

11 OLD WINDSOR BUS SERVICE PETITION

CABINET: 24TH OF JULY 2008

MEMBER REPORTING: COUNCILLOR RAYNER, LEAD MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider a petition containing 571 signatures presented to Council on 22nd April 2008 by Cllr Beer stating:

“We the undersigned urgently request that the Borough Council/First Group reinstate the '43' bus route along Burfield Road/St Luke's Road. The removal of this service has restricted the independence of many parishioners that live to the west of Straight Road.”

2. MEMBER'S RECOMMENDATION: That

- (i) **The Royal Borough works closely with Ward Members and the Parish Council to identify those vulnerable residents that have been disadvantaged - to identify transport needs and identify potential alternative arrangements**
- (ii) **The passenger transport team review the information and recommend alternative transport methods.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Wards Affected

Old Windsor.

3.2 Relevant Matters Upon Which Decision is Based & Reasons Supporting Recommendation

The 71 superseded the 41/43 service, and resulted in the removal of part of the route which served Burfield Road and St Luke's Road in Old Windsor.

The 43 service was operated by the First Group as part of the 41/43 service from Slough to Staines, via Windsor and Old Windsor. The 43 element of the route served Burfield Road and St Luke's Road in Old Windsor once an hour, where as the 41 went down Straight Road in Old Windsor. The service operated Monday to Saturday from approximately 7 am to 7 pm, and limited service on a Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm. The 41/43 service was operated on a commercial basis.

The 71 service is operated by the First Group on a commercial basis with no financial support from RBWM. The route is Slough – Windsor – Old Windsor – Staines – Heathrow terminal 5. The service operates offers longer operating hours 7 days a week, and a direct link to Heathrow Airport, overall a far better service than the 41/43 route offered. Though some residents living in the areas off Burfield Road / St Luke's Road have been disadvantaged, residents living on, or to the East of, Straight Road now have a half hourly bus service.

Bus services are run on 3 levels of financial support from local authorities:

- Contracted - the council tenders, contracts and pays for the complete service
- De-minimus agreement – the council contributes to a specific part of the route i.e. early mornings, Sundays or evening services (maximum £30k per route per annum)
- Commercial – the service is operated at the bus companies own commercial risk

- 3.2.1 The First Group indicated to the council their intention to withdraw the Burfield Road / St Luke's Road service at a liaison meeting in November 2007. First had carried out surveys of the number of passengers accessing the service in the area, and the numbers were very low. The surveys showed that on some days the number of passengers accessing the service was 8 or less. There were also problems with traffic congestion along Burfield Road, which caused the buses to occasionally run late. At the meeting, council officers raised objections to the withdrawal of this section of the route. As the service is operated on a commercial basis, this reduces the level of influence the council has.
- 3.2.2 The local ward members were informed of the proposed changes, and initially supported the service enhancements of a 7 days a week direct and reliable service to Heathrow. As news of the service change came into the local community, the changes were not well received by some residents, and a local ward member reported these back.
- 3.2.3 During further talks with the First Group, council officers ascertained that First would not reinstate the withdrawn section of the route, even if there was the offer of a financial contribution to the service. Their reluctance was based on the delays to the service caused by the traffic congestion on the route generated by indiscriminate parking and the presence of traffic calming, leading to an unreliable service for the majority of passengers.
- 3.2.4 The service change took place on the 22nd of March 2008 and the councils passenger transport team received 4 phone calls concerning the service, of these 2 were complaints that individuals would have to walk further to catch the bus, 1 was requesting an additional island crossing point be put on Straight Road to assist with crossing the road, and 1 was to say how pleased the individual was that all the buses will be going down Straight Road.

Residents affected by the service change

- 3.2.5 It is recognised that there are a very small proportion of residents who will have been affected by the withdrawal of the bus service in Burfield Road / St Luke's Road, but until the numbers are known it is difficult to evaluate the need for any alternative transport. The Royal Borough will work closely with Ward Members and the Parish Council to identify those vulnerable residents that have been disadvantaged to identify potential alternative transport arrangements.
- 3.2.6 Older residents who have mobility problems and cannot walk to Straight Road to catch the 71 service may find it easier to use the borough's dial a ride service, operated by People 2 Places.
- 3.2.7 The petition also raised a specific issue with relation to home to school transport and it should be noted that, the council's home to school transport guidelines state that mainstream pupils issued with a season ticket for local coach and bus services are expected to walk up to one mile to a bus stop. No Old Windsor pupils currently issued with a season ticket are further than one mile from a bus stop. The guidelines also state that pupils are expected to be "accompanied by a responsible adult where appropriate", to ensure the safety of the pupil.

3.2.8 There are pelican crossings on Straight Road by the junction with St Lukes Road and Ricardo Road to assist people to cross the road safely. Preliminary work is currently being carried out on the provision of 2 additional refuges along Straight Road to facilitate safer crossing for all pedestrians.

3.3 Options Available and Risk Assessment

	Option	Comments
1.	The Royal Borough will work closely with Ward Members and the Parish Council to identify those vulnerable residents that have been disadvantaged to identify transport needs and identify potential alternative transport arrangements.	The passenger transport team would seek the assistance of local ward members and the Parish Council
2.	Introduce a council funded bus service to provide transport for Old Windsor residents who live in the Burfield Road / St Luke's Road area	Could possibly undermine the commercial viability of the 71 route, and would potentially be poor value for money.
3.	Do nothing	This is not recommended

The possible risks associated with this report are:

- Burfield Road / St Luke's Road residents with mobility problems may not be able to access bus services on Straight Road.
- There may be dissatisfaction from local ward members and residents because the 43 service will not be reinstated.

3.3.1 Reasons supporting recommendation:

- A transport needs survey would identify any residents who cannot access the 71 service on Straight Road, and alternative transport options could be recommended i.e. People 2 Places for passengers with mobility problems
- If the council were to fund a limited bus service for residents in the areas off Burfield Road / St Luke's Road, this may reduce the commercial viability of the 71, something that is specifically against the guidance in the 1985 Transport Act. The cost of introducing such a service would probably exceed the council's maximum subsidy of £3.50 per passenger journey.
- The majority of Old Windsor residents have benefited from an improved service since the introduction of the 71 service.

3.4 Relevant National/Regional Guidance

- The Transport Act 1985

3.5 Relevant Council Policies/Strategies

The recommendations contained in this report contribute to the Community Strategy in the following ways:

The Local Transport Plan

The recommendations contained in this report also contribute to the Community Strategy in the following ways:

	Relevant? Yes / No
Key Themes:	
Supporting Children & Younger People	Yes
Supporting Adults & Older People	Yes
A Thriving, Cleaner, Greener Borough	Yes
Safer & Stronger Communities	Yes

4. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

As the council has minimal influence over a commercially operated bus service, no consultation was carried out.

There is no obligation for the bus operator, First, to carry out any consultation process.

5. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

TBA – (Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny 30/06/2008)

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

If the council were to introduce a one return journey per day minibus service for residents of Burfield Road / St Luke's Road from Old Windsor to Windsor, the potential cost could be in the order of £15,500 per annum.

There is currently no budget allocation to meet these additional costs.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Rights Act

In terms of the Human Rights Act, the recommendations in this report have no negative implications.

6.4 Planning

None required

6.5 Sustainable Development

Improved public transport discourages private car use which has positive effects on sustainability.

6.6 Diversity and Equality

“In terms of the Council’s Equality Impact Assessment Policy, the recommendations in this report have no negative equality and diversity implications.”

Background Papers:

None

