buses to/from Stokenchurch and Wallingford
- b) Lewknor has the 24/7, 365 days per year Tube service from the M40 interchange to Oxford and London, whilst this point is also served at present by the Connection taxibus service to/from Watlington (which also serves Pyrton and Shirburn)
- c) Lewknor is also served by the X32 shopper bus to/from High Wycombe on Saturdays and route M1 to Reading/Stokenchurch. Additionally route 275 also serves the Lambert Arms with links to Oxford and High Wycombe.
- d) Tetsworth and Postcombe are also on the 275 route.
- e) This is the only service to South Weston on Tues and Sats.
- f) Thame has regular services to Oxford, Aylesbury, Chinnor and Princes Risborough
- g) This is the only service to Christmas Common, Stonor and Middle Assendon (together with Northend and Turville Heath in Bucks)
- h) Lower Assendon has daily service on route 139 (Wallingford – Henley) which is extended to Oxford on Sundays
- i) Henley has daily buses to Marlow, High Wycombe, Reading, Wallingford and occasional buses (Mon-Sat) to Maidenhead). There is a branch line train service to Tyxford and Reading with connections to London (daily)

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £76,773 (Combined with S2, S9, S10 & S29)  
£139.85 per day (estimate)

**Average passengers per day:** - To/from Henley 14, To/from Thame 11

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £5.59 (estimated)

**Comments from consultation:-**

- Cllr David Turner:-* Examine a through Henley service from Chalgrove / Stadhampton.
- Bix & Assendon:-* Retain Saturday service as used by more passengers (in preference to Thursdays)
- Pishill & Stonor:-* No change to Saturday service
- Watlington:-* Timings a bit unhelpful for Thame – Watlington users – possibly discontinue through service

**Prices sought:-**

- S28A – Enhanced service (two jnys each way plus two short workings)
- S28B – Current service (Two jnys each way plus one short working)
- S28C – Reduced service (Watlington – Thame only)

Note:- Contracts S9, S16 and /or S29 only cover Mon-Fri operations – this contract provides for a Saturday service over these routes

**Contract S29: Service 124:- Watlington – Henley on Thames**

<b>Description</b>	Market day service
<b>Operator</b>	Red Rose Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Thursdays ONLY
<b>Frequency</b>	Two journeys each way
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	4 - Bix & Assendon, Henley on Thames, Pishill with Stonor, Watlington. (Also operates in Bucks serving Northend and Turville)

**Alternative services: -**

- a) Watlington has regular links to Oxford and Reading (M-Sat) and a shoppers service to Henley on Thurs and Sats. The Taxibus Connection currently runs Mon-Fri peaks to Lewknor/Chinnor and there are other daytime buses to/from Stokenchurch and Wallingford
- b) This is the only service to Christmas Common, Stonor and Middle Assendon (together with Northend and Turville Heath in Bucks)
- c) Lower Assendon has daily service on route 139 (Wallingford – Henley) which is extended to Oxford on Sundays
- d) Henley has daily buses to Marlow, High Wycombe, Reading, Wallingford and occasional buses (Mon-Sat) to Maidenhead). There is a branch line train service to Tywford and Reading with connections to London (daily)
- e) The 'Swyncombe Lifeline may cover Pishill and/or Maidensgrove

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £76,773 (Combined with S2, S9, S10, & S28)  
£125.88 per day (estimated)

**Average passengers per day:** - 13 (2003 – 15)

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £9.68

**Comments from consultation:-**

- Cllr David Turner:-* Examine a through Henley service from Chalgrove / Stadhampton.
- South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that is only bus to Christmas Common, Stonor and Assendon.
- Bix & Assendon:-* Retain Saturdays, Thursdays could possibly be covered by the "Swyncombe Lifeline"  
Needs survey shows Henley as the major destination for all purposes – work, shopping, education
- Pishill & Stonor:-* Extending "lifeline" may work but not happy with axing 124 as a result.
- Watlington:-* Only weekday service to a number of villages. Brings shoppers into Watlington – maintain in some form

**Prices sought:-**

- S29A - Current service (two jnys each way)
- S29B - Reduced service (one jny each way)

Prices are also being sought for the cost of extending to orbit of the Swyncombe lifeline Dial a Ride service to include the parishes of Bix & Assendon and the provision of a larger capacity vehicle. If awarded this option would result in the loss of a Thursday service to Christmas Common. Turville Heath and Northend are in Buckinghamshire and that authority has been made award of this possible outcome and has indicated that they may seek to provide alterative facilities from their own resources. Award of S28A or S28B would maintain a Saturday service to these Parishes.

**Contract extended from 27 January 2007 to 2 June 2007**

**Contract S21: Service TB1 Watlington – Lewknor – Chinnor**

<b>Description</b>	Peak hour link to Junction 6 on the M40 connecting with the Stagecoach Tube service
<b>Operator</b>	Walters Limousines
<b>Days of operation</b>	Mondays to Fridays
<b>Frequency</b>	Five jnys each way AM and PM peak periods only
<b>Towns/Parishes served</b>	12 – Aston Rowant, Chinnor, Crowell, Kingston Blount, Lewknor, Pyrton, Shirburn, Watlington.

**Alternative services**

- Watlington has a regular service to Oxford and other links (Mon-Sat) to Wallingford and Lewknor interchange. Buses to Thame on Tues & Sats and Henley on Thurs and Sats
- Lewknor has the 24/7, 365 days per year Tube service from the M40 interchange to Oxford and London.
- Lewknor is also served by the X32 shopper bus to/from High Wycombe on Saturdays and route M1 to Reading/Stokenchurch. Additionally route 275 also serves the Lambert Arms with links to Oxford and High Wycombe.
- Chinnor has one School-day only bus direct to High Wycombe (route 331) via Bledlow Ridge wholly funded by Bucks C.C. There is a "with the flow" link to Risborough Station (Mon-Sat) – route 320- funded by Chiltern Railways. There is a regular service to/from Thame (231/232) which also goes to Princes Risborough (Off-peaks). Service X32 offers one Saturday morning shoppers' bus to High Wycombe.

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £43,040

**Average passengers per day:** - 13 (Based on one weeks data since change on 27 Jan 2007)

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £13.00

Initial indications after one week of the new pattern of service is that there are more users on the restored link from Chinnor than there were previously on the Stokenchurch Link. New contract S14 (Line 340) offers the option of an hourly link from Chinnor to the Aston Rowant / old A40 junction which is about 250metres from the Lewknor interchange stops.

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**Comments from consultation:-**

*Chalgrove:-* Few users when route ran here – a lot of villagers travel to Lewknor by car.

*Watlington:-* Retiming from Jan 27<sup>th</sup> will deter users due to first AM bus running later. Passengers lost when service decreased previously. Extend X39 in replacement? (although no convenient turning point at J6 on M40)

**Prices sought:-**

S21A – Current service

**Contract currently administered by Buckinghamshire County Council**

**Contract S8 (was 108): Service 14:- Thame – Hornton – Oxford**

(Contract awarded by Buckinghamshire County Council)

<b>Description</b>	Shoppers service from villages in Bucks and on the Otmoor to/from Headington and Oxford City
<b>Operator</b>	Heyfordian Travel
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday to Saturdays
<b>Frequency</b>	One jny in each direction
<b>Towns served</b>	7 – Beckley & Stowood, Elsfield, Horton-cum-Studley, (Old Marston), Oxford City, (Risinghurst & Sandhills), Thame

**Alternative services: -**

- a) Certain peak journeys on route 108 serve Beckley
- b) This is the only public service to Hornton-cum-Studley, and Elsfield

**Current subsidy per annum** : - £13,874 (Oxon contribution to Bucks C.C.) maximum commitment.  
= £45.50 per operating day (from which any revenue will be deducted)

**Average passengers per day:** - 6.5 (Oxon), 8.5 (whole route)

**Cost per passenger journey:** - £7.00 (excluding revenue deduction)

**Note:** Bucks C.C. retendered this contract in 2005; it currently remains a Bucks contract. Notification was given by 2 February 2007 to existing operator to terminate existing contract at 120 days notice.

**Comments from consultation:-**

*South Oxfordshire D.C.:-* Concern that is only bus to Elsfield.

*Beckley:-* Vehicle used on 14 too large – gets stuck in village on occasions. Inconvenient to access (high floor). More direct route into Oxford.

*Elsfield:-* 8 concessionary permit holders in village and regular users twice or three times per week. Very concerned at loss of service.

*Horton cum Studley:-* AM/PM peak buses to/from Oxford required or taxibus to link to 108 route/Barton/Thornhill  
Feel excluded if lost current limited 14 service – more jnys required.  
Needs survey elicited high level of response – Current route considered circuitous.

**Prices sought:-**

S8A – Existing Service amended to run Oakley – Oxford only (Note: number of days may be reduced)(renumbered 114)

S8B – As S8A but including additional journey City – Headington Quarry (replacing 1098 diversion)

S8C – Amended service incorporating 108 route. Note under this option the section of 108 via Quarry would be covered by other services as would the Holton and Wheatley links. Waterperry extension discontinued (although there are other services).

If prices received are unsatisfactory then there may be an option of continuing the existing Bucks Contract (at the existing price) although Buckinghamshire have indicated that the operator may be reluctant to do this.



**SECTION B – OTHER CONTRACTS WITH SAME TERMINATION DATE.**

**Contract W20 Service X15:- Abingdon – Witney**

<b>Description</b>	Inter urban route from Abingdon to Witney via Kingston Bagpuize and Standlake.	
<b>Operator</b>	Thames Travel	
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday to Saturdays	
<b>Frequency</b>	Hourly service each direction	
<b>Parishes served:-</b>	(10) Abingdon, Ducklington, Frilford, Fyfield with Tubney, Hardwick with Yelford, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Marcham, St. Helen Without, Standlake, Witney,	
<b>Alternative services:-</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Abingdon to Marcham is also served by Stagecoach routes 31, 32 and 33</li> <li>b) Frilford crossroads is served by Stagecoach X30 direct from Oxford as well as the 31/2/3 and all these routes continue to Wantage</li> <li>c) Southmoor and Kingston Bagpuize are served by Stagecoach route 66 (Swindon – Oxford) daily</li> <li>d) Standlake has an hourly link to Oxford (Mon-Sat) by Stagecoach service 18 which also goes to Bampton.</li> <li>e) Ducklington has an hourly service to/from Witney by Stagecoach route 19 (Mon-Sat) - note that X15 goes along the Ducklington By-pass and does not serve the village.</li> </ul>	
<b>Current subsidy per annum:-</b>	£179,603	(includes Government Grant and external funding).
<b>Average passengers per day:-</b>	420	(from survey undertaken by OCC)
<b>Cost per passenger journey:-</b>	£1.40	

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**Note:-** This service was commenced using partnership funding from a number of sources the larger portion coming from a one-off Government grant under the “Urban Challenge” programme.

**Comments from consultation:-**

*Consultation is still underway at the time of completion of this report and continues until 2 March 2007. Comments received will be summarised as part of confidential Annex 2 to be submitted to the meeting.*

**Prices sought:-**

- W20A – Existing service (hourly)
- W20B – Amended existing service (saves a bus)
- W20C – Hourly Service (M-F), Two-hourly (Sats)
- W20D – Reduced hourly service (M-F), Two-hourly (Sats)

Above based on the use of large capacity single-deck buses over Newbridge under a special “permit” to exempt buses from possible weight restrictions.

**Contract C20 Services B10/B11 Banbury – Hanwell Fields Estate**

**Description**                      Circular service from Banbury Centre to new development at Hanwell Fields either via Warwick Road or Southam Road

**Operator**                            Grayline

**Days of operation**                Monday to Saturdays

**Frequency**                         Every 40 minutes in alternate direction round the loop

**Parishes served:-**                (1) Banbury

**Alternative services:** - a) Highlands and the Hardwick Estate are served by route B8 (Stagecoach commercial operation). B8 also serves Warwick Road from Ruscote Avenue to the town centre  
 b) Warwick Road west of Ruscote Avenue has infrequent country services to Stratford on Avon (270) (which turns off at Drayton Road) or Southam.  
 c) Southam Road has only an infrequent country service to Cropredy and Farnborough (510)  
 d) This is the only service to the Hanwell Fields Estate and to the Tesco retail park.

**Current subsidy per annum:** -                £78,520 (all S106 monies from the Developers of Hanwell Fields.  
 There is a further £2080p.a. from ED contract 1262A is part of this service  
 No further funds are currently available from S106 contributions after 6/07

**Average passengers per day:** -                N/A

**Cost per passenger journey:** -                N/A

Note:- This service was commenced on 25 July 2004 using S106 monies (and following an open tendering exercise). It has been extended on an annual basis since that date (although the ED element was retendered in June2005).

**Comments from consultation:-**  
 Not applicable

**Prices sought:-**  
 If re-awarded the existing contract with Grayline would be extended for a further period. Maximum contract length is currently 5 years (i.e. until July 2009) but the next Banbury area review is due by 30 May 2009 and the intention would therefore be to extend to that date (if continued)

**SECTION C – OTHER CONTRACTS TO BE DISCUSSED**

**Cherwell Villager service 51: Banbury – North Aston – Banbury**

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<b>Operator</b>	Banburyshire Community Transport Association
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday only
<b>Frequency</b>	Two circular journeys (providing one return journey to Banbury)
<b>Parishes served</b>	9: Adderbury (including Twyford), Banbury, Barford St. John & St Michael, Deddington (Hempton), Duns Tew, Milton, North Aston, Somerton, Souldern

**Alternative services**

- Adderbury, Duns Tew and Twyford have services 59 and/or 59A to Banbury Monday to Saturday
- Adderbury, Barford St. John and St. Michael, Duns Tew, Hempton and Milton have service 90 to Banbury on Thursday
- Adderbury, Somerton and Souldern have service 81 to Banbury on Thursday, Friday and Saturday
- This is the only service to the village of North Aston

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 19 (OCC surveys), 15.8 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>	
Adderbury	nil		0.2
Banbury	nil		nil
Barford St. John & St. Michael	2	3.8	
Duns Tew	1		1.4
Hempton	nil		nil
Milton	nil		nil
North Aston	6		1.4
Somerton	nil		nil
Souldern	2		1.6
Twyford	8	7.4	

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Banbury Town Council wrote in support of the proposal to convert to dial-a-ride.

Cllr Keith Mitchell (Oxfordshire County Councillor for Bloxham) commented “Based on the data provided, it seems that there will be some losers in Adderbury on the basis of the current BCTA patronage, although it would seem that the existing alternatives provide a means of getting to Banbury, Oxford or Kidlington.

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of Cherwell Villager 51.

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**Cherwell Villager service 53: Banbury – Hornton – Banbury**

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<b>Operator</b>	Banburyshire Community Transport Association
<b>Days of operation</b>	Tuesday only
<b>Frequency</b>	Two circular journeys (providing one return journey to Banbury)
<b>Parishes served</b>	8: Banbury, Hanwell, Horley, Hornton, North Newington, Shennington with Alkerton, Shutford, Wroxton (Balscote)

**Alternative services**

- Hanwell has service 498 to Banbury on Thursday and Saturday
- Balscote and Shennington have service 270 to Banbury Monday to Saturday
- North Newington and Shutford have service 502 to Banbury on Thursday and Saturday
- This is the only service to the villages of Hornton and Horley

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 15 (OCC surveys), 11.9 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>	
Alkerton	nil		nil
Balscote	2		2.3
Banbury	nil		0.2
Hanwell	4	1.4	
Horley	nil		2.2
Hornton	8	4.8	
North Newington	1		0.9
Shutford	nil		0.1

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Horton Parish Council expressed concern that the conversion of the Cherwell Villager to dial-a-ride might adversely impact on the current users of the service, dependent on the qualifying criteria for the dial-a-ride. The dial-a-ride should be available to all villagers, or at least to all pensioners. If any general replacement service were considered it ought to operate on Thursdays rather than Tuesdays.

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of Cherwell Villager 51.

BCTA were also invited to submit a price for a Thursday bus service linking Hornton, Horley and Hanwell Turn to Banbury.

**Cherwell Villager service 54: Mollington – Banbury**

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**Operator** Banburyshire Community Transport Association  
**Days of operation** Tuesday only  
**Frequency** One return journey  
**Parishes served** 5: Banbury, Bourton, Claydon with Clattercot, Cropredy, Mollington

**Alternative services**

- All villages have service 510 to Banbury Monday to Saturday

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 6 (OCC surveys), 6.9 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>
Claydon	6	5.1
Cropredy	nil	0.4
Great Bourton	nil	nil
Little Bourton	nil	nil
Mollington	nil	1.3

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

None received.

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of Cherwell Villager 54.

**Cherwell Villager service 55: Banbury – Hook Norton – Banbury**

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**Operator** Banburyshire Community Transport Association

**Days of operation** Wednesday only

**Frequency** Two circular journeys (providing one return journey to Banbury)

**Parishes served** 5: Banbury, Hook Norton, Milcombe, Bloxham, Wigginton (passes through parish not village)

**Alternative services**

- All villages have service 488 to Banbury Monday to Saturday

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 25 (OCC surveys), 19.4 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>
Banbury	nil	nil
Bloxham	nil	nil
Hook Norton	25	19.4
Milcombe	nil	nil

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Cllr Keith Mitchell (Oxfordshire County Councillor for Bloxham) stated that “Based on the zero usage in Bloxham, Milcombe or Milton I can see no excuse for continuing a service that must carry a significant cost for very little benefit. On this basis, and subject to any comments from users or Parish Councils, I would be inclined to support the proposals put forward by Cherwell

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of Cherwell Villager 55.

**Cherwell Villager service 57: Banbury – Barfords – Banbury**

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<b>Operator</b>	Banburyshire Community Transport Association
<b>Days of operation</b>	Saturday only
<b>Frequency</b>	Two circular journeys (providing one return journey to Banbury)
<b>Parishes served</b>	6: Adderbury (including Twyford), Banbury, Barford St. John & St Michael, Bodicote, Deddington, Milton

**Alternative services**

- Adderbury, Deddington and Twyford have services 59 and/or 59A to Banbury Monday to Saturday
- Barford St. John and St. Michael, Duns Tew, Hempton and Milton have service 90 to Banbury on Thursday
- Bodicote has services B2 and B4 to Banbury daily

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 10 (OCC surveys), 15.2 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>	
Adderbury	2		0.8
Banbury	nil		0.3
Barford St. John & St. Michael	nil	3.4	
Bodicote	nil		3.5
Deddington	nil		0.1
Hempton	4		2.2
Milton	nil		nil
Twyford	4	5.0	

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Cllr Ivor Burgess (parish councillor and resident of Adderbury) offered the view that “dial-a-ride restores some small measure of independence” [to disabled and mobility-impaired people].

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of Cherwell Villager 57.

**Kidlington Lynx service: Kidlington – Church Hanborough – Kidlington**

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**Operator** Banburyshire Community Transport Association

**Days of operation** Monday only

**Frequency** Two circular journeys (providing one return journey to Kidlington)

**Parishes served** 5: Bladon, Cassington, Hanborough, Kidlington, Yarnton

**Alternative services**

- Yarnton has service 224 to Kidlington Monday to Saturday
- Bladon, Cassington, Church Hanborough and Long Hanborough don't have alternative services to Kidlington, however all have alternative services to Oxford and/or Woodstock

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 6 (OCC surveys), 11.8 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>
Bladon	nil	2.4
Cassington	2	2.4
Church Hanborough	2	2.6
Kidlington	nil	0.1
Long Hanborough	2	4.2
Yarnton	nil	nil

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Bladon Parish Council stated that they thought "it can be safely assumed that demand is very low, which I am sure is the reason for this having been mooted".

Cassington Parish Council wrote "There are at least three elderly residents in Cassington who currently use the service on a regular basis and enjoy shopping in Kidlington. They and the parish council are disappointed that this service is likely to be withdrawn".

Hanborough Parish Council reported that some disabled and mobility-impaired users might be disadvantaged [but were subsequently satisfied that the Octabus dial-a-ride in West Oxfordshire provides a suitable alternative]. The Parish Council might consider asking the County Council to provide financial support to the Lynx service.

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of this Kidlington Lynx.



**Kidlington Lynx service: Kidlington – Bletchingdon – Kidlington**

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<b>Operator</b>	Banburyshire Community Transport Association
<b>Days of operation</b>	Monday only
<b>Frequency</b>	Two circular journeys (providing one return journey to Kidlington)
<b>Parishes served</b>	6: Bletchingdon, Gosford and Water Eaton, Hampton Gay and Poyle, Kidlington, Kirtlington, Weston-on-the-Green

**Alternative services**

- There are no alternative services to Kidlington High Street from any of these villages, however all villages are served by 25 and/or 25A which provides an hourly service to Oxford and Bicester Monday to Saturday. One journey each way also serves Kidlington Garden City for Sainsbury's

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 10 (OCC surveys), 12.6 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>
Bletchingdon	6	7.4
Gosford	nil	nil
Hampton Poyle	nil	nil
Kidlington	nil	0.1
Kirtlington	4	5.0
Weston-on-the-Green	nil	0.1

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Bletchingdon Parish Council had surveyed local opinion and were concerned about the change to dial-a-ride as expressions of no confidence in the existing dial-a-ride service had been made. They felt the existing dial-a-ride had insufficient capacity to met demand. They felt that if the Kidlington Lynx service was increased and better advertised it would attract more custom.

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of this Kidlington Lynx.

**Kidlington Lynx service: Kidlington – Steeple Aston – Bicester**

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<b>Operator</b>	Banburyshire Community Transport Association
<b>Days of operation</b>	Tuesday only
<b>Frequency</b>	One return journey
<b>Parishes served</b>	7: Bicester, Kidlington, Lower Heyford, Middleton Stoney, Shipton-on-Cherwell and Thrupp, Steeple Aston, Steeple Barton

**Alternative services**

- Hopcrofts Holt, Lower Heyford, Middle Barton, Middleton Stoney and Steeple Aston have service 82 to Bicester on Friday. Lower Heyford and Middleton Stoney also have service 25A to Oxford and Bicester Monday to Saturday
- There are no alternative direct services from Kidlington or Shipton-on-Cherwell to Bicester however both parishes have services to Banbury and Oxford Monday to Saturday

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 13 (OCC surveys), 8.8 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>
Bicester	nil	nil
Hopcrofts Holt	nil	nil
Kidlington	nil	nil
Lower Heyford	2	1.9
Middle Barton	2	2.0
Middleton Stoney	2	1.8
Shipton-on-Cherwell	nil	nil
Steeple Aston	7	3.0

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

Middleton Stoney Parish Council considered that “there might well be benefit in converting the Lynx service into a dial-a-ride service, provided that other bus services in the village remain unchanged”.

Lower Heyford Parish Council had “no objections to the proposal” and was not aware of any current regular users. An article in the parish newsletter asking for anyone who would be disadvantaged to come forward brought no response.

Steeple Aston Parish Council expressed concern. Several villagers who used the Lynx regularly did not fall into the category of mobility-impaired and “would be left without their bus service”

Mr Richard Preston, of the Valentine Club, Steeple Aston, commented that “if the service is limited to people that are mobility-impaired some of our members and present users would find it hard to qualify. None the less, they do not have their own transport, many of them have no immediate relatives to assist, and they form part of our older members of the community”.

Westcott Barton Parish Council felt that the Lynx should be retained “as it is the only bus link directly to Bicester from the village”

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of this Kidlington Lynx.

**Kidlington Lynx service: Kidlington – Bletchingdon – Bicester**

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<b>Operator</b>	Banburyshire Community Transport Association
<b>Days of operation</b>	Thursday only
<b>Frequency</b>	One return journey
<b>Parishes served</b>	6: Bicester, Bletchingdon, Hampton Gay and Poyle, Kidlington, Kirtlington, Weston-on-the-Green

**Alternative services**

- All villages except Kidlington are served by 25 and/or 25A which provides an hourly service to Bicester and Oxford Monday to Saturday
- There are no alternative direct services from Kidlington to Bicester however there are other services to Banbury (Monday to Saturday) and Oxford (daily)

**Current subsidy per annum** n/a

**Average passengers per day** 12 (OCC surveys), 20.8 (BCTA records),

**Breakdown of average passenger loadings by village:**

	<u>OCC surveys</u>	<u>BCTA records</u>
Bicester	nil	nil
Bletchingdon	4	4.8
Hampton Poyle	nil	nil
Kidlington	4	9.2
Kirtlington	4	1.9
Weston-on-the-Green	nil	5.0

Note: The above figures are ticket sales by village, with returns counting as two journeys for the village

**Cost per passenger journey** n/a

**Comments from consultation**

None

**Prices sought**

BCTA were invited to submit a price for the continuation of this Kidlington Lynx..

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## **REPLACEMENT OF CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL – FUNDED BUS SERVICES BY DIAL-A-RIDE ENHANCEMENTS**

### **Introduction**

1. Since 1992 Banburyshire Community Transport Association (BCTA) has been running a number of generally-weekly bus services from a number of villages in Cherwell district (and including a small number in West Oxfordshire district), linking those villages with either Banbury, Bicester or Kidlington. These bus services have been marketed under the names “Cherwell Villager” and “Kidlington Lynx”, and have received revenue support funding from Cherwell District Council.
2. In recent years patronage of the Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services is reported to have declined and BCTA have submitted a proposal to Cherwell District Council that would see these bus services replaced by enhancements to the existing dial-a-ride services for disabled and mobility-impaired people in Cherwell District, which are part funded by Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.
3. BCTA have asked Cherwell District Council to consider the future of these services in the light of the continuing financial losses that are being incurred by BCTA, over and above the subsidy payment which Cherwell District Council is making towards them. It is reported that BCTA is unable to shoulder this loss and Cherwell District Council has indicated that it is unwilling to continue to increase its subsidy to BCTA for the services in their current form.
4. No changes to the funding support provided by Oxfordshire County Council are sought and there are not necessarily any financial implications to Oxfordshire County Council in the proposal. However, the proposed conversion of these scheduled bus services to dial-a-ride and the parallel restriction of them to disabled and mobility-impaired people, can be regarded as an effective withdrawal of bus services available to the general public.
5. For this reason the County Council has entered into its established procedures, as set out in the Bus Strategy, for the review of these ‘bus service withdrawals’ and has undertaken patronage surveys as well as consultation with parish councils. The Cabinet Member for Transport is invited to consider whether any of the Kidlington Lynx or Cherwell Villager bus services should be replaced with County Council-funded subsidised bus services.

## **'Cherwell Villager' and 'Kidlington Lynx' Services**

6. The services operate as a normal scheduled bus service, carrying members of the general public and charging a fare. Holders of Cherwell District Council concessionary bus passes are carried free of charge. The services are registered with the Traffic Commissioner and provided by BCTA under a Section 22 Permit.
7. The current funding arrangements for these services expire on 30 June 2007, but Cherwell District Council and BCTA have given notice that they wish to, in effect, convert these public bus services into door-to-door demand-responsive services for disabled and mobility-impaired people. This would be achieved by using the seven vehicle-days' worth of resources released, diverting them into enhancing the resources committed to dial-a-ride services. This, it is believed, will more effectively use these resources, as well as making the service available to users not previously served by the Villager/Lynx and also make the service available for longer operating hours and on more days per week.

## **Parishes Served and Provision of Public Transport Services**

8. Details of the affected parish areas and the alternative bus services that exist, are contained in Annex 1 to this report. The Annex also gives details of the patronage of the current Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services.
9. It is apparent that for the majority of parishes served by the Cherwell Villager or Kidlington Lynx there are already alternative bus services in existence, either provided commercially by operators or provided under contract to Oxfordshire County Council with financial support.

## **Patronage**

10. Patronage data has been supplied by BCTA in the form of a weekly summary of passenger journeys to/from each parish / village served. For the purposes of analysis this has been reduced to a month-by-month summary covering the period April 2005 to September 2006.
11. Members of the Public Transport Team have additionally undertaken on-bus patronage surveys during January 2007 as a means of comparing and validating the data supplied by BCTA. Additionally, members of the Public Transport Team were asked to assess the proportion of users of the Kidlington Lynx and Cherwell Villager services who, in their judgement, would be likely to qualify to use the proposed replacing dial-a-ride service.
12. Patronage of the Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services from some parishes is reported to be, and has been observed to be, very low – in some cases, according to BCTA, *no* passenger journeys have been recorded for the 18 months from April 2005 to September 2006.

## **Consideration of Replacement Services**

13. Information supplied by BCTA and the observations of Oxfordshire County Council surveyors suggests that the vast majority of users of the Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services are likely to qualify to use the replacing dial-a-ride service.
14. It has been assessed that only three parishes will be left with no scheduled bus service available for the general public as a result of the BCTA / Cherwell proposals. These are Hornton, Horley and North Aston parishes. In only these cases do officers feel that some form of Oxfordshire County Council-funded replacement needs to be considered.

## **Consultation**

15. Consultation letters were sent in early December 2006 to all affected Parish Councils, as well as Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and Transport For All (formerly the Committee on Inclusive Transport).
16. Additionally, in January, all County Councillors in divisions served by the Kidlington Lynx and Cherwell Villager were also asked for their views.
17. Consultation responses have been shared with Cherwell District Council.
18. Consultation responses specific to individual Cherwell Villager or Kidlington Lynx services are reported at Annex 1. Responses of a general nature have been summarised below.
19. Banbury Town Council noted that Banbury was the primary destination of the Cherwell Villager, and so it was the town's businesses that benefited from the service rather than its residents. Banbury Town Council wrote in support of the proposal to convert to dial-a-ride.
20. Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) considered that the change to dial-a-ride "to be in the best overall interest of BCTA and residents of Cherwell District unable to use conventional public transport". ORCC further stated their understanding (from BCTA) that the users of the existing services would be eligible to join the dial-a-ride scheme and consequently should not be disadvantaged. Only a couple of small settlements were not already served by alternative bus services and ORCC suggested that the eligibility criteria for using dial-a-ride in those areas be modified to permit its use by any resident.
21. Transport For All (formerly the Committee on Inclusive Transport) discussed the proposals at their meeting in February 2007 and agreed that they could be expected to be of benefit to disabled and mobility-impaired people, and accordingly supported the proposals.
22. Councillor Lawrie Stratford (Oxfordshire County Councillor for Bicester) stated that "I do appreciate why the proposal is being put forward, and I recognise the value of the more personal offering that dial-a-ride can provide". He expressed the view that "any reduction in public transport has to be weighted against the risk of more car journeys".

23. Councillor Surinder Dhesi (Oxfordshire County Councillor for Banbury: Neithrop) stated that "Dial-a-Ride is well used in Banbury and many people depend on that service. It is important that the service is available for all the elderly who may not be mobility-impaired. Councillor Dhesi felt that Oxfordshire County Council should help fund dial-a-ride services in Cherwell District. [In fact, Oxfordshire County Council does contribute financially to some of the dial-a-ride provision in Cherwell. No additional Oxfordshire County Council funding has been sought as part of the current BCTA / Cherwell District Council proposals].

### **Summary and Recommendations**

24. In the opinion of County officers, the Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services are essentially duplicated by local bus services, with only a few exceptions. It could be seen as anomalous that Cherwell District Council was financing a network of public bus services independent of the structure of supported services designed and funded by Oxfordshire County Council. In particular, part of the funding provided by Cherwell District Council was supporting the provision of bus services to a number of parishes in West Oxfordshire district. Diversion of the resources into enhancing dial-a-ride provision is arguably a more appropriate focus for Cherwell District Council financing.
25. Notwithstanding the potential financial implication for Oxfordshire County Council to have to consider funding bus services which were previously provided with Cherwell District Council funding, it is the view of officers that the proposed change of these BCTA services to dial-a-ride should be welcomed.

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

26. The financial implications will be dealt with in supplementary Annex 2. There are no staff implications.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

27. **The Cabinet Member for Transport is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) welcome the proposal by BCTA and Cherwell District Council to convert the Cherwell Villager and Kidlington Lynx services to dial-a-ride;**
  - (b) to consider whether any replacement scheduled bus services are required for any parish or group of parishes, consequent upon the conversion to dial-a-ride.**

STEVE HOWELL

Head of Transport

Background papers:

Nil

Contact Officer:

Neil Timberlake, Tel 01865-815585 January 2007

## **SIMPLIFIED, MILEAGE-BASED FARETABLES ON SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES IN OXFORDSHIRE**

### **Introduction**

1. Bus fares on commercial bus services are a matter entirely for the commercial judgement of the bus service operator concerned. Commercial services currently account for around 90% of all passenger journeys in the county. The County Council has no power to intervene in the setting of such fares. However, bus fares on services which the County Council subsidises *may* be set by the County Council, as part of the specification of the tender, against which bus operators may bid.
2. In accordance with an undertaking given in the Bus Strategy, officers have been working on a pilot proposal that would see the fares on subsidised bus services adopt a 'unified' and simplified fare-scale. Opportunity has been taken, as part of the current Area Review of bus services in Thame/Watlington/Wheatley, to develop these proposals in more detail, including the calculation of a basis on which the initial unified fare-scale might be set, and this has been subject to consultation with parish councils in the area of the current Area Review.
3. It has become clear in developing the pilot project, that a number of difficult issues exist. These are discussed later in this report.
4. In addition, bus operators have been invited to submit a 'shadow' tender price for the operation of subsidised bus services, on the basis that the unified fare-scale would apply. By comparing this 'shadow' price with the actual tender submissions received, it is hoped that it will be possible to identify whether the adoption of a unified fare-scale for subsidised bus services would provide for any significant changes in subsidy levels required of the County Council in supporting such services.
5. The outcome of this 'shadow' tendering exercise will be reported verbally to the meeting.
6. The Cabinet Member for Transport is invited to consider the response to this pilot project, and to consider officer recommendations as to future action and policy.

### **Existing County Council on Bus Fares for Subsidised Services**

7. Up to now, County Council policy on fares for subsidised bus services has been largely focussed on ensuring compatibility with commercial services.
8. On free-standing routes, operators are free to set their own fares, subject to an overall maximum for each one-mile (as-the-crow-flies) band which is set to ensure that 90% of commercial fares for that distance are lower.



9. Where the subsidised bus service is designed to supplement a commercial service, fares must be the same as the commercial service.
10. Where the subsidised bus service happens to parallel a commercial route over part of its journey, fares must be no lower than the highest commercial fares on that section.

### **Simplified Fares Structures on Local Bus Services**

11. In several urban centres outside Oxfordshire, there have been moves towards simplifying bus fares on urban networks. Easily the largest in Britain has been London, which, around a quarter of a century ago moved to a fares structure for both buses and underground services based on a series of more-or-less concentric rings.
12. Since then, commercial bus operators in such places as the West Midlands, Dundee, Bournemouth and Brighton have adopted very simple fares structures, often comprising just two or three fares.
13. The benefits of a simplified fares structure include 'de-mystifying' bus travel, offering clear, easily-understood fares, which are easy to publicise (perhaps facilitating the incorporation of fares information at bus stops alongside timetable information), reducing boarding times by simplifying (and even automating) cash transactions. Reducing boarding times at bus stops reduces overall journey times and can allow a given schedule to be operated with fewer resources and less cost to the bus operator. Studies have shown that reduced boarding time can contribute to improvements in general bus service punctuality also.
14. In 2005 The TAS Partnership Ltd. undertook, on behalf of the County Council, a study into fares and ticketing issues, which formed the basis of the Council's Fares and Ticketing Strategy. The ticketing study suggested that simpler fares structures could be encouraged on commercial services through implementing zonal fares on subsidised services. There are a number of difficulties with this approach, particularly in managing the transition from one system to another, dealing with fares increases in future and compatibility with parallel commercial services. However, consultation for the Fares & Ticketing Strategy showed support for the concept. The County Council committed itself to developing a pilot project and making this the subject of further detailed consultation.

### **Calculating a 'Unified' and Simplified Fare-Scale for Subsidised Bus Services**

15. The objective of the pilot study was to create fare-scales for each service under review, using a standard mileage basis that might in future be applied across the county to all Oxfordshire County Council-supported bus services. These services are provided by a number of bus operators, both large and small, each with varying cost-bases and existing fares structures.

16. Most current fare-scales are not strictly mileage-based, but have regard to prevailing market conditions, the presence of competing services, historic 'anomalies' and the overall commercial needs of the operator concerned. Creating a 'unified' fare-scale that would be intended to apply to all operators therefore immediately raises issues of compatibility. Moving to a firmly mileage-based fare-scale would be expected to throw-up a number of other issues, with some fares potentially rising substantially, whilst others fell.
17. The pilot study also required that a simplified fare-scale should be developed, with the number of fare 'steps' reduced and the actual fare 'steps' rounded to clear multiples or fractions of a Pound. Accordingly, a fare-scale based on 50p adult fare increments was the basis of the pilot study.
18. The approach adopted in this pilot exercise was therefore to take a sample of existing fare-tables from a number of operators, identify the range of mileages that a given fare could purchase and seek to combine these to create a 'compromise' fare-scale.
19. It was found that a given fare is capable of purchasing a wide range of journey lengths, depending on the specific bus route travelled and the operator of the service concerned. For example, based even on the limited number of existing fare-scales surveyed as the basis for the unified scale, a fare of £1.10 can buy a journey varying in length from 1.1 miles to 6.4 miles; a fare of £1.90 can buy a journey varying in length from 2.8 miles to one of 9.8 miles; a fare of £2.20 can buy a journey varying in length from 11.2 miles to one of 23.8 miles.
20. In creating a 'unified' scale the maxima and minima of journey lengths that could be purchased for each fare 'step' were plotted graphically, and a regression line produced showing the average minimum and maximum mileage of bus journey that can currently be purchased for a given fare. A further regression line, showing the approximate mid-point between the regression lines for the maxima and minima, was used to calculate the appropriate line to be used for the compilation of a unified fare-scale.
21. This regression line can be used to create a 'unified' fare scale based on any required set of fares. However, the pilot project was also to be based on simplifying the existing fares structures by introducing 50p adult single fare increments. Accordingly, points were read-off the regression line analysis that would equate to the appropriate average distances that could currently be travelled for each 50p step.
22. In this way, a mileage-based simplified fare structure was constructed on the basis of the following table of fares and mileages:

50p	up to 0.6 miles
£1.00	up to 1.5 miles
£1.50	up to 6.0 miles
£2.00	up to 8.9 miles
£2.50	up to 12.8 miles
£3.00	up to 15.0 miles
£3.50	up to 17.4 miles
£4.00	17.5 miles and over

## **Issues and Complications Attached to a 'Simplified' and 'Unified' Fare-Scale**

23. As has already been noted, most current fare-scales are not strictly mileage-based. Adopting such a basis for calculating fares would therefore be expected to create situations where existing fares could rise or fall substantially. In the former case, this could be expected to have the effect of suppressing or reducing demand for bus travel, as well as creating potentially vocal public disquiet as the new fares became apparent. In the case of situations where the fare fell substantially, this might have the effect of significantly reducing fare-box income, unless sufficient additional passengers were thereby encouraged to travel to make up for the shortfall in overall income.
24. A coarsening of the fares scales will result in fewer but larger jumps in price between fare stages. For example, if a 50p increment were adopted, a short additional length to a journey could result in a substantial increase in the fare. In the case of the proposed mileage scale, a journey of 0.6 miles would attract a fare of 50p, but the small additional journey (perhaps only to the next bus stop) involved in undertaking a journey of 0.7 miles involves the fare increasing to the next 50p increment, in this case doubling the fare charged.
25. There is a significant issue attached to what should happen when fares levels need to rise. If the basis of a simple fares structure is to be retained, this poses a number of stark choices when raising fares.
26. Essentially the options are either:
27. To keep the 50p increments, but potentially put the fares up to the next 50p step above. If a general fares increase of 10% were sought, this might mean that, for example, £1 fares would nevertheless jump 50% to £1.50; whereas £2 fares might rise 25% to £2.50; and even £3 fares would rise 16% to £3.50, and so forth.
28. To raise the baseline coarser fares levels by an appropriate amount, although this might destroy much of the simplicity of the fares structure. For example, in the case where a general 10% fares increase were sought, to raise £1 fares to £1.10; £1.50 fares to £1.65; £2 fares to £2.20, and so forth. This would retain the reduced number of different fares levels, occasioned by the coarser fare stages, but would at a stroke destroy the simplicity and the ease of paying and change-giving with as few coins as possible.
29. Keep the 50p fares increments, but reduce the size of the fare zones and thereby reduce the distance that any given fare would purchase. However, a consequence of this could mean that a journey which fell into one fare zone at, say, £1.50, could subsequently involve crossing an additional fare zone and thereby increase to £2. For example, a journey between two points at a distance of 5.8 miles would initially cost £1.50, but if the need to raise fares had reduced the maximum distance of the £1.50 fares band to 5.5 miles, then the new fare between the points 5.8 miles apart would be raised to £2.

30. There are also significant issues attached to the need to periodically re-define all the fare zones, which would be necessary with this approach.

### **Other Fares Issues Associated with a Simplified Fare Scale**

31. The purpose of having simple 50p increments in adult single fares is to make it easier to understand and remember bus fares and possibly to aid the speeding up of boarding by allowing cash fare transactions to be made with fewer coins, and with less likelihood of requiring change to be given. However, this simplicity could be clouded by consideration of what should be the corresponding child fares and return fares.
32. If adult fares are charged in increments of 50p then this implies that corresponding child fares would be in increments of 25p, if the child fare is levied at half the adult rate.
33. Return fares may be less problematical, but again may not readily lend themselves to 50p increments, as return fares (to be worthwhile from a marketing point of view) are generally somewhat less than twice the single fare, indeed may be only a little higher than the single fare in some circumstances.
34. At the present time, different operators have different charging regimes for child fares. Whilst most bus operators in Oxfordshire apply child fares to those aged between 5 and 15 years inclusive, this is not universal. Neither is there a common ratio of child fares to adult fares.
35. These were the issues that consultees were invited to comment upon.

### **Consultation**

36. Consultation letters were sent in early October 2006 to all Parish Councils affected by the Area Review of subsidised bus services in the Thame / Watlington / Wheatley area. A further consultation letter was sent to the same Parish Councils in mid December 2006, this time enclosing a sample of the 'unified' and simplified fare-tables that might be applied to bus services, and, as a comparison, copies of the existing fare-tables for those bus services. Parish Councils, as well as being invited to consider the broad issues discussed above that the adoption of such a fares policy might have, were thereby also given the option to see how this policy might, in detail, affect specific bus services with which they might be familiar.
37. Consultation responses were received from five Parish Councils and from four Parish Transport Representatives.
38. Consultation responses were not generally supportive of the proposal to move to a fares structure with 50p increments. Of the nine respondents, five were opposed, one parish council had "no strong views to communicate", two did not address the issue directly (although by implication their answers to other issues may be thought to acknowledge acceptance of the proposal) and only one respondent was unequivocally in favour.

39. In responding to the issue of how to deal with future needs to raise fares on a unified and simplified scale, Horton-cum-Studley and Little Milton parish councils preferred to see baseline fares rise by an appropriate amount, despite this destroying the initial 'simplicity' of a 50p increment scale. By contrast, the PTRs for Forest Hill and Stanton St. John both expressed support for keeping the 50p increment, but reducing the size of the fare stages.
40. Copies of consultation responses are available in the Members' Resource Centre.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

41. In the opinion of County officers, the development of the pilot project has identified that there are numerous issues attached to any move to a 'simplified' and/or 'unified' fare-scale for subsidised bus services.
42. The evidence of consultation responses to this initial pilot project suggests that, when faced with the specific issues raised, support for the concept of a simplified and unified fare-scale diminishes significantly.
43. The difficulty of resolving the many issues raised and the lack of firm consultee support for the detailed pilot study proposals, has led officers to conclude that it would not be prudent to progress the pilot of creating a simplified and unified fares structure on subsidised bus services, at least not until such time as commercial fares structures are much simplified, with perhaps a commercially-led move to a broadly zoned fares structure.

### **Financial and Staff Implications**

44. The financial implications as they relate to bus service tenders will be dealt with in the supplementary Exempt Annex 2.
45. The TAS Partnership study and report suggested that a policy of restructuring fare scales for secured services be progressed in a rolling programme accompanying the Council's Area Review process. It suggested the likelihood that "extensive consultation will need to be undertaken as part of this exercise and comparisons of 'before' and 'after' fares will need to be made".
46. To allow additional time for the consultation process, a cost allowance was suggested by The TAS Partnership as necessary for implementation of this strategy as part of each area review. It was hoped, however, that there would be some cost savings to be accrued by simplification of the fares increase process in subsequent years, although the results of the pilot leave officers to doubt that such savings can be achieved.
47. The TAS Partnership assessed that there would be an estimated set-up cost of £1,500 to £2,000 per Area Review, with operators also incurring an estimated set-up cost of £500 per Area Review. The operator cost would be largely related to re-setting electronic ticket machines to the new fare stages and incremental fare steps.

48. The TAS Partnership also assessed that the aim of the simplified and unified fares structure would aim to be revenue neutral, but that a contingency of 1% of on-bus revenue from secured services should be established to cover possible revenue shortfalls.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

49. **The Cabinet Member for Transport is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) instruct officers not to further progress any move towards simplified and 'unified' fares structures on County Council-supported bus services until such time as a much simplified fares structure had been introduced widely on commercial bus services in the county;**
  - (b) instruct officers not to accept any of the 'shadow' tenders offered on the basis of the simplified, 'unified' fares structure in the current tender round, but to continue the present policies in relation to bus fares on supported services.**

STEVE HOWELL  
Head of Transport

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Neil Timberlake, Tel 01865-815585

February 2007