

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan
Public Transport Strategy Review
Frequently Asked Questions

January 2016

Public Transport Review - Frequently Asked Questions

1.	What is public transport?	4
2.	What proportion of bus services in Wiltshire does the Council support?	4
3.	What is community transport?	4
4.	Why is public transport important?.....	5
5.	What is the role of public transport?	5
6.	What is the Public Transport Review?	6
7.	Why is Wiltshire Council reviewing its Public Transport Strategy and supported bus services?	6
8.	Are other local authorities also reviewing their bus services?	6
9.	What has already been done as part of the review?	7
10.	How has Wiltshire Council decided on the bus service options presented in this consultation?	7
11.	Why can't Wiltshire Council reduce service frequencies rather than cut whole services?	7
12.	Why can't fares be increased to remove or lessen the need for bus service cuts?	7
13.	Why can't fares be reduced to encourage more people to use bus services so removing or lessening the need for service cuts?	8
14.	Can the Council introduce a small additional charge for concessionary bus pass holders (e.g. 50p for each journey) or an annual administration charge for each pass (e.g. £10) or make them means tested?	8
15.	Why doesn't the Council seek to increase fares income through better promotion and marketing and/or by improving the attractiveness of the service to encourage greater use?	8
16.	Why not use more minibuses to save money as most rural buses have only 1 or 2 people on board?.....	8
17.	How can I find out if my bus service is being considered for a cut or reduction in service?	8
18.	What if my bus service isn't identified as being at risk?	9
19.	Will concessionary passes be affected?	9
20.	Will Community Transport services be affected by this review?.....	9
21.	Will my child's free transport to school be affected?	9
22.	What is Wiltshire Council's obligation with regard to supporting bus services?	9
23.	Isn't the Government soon to introduce changes to the way buses services are run in local areas?	10

24.	How many passengers use buses in Wiltshire and what proportion use supported bus services?	10
25.	How much does Wiltshire Council spend on supporting bus services?	10
26.	How much does it cost to subsidise each type of supported bus service?	10
27.	How much does the Council need to save from the passenger transport review?	11
28.	Why can't financial savings be made in other areas of the Council?	11
29.	What about increasing the Council Tax to help retain bus services?	11
30.	How can the Council even consider making bus service reductions when all the evidence shows that they are vital to the wellbeing of an area?	11
31.	How will Wiltshire Council assess the impacts of any bus service reductions or cuts?	12
32.	When will the Council implement any changes?	12
33.	How do I comment on the Public Transport Review?	12
34.	What is the period of the review?	13

This paper provides brief responses to some potentially 'frequently asked questions'. For further information please see the Public Consultation Paper available under the 'Supporting Documents' tab of the relevant Wiltshire Council consultation portal webpage:

Direct link:

http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal/ftp/wiltshire_local_transport_plan_-_public_transport_strategy_review

Via consultation portal front page:

<http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal>

1. What is public transport?

In Wiltshire, public transport includes buses, trains, community transport and taxis. For the purpose of this review, however, trains and taxis will only be included where they may have a significant role to play in supporting or providing an alternative to existing bus and community transport services.

2. What proportion of bus services in Wiltshire does the Council support?

In Wiltshire, roughly 50% of the bus mileage that operates in the county is operated on a commercial basis, with the other 50% operated under contract to Wiltshire Council. The following maps showing both commercial and supported bus routes are available in the Public Consultation Paper (available under the 'Supporting Documents' tab on the relevant Wiltshire Council consultation portal webpage):

- MAP 1 - Strategic bus network
- MAP 2 - Regular daytime services
- MAP 3 - Infrequent daytime services
- MAP 4 - Evening services
- MAP 5 - Sunday services

3. What is community transport?

Community transport is operated by a community or voluntary organisation. In Wiltshire there are currently two main types of scheme: community transport minibus schemes; and 'social car' (Link) schemes where volunteers provide lifts for people in need using their own private car. Community First¹ provide countywide support for existing and developing schemes.

Community First also run the countywide 'Wheels to Work' scheme, which provides affordable moped hire for predominantly young people who would otherwise not be able to access work, training or further education.

¹ <http://www.communityfirst.org.uk/>

4. Why is public transport important?

At a national level, the Campaign for Better Transport states that:

- 64% of jobseekers either have no access to a vehicle or cannot drive.
- Young people are amongst the biggest users of bus services, whilst 40% of people over 60 use the bus at least once a week.
- Passenger cars produce nearly 60% of all CO2 emissions from road transport in the UK, compared with just 5% from buses.
- If drivers switched just one in twenty five of their car journeys to bus or coach, it would mean one billion fewer car journeys per year.
- Every £1 of public investment in buses provides between £3 and £5 of wider benefits.
- Bus commuters generate £64 billion in economic output every year.

In Wiltshire, the most recent 'What matters to you survey' identified the following:

- 47.4% of respondents think that traffic volumes are one of the main threats to the environment in Wiltshire.
- 33.5% of respondents think the level of traffic congestion in their area needs improving.
- 28.6% of respondents think the level of public transport in their area needs improving.
- 24.2% of respondents think the level of public transport is one of the most important things in making somewhere a good place to live.
- 92.2% of respondents think the same (62.3%) or more (29.9%) should be spent on transport coordination and bus services.

5. What is the role of public transport?

- **Reduces reliance on the car.** Public transport provides an alternative to travel by car.
- **Provides benefits to individuals and communities.** Public transport provides access to jobs and essential services especially for those people who do not have use of a car.
- **Reduces traffic congestion and travel times.** Public transport has the capacity to transfer large numbers of people who might otherwise travel by car.
- **Provides economic opportunities.** Public transport increases access options to employment sites and provides bus services to new housing sites.
- **Reduces air pollution and greenhouse gases.** Public transport can produce less air pollution and greenhouse gases per passenger kilometre travelled compared to cars.

6. What is the Public Transport Review?

Wiltshire Council is embarking on a review of the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) Public Transport Strategy² and its service delivery (i.e. Wiltshire Council supported bus services).

The review of the Public Transport Strategy is part of a wider review of all areas of Wiltshire Council's passenger transport remit (except rail and taxis). The wider review will include re-examining policy and spending in home-to-school and college transport, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transport and social care client transport.

We are keen to hear the views of residents, stakeholders and other interested parties to help us shape the new strategy. The Council has made no decisions at this stage and would like to see how far you agree or disagree with the options presented in the accompanying questionnaire.

7. Why is Wiltshire Council reviewing its Public Transport Strategy and supported bus services?

We are embarking on a review of the Public Transport Strategy and its service delivery (i.e. supported bus services) because of the increasing and ongoing pressures on Wiltshire Council's budget and demand for its services. The Council's Business Plan³ sets out that we need to manage savings of at least £120 million over the period 2013 to 2017 (made up of projected cuts to the Council's funding and an increase in demand for the Council's services). This is on top of significant reductions in spending that have already been achieved in recent years.

8. Are other local authorities also reviewing their bus services?

Wiltshire Council is not alone in facing financial pressures and in needing to consider further passenger transport budget savings. Many other local authorities have also made savings and reductions to bus services, as identified by the Campaign for Better Transport⁴:

"Our research shows that this year [2015/16] 63 per cent of local authorities in England and Wales have cut funding for bus services, whilst 44 per cent have reduced or withdrawn services. Since 2010-11 over 2,400 bus services have been reduced, altered or withdrawn altogether across England and Wales. Since 2010-11 the total cuts to supported bus services in England and Wales is £78.1 million, a reduction of 25 per cent".

²

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/howthecouncilworks/plansstrategiespolicies/transportpoliciesandstrategies/localtransportplan3.htm>

³ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/howthecouncilworks/businessplanandperformance.htm>

⁴ <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/buses/blog/our-buses-are-crisis>

9. What has already been done as part of the review?

A pre-consultation exercise was run between 8 July and 31 August 2015. Through questionnaire responses and five workshops, this provided key stakeholders and partners with an opportunity to shape the scope of the review.

In brief, the key points that came out of the pre-consultation exercise are as follows:

- The overall feedback highlighted the importance of bus services to users, communities and public sector service providers (e.g. health).
- Community transport will not be able to provide transport alternatives on any significant scale.
- There is little scope to make currently supported bus services commercial.
- There were no new 'big ideas' suggested that would make significant financial savings within the necessary timeframe.
- There is limited potential for further savings in other areas of the Council's public transport budgets.

Further information on the pre-consultation can be viewed on Wiltshire Council's website⁵.

10. How has Wiltshire Council decided on the bus service options presented in this consultation?

Given the outcome of the pre-consultation (see Question 9), reductions in supported bus services are considered the only realistic way to achieve significant financial savings. However, the Council has made no decisions at this stage and would like to see how far you agree or disagree with the options presented in the accompanying questionnaire.

11. Why can't Wiltshire Council reduce service frequencies rather than cut whole services?

Over the last few years the Council has undertaken a rolling programme of reviews of supported bus services which have achieved substantial savings by reducing frequencies particularly on services which are relatively poorly used or expensive to provide. This programme is now virtually complete. Therefore, achieving significant further savings will need a new approach based on reducing the number of buses and drivers required.

12. Why can't fares be increased to remove or lessen the need for bus service cuts?

This would need careful consideration as, apart from the possible impact on affordability for some users, it would increase the cost to the Council of concessionary fares reimbursement payments to the operators. The concessionary fare scheme costs Wiltshire Council around £4.3m per year. This equates to around £1.06 every time a concessionary pass is used (the cost is largely calculated on the number of passengers who access a given service and the average fare price for that service). Therefore, an increase in the fares or the number of

⁵

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/howthecouncilworks/plansstrategiespolicies/transportpoliciesandstrategies/localtransportplan3.htm>

passengers generally increases the cost Wiltshire Council has to reimburse the bus operator. There would also need to be a re-negotiation of operating contracts as most are awarded on a 'net cost' basis under which the Council pays a fixed contract price and the operator keeps the revenue.

13. Why can't fares be reduced to encourage more people to use bus services so removing or lessening the need for service cuts?

The experience of bus operators is that any additional patronage would generally not be sufficient to offset the impact on income levels as a result of lower fares. This is particularly the case on services where the frequency is not sufficient to make the service attractive to current non-users.

14. Can the Council introduce a small additional charge for concessionary bus pass holders (e.g. 50p for each journey) or an annual administration charge for each pass (e.g. £10) or make them means tested?

This is not allowed by Government legislation. A number of local authorities, including Wiltshire Council, and other bodies have lobbied the Government on this matter but have been informed that there are no plans to review the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme at this time.

15. Why doesn't the Council seek to increase fares income through better promotion and marketing and/or by improving the attractiveness of the service to encourage greater use?

Unfortunately, for the majority of supported services this is not a realistic option as the likely increase in patronage would not be enough to generate savings of the magnitude that will be required, particularly as a high proportion of users are bus pass holders who do not pay a fare.

16. Why not use more minibuses to save money as most rural buses have only 1 or 2 people on board?

Council contracts do not require an operator to use a larger vehicle than required to carry the maximum expected load. However, operators often choose to use the same vehicle throughout the day as it would add to their costs to have a smaller vehicle available for use just in the middle of the day. Fuel and direct operating costs are only a small proportion of overall costs, so the saving from using a small vehicle would be outweighed by costs of having a larger fleet.

17. How can I find out if my bus service is being considered for a cut or reduction in service?

The Council has consulted with stakeholders and partners, and used its own experience and that of other councils to develop a number of options to make financial savings. As there will

be many combinations of bus service changes possible, the Council has not yet determined what these service changes may be and is asking for responses to the options shown in the accompanying questionnaire to help guide decisions. There are, however, tables available under the 'Supporting Documents' tab of the relevant Wiltshire Council consultation portal webpage showing services at risk. These tables are also shown in the questionnaire.

18. What if my bus service isn't identified as being at risk?

All bus services that are supported financially by Wiltshire Council will be subject to review. If a bus service that you use regularly is not listed, it will most likely be a commercial service and therefore not subject to this review.

19. Will concessionary passes be affected?

No. Free bus travel is available for older and disabled people under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. There is a statutory entitlement to free off peak travel on local bus services anywhere in England between the hours of 9.30am and 11pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and bank holidays. Additionally, in Wiltshire it gives free travel on buses after 11pm (where these operate) and on certain infrequent bus services it can be used from an earlier time than 9.30am.

20. Will Community Transport services be affected by this review?

We are not proposing any changes at present. Community Transport has an important role to play and we are considering its contribution, where it might grow and how, and how to get best value as part of this review.

21. Will my child's free transport to school be affected?

No. Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for those students who are entitled under the scheme. Where services are changed, it may mean that the current transport arrangements alter, but you will be informed of any changes in good time.

22. What is Wiltshire Council's obligation with regard to supporting bus services?

Since the 1985 Transport Act, which deregulated and privatised the bus industry, local bus services have been provided by private bus companies on a commercial basis where they are commercially viable. These commercial services do not receive any financial support from Wiltshire Council and it has no control over the service that is provided. Commercial services are therefore not subject to this review.

Local authorities like Wiltshire Council do, however, have a duty to consider whether there are transport needs that are not served by the commercial network, and whether to secure additional services to meet these needs. There is no statutory duty to actually secure these additional services. In most circumstances, supported services are secured through

competitive tendering and a contract awarded to the operator who offers the most advantageous bid.

23. Isn't the Government soon to introduce changes to the way buses services are run in local areas?

A Buses Bill was announced by the new Government as part of the Queen's Speech in May 2015. The intention is that the Bill will be introduced to Parliament before the end of the current 2015/16 session.

At the same time, the Department for Transport has instigated a number of Total Transport pilots across the country which will run for up to two years. Total Transport involves better integrating transport services that are currently commissioned by different central and local government agencies - and delivered by different operators.

While the outputs from the above processes may be significant in the medium-term, they are unlikely to be relevant in the short-term when the Council needs to make its financial savings.

24. How many passengers use buses in Wiltshire and what proportion use supported bus services?

Overall, 9.27 million bus passenger journeys were made in Wiltshire in 2014/15. Of these, 2.5 million were on services operated under contract to the Council.

25. How much does Wiltshire Council spend on supporting bus services?

In the 2014/15 financial year, Wiltshire Council spent £5.1 million on supported bus services, plus a further £984,500 of funding provided by central government to replace the Bus Service Operators Grant that it used to pay directly to the operators.

The Council also spent £381,600 in 2014/15 on support for community and voluntary transport. This provided grants to support the operation of existing community transport minibuses, voluntary car and Link schemes, and also funding for staff in the voluntary sector who work with community groups to support and maintain their activities and to assist them to expand.

26. How much does it cost to subsidise each type of supported bus service?

A breakdown of the current costs of all Council funded bus service contracts is included as Appendix 1 in the Public Consultation Paper (available under the 'Supporting Documents' tab on the relevant Wiltshire Council consultation portal webpage)

The following table provides a summary.

Costs and use of supported bus services

	Cost to bus support budget (£pa)	Annual passenger journeys (2014/15)	Average cost per passenger journey (£)
Interurban (strategic network) routes – daytimes (10 contracts)	£788,650	464,551	£1.63 (note a)
Town / city services – daytimes (18 contracts)	£1,014,190	654,206	£1.55
Rural regular services (27 contracts)	£2,175,360	888,436	£2.42 (note a)
Rural infrequent services (25 contracts)	£294,310	75,969	£3.86 (note a)
Evening services (10 contracts)	£639,080	328,245	£1.95
Sunday services (7 contracts)	£165,180	144,783	£1.14
TOTALS	£5,076,770	2,556,190	£1.98 (note a)

Note (a) – adjusted for services where passenger data not available

27. How much does the Council need to save from the passenger transport review?

The Council outlined a saving of £2.5 million in its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

28. Why can't financial savings be made in other areas of the Council?

Although the importance of good passenger transport services is recognised, Wiltshire Council faces significant budget constraints. Over the next few years we will have to manage savings of at least £120 million. The Council's Passenger Transport Unit and the services it provides will have to bear its share of these savings.

29. What about increasing the Council Tax to help retain bus services?

The Council faces financial pressures from reduced funding from central Government and demand led pressures in several of its services (e.g. increased numbers within the care sector). If the Council Tax was raised, this would not close the Council's budget gap; there would still be savings required to ensure a balanced budget in 2016/17.

30. How can the Council even consider making bus service reductions when all the evidence shows that they are vital to the wellbeing of an area?

It is acknowledged that the available evidence highlights that public transport plays a key role in delivering a variety of economic, social and environmental objectives. However, because there is no statutory duty to provide any specified minimum level of bus service

provision, and because of the enormous pressure on local authority budgets from central Government spending cuts and the increase in demand for services, councils across the country are being forced to make ever larger cuts in public transport provision.

31. How will Wiltshire Council assess the impacts of any bus service reductions or cuts?

It is accepted that each of the bus service options would likely have an adverse impact on a number of economic, social and environmental objectives. It is also acknowledged that any financial savings from reducing bus services could be offset, at least partly, by as yet unknown impacts on other Wiltshire Council and public sector budgets (social care, health, etc).

Supporting documents including the Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment have been developed to inform the review and the Council's Cabinet in making its decision. These documents can be viewed under the 'Supporting Documents' tab on the relevant Wiltshire Council consultation portal webpage.

32. When will the Council implement any changes?

The findings of the review and public consultation will be reported to the Council's Cabinet in the summer of 2016. It will then be necessary to design and develop detailed implementation proposals. The timescale for this will depend on the nature of the changes approved by Cabinet and the lead time necessary for their implementation.

33. How do I comment on the Public Transport Review?

Our preferred method to receive comments is through completion of the on-line electronic questionnaire – see:

Direct link:

http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal/ltpr/wiltshire_local_transport_plan_-_public_transport_strategy_review

Via consultation portal front page:

<http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal>

(Please note that there is no requirement to register or log-in to the portal to respond through the on-line questionnaire).

Paper copies of the questionnaire are also available on request by phoning the number below. Copies of the questionnaire and the public consultation document will also be available on buses operating Wiltshire Council contracted services, in libraries, and in Council hubs (Monkton Park in Chippenham, Snuff Street in Devizes, Bourne Hill in Salisbury, and County Hall in Trowbridge).

Consultation documents can be viewed under the 'Supporting Documents' tab at the bottom of the relevant Wiltshire Council consultation portal webpage.

Please return your completed questionnaire by post, by email to the address below or by handing in at a library or Council hub.

If you have any queries, please contact us using these details:

Public Transport Survey
Passenger Transport Unit
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

Tel. No. 0300 456 0100

By email to: passengertransport@wiltshire.gov.uk

To speak to someone in the Council's Passenger Transport Unit please call - 01225 713454

34. What is the period of the review?

The consultation period is from the 11 January to 5pm on 4 April 2016.