

Public Transport

Keynsham Civic Centre, Market Walk, Keynsham, BS31 1FS
Minicom: 01225 394166 Council Connect: 01225 39 40 41
www.bathnes.gov.uk

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Our ref:
Direct line: 01225 477604
Fax:
Email: richard_smith@bathnes.gov.uk

Stakeholder Consultation
Bath and North East Somerset

Dear Sirs

Re: Contracts for supported bus services

The Council funds a number of supported bus services under contracts that are due to end during 2018. The management of these contracts is jointly undertaken by Bath & North East Somerset Council and the West of England Combined Authority. The Council faces severe limitations in its income and is therefore considering whether to extend these contracts, or to make changes to services to reduce the costs of operation.

To help inform and advise any decisions on the future of these contracts we are therefore inviting the views of Councillors, Parish and Town councils, operators, residents, users, and other stakeholders as to the best and most appropriate way to proceed. The responses will further help us develop the detail of specifications for any contracts that are retendered.

The services concerned are:

- Services 2, 6A, 8, 9, 265:** Evening Services in Bath
- Service 20A/C:** Bath Circular services
- Service 82/82A:** Paulton – Westfield – Radstock Tynning
- Service 172:** Bath – Midsomer Norton – Paulton (evenings)
- Service 179:** Bath – Timsbury – Radstock – Writhlington (evenings and Sundays)
- Service 672 & 67:** Blagdon- Bristol via Bishop Sutton, Chew Magna, and Dundry
- Service 768:** Clutton – Radstock – Timsbury – Englishcombe - Bath
- Service A4:** Early morning service from Chandag Estate in Keynsham

A separate schedule is provided for each service. Contracts are either net subsidy contracts where revenue is retained by the operator; or gross cost contracts where the Council retains the revenue. In either case the net cost to the Council is quoted, along with patronage and revenue data where available. The revenue data is based on the actual cash revenue and an approximation of the concessionary revenue from the Diamond travelcard scheme.

Specific issues in respect of each service are detailed in the individual schedules. For all services the Council intends that fares will be aligned with commercial fare levels elsewhere in the area. All consultees are invited to submit their views on these specific issues, as well as to timetabling, routing, frequency, or any other matter affecting one or more of the individual services.

Whereas bus operators are under no obligation to consult users before making changes to their commercial network, the Council is keen to hear the views of users on the services it supports financially, to help inform its decisions.

The Council has not completed its budget round for 2018/19 and there can be no certainty as to whether all or any of the services will be able to be retained in their current form.

Please could you submit any comments, proposals, or suggestions not later than **Wednesday 31st January 2018**, to public_transport@bathnes.gov.uk so that these can be considered when decisions are made on the future of the services and tender specifications drawn up.

As a result of all these consultations the detail of any contracts to be let may differ from the services in operation at present. If contracts are retendered it is anticipated that the formal Invitations to Tender will be published in March 2018.

I look forward to receiving your advice and suggestions. Please note that this consultation will also be published on the Council website, and advertised on vehicles operating the services where this is practicable.

Yours faithfully

Richard Smith
Senior Public Transport Officer
Public Transport

Service 2, 6A, 8, 9, and 265 in Bath (Evenings)

The Council supports evening journeys (Mon-Sat) within Bath to

- Combe Down (2): see [First Service 2.pdf](#) for route map and timetable
- Larkhall and Fairfield Park (6A), see [First Service 6 6A 7.pdf](#) for route map and timetable
- Kingsway (8); see: [First Service 8.pdf](#) for route map and timetable
- Upper Weston (9); see: [First Service 9.pdf](#) for route map and timetable

Two buses are used to provide the services.

B&NES also supports evening services to Bathampton through a contribution to a contract let by Wiltshire Council on service 265. This requires the evening 265 service to divert via Bathampton village.

B&NES contract 2, 6A, 8, 9	
Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£31,360
Patronage (estimated)	34,000
Concession journeys %	20%
Cost per passenger journey	£0.92

Daytime buses on these services are operated commercially and not affected by this.

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs.

Around half of customers on the services use tickets that are pre-purchased from the operator. The Council considers that a reduced level of service may be commercially viable.

Some journeys on the services can be made directly on other commercial evening bus services; whilst other journeys may be feasible using a combination of walking and other commercial bus services.

Options include:

1. Reduction of the level of supported service to that which can be provided by one vehicle
2. Withdrawal of financial support to allow flexibility in the level of commercial replacement by operators.
3. Withdrawal of the contribution to the evening 265 service with the loss of the service via Bathampton village.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 20A/C: Bath Circular services

The route map and current timetable are at: [B&NES service 20A/C.pdf](#) . The service is operated by Wessex under the terms of a net subsidy contract.

The Council supports an hourly service around the entire route in each direction (Monday – Saturday). This is supplemented by an additional vehicle that increases the frequency of service to half hourly between Twerton Parade and Bath University on weekdays during University terms. There is no evening or Sunday service. This service requires 4 buses in total.

The Council funds some students to travel on the service between Weston and Ralph Allen school, but most students use other services that are operated commercially.

Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£249,578
Annual Patronage	155,642
Concession journeys %	30%
Cost per passenger journey	£1.61

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs.

The 20A/C contract is the largest single financial commitment to supported bus services made by the Council and options are therefore being considered as to how the overall cost could be reduced.

Options include:

1. Re-routing of the service to operate via Bath Western Riverside between Windsor Bridge and Brougham Hayes. This would provide access benefits for residents of BWR and potentially attract more customers to the service. We anticipate that access through BWR will be available for buses by summer 2018.
2. Re-structuring the service into smaller elements more related to passenger usage of the services. This might include:
 - A half hourly service between the University and Twerton
 - A reduced frequency of service (every 90 minutes rather than hourly) on Widcombe Hill, Julian Road and Weston Road.
 - Removal of services on the section of route Twerton - Oldfield Park – RUH where there are commercially operated alternatives.
3. Removal of the service in its entirety, allowing commercial operators to develop replacement services where they feel this is feasible (e.g. potentially between the University and Twerton). The Council would then

have the option of restoring some services where this is not commercially viable.

Option 1 would reduce the cost of the service by increasing fare income.

Options 2 and 3 above would reduce the number of vehicles required to operate the service, reduce costs, and potentially improve reliability on individual sections of route because the impact of delays on one section of route would be localised.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 82/82A Paulton – Radstock Tynning via Westfield

The Council supports a daytime (Mon-Fri) service that provides links between:

- Residential areas in Paulton and
- Midsomer Norton
- Residential areas in Westfield
- Radstock and Radstock Tynning

The route timetable is at: [Frome Minibus 82 timetable.pdf](#)

The service is operated by Frome Minibuses under a net subsidy contract

Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£27,249
Patronage (estimated)	32,000
Concession journeys %	75%
Cost per passenger journey	£0.84

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs.

The service operates close to main roads that are served by established commercial services and many passengers could access these services instead.

Options include:

1. Withdrawal of the service
2. Replacement by re-routing of services 414 and 424 to serve Westfield estates and Radstock Tynning (as operated on Saturdays)
3. Retaining elements of the service by linking to housing developments where developer support is available.
4. Replacement in part by development of Farecar (shared taxi services) for Radstock area

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 172 Bath - Paulton via Peasedown St John and Midsomer Norton

The Council supports late evening journeys after 2100 (Mon-Sun) between Bath and Paulton via Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Route map and timetable details are at: [First Mendip Explorer.pdf](#). The subsidy funds 4 departures from Bath (Mon-Sat) and 2 departures on Sunday together with 3 departure (Mon-Sat) and 1 (Sun) in the opposite direction. Two buses are used to provide the service each evening.

Services are operated by First under separate arrangements for Monday-Saturday and Sunday

Monday – Saturday evenings	
Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£40,195
Patronage (estimated)	36,880
Concession journeys %	11%
Cost per passenger journey	£1.09

Sunday evenings	
Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£9,788
Patronage (estimated)	2,990
Concession journeys %	12%
Cost per passenger journey	£3.27

The daytime 172 service is operated commercially and is not affected by this.

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs.

More than half of customers on the services use tickets that are pre-purchased from the operator. The Council considers it likely that the service may be commercially viable, at least on some evenings during the week.

Options include:

1. Reduction of the level of supported service to that which can be provided by one vehicle each day.
2. Withdrawal of financial support to allow flexibility in the level of commercial replacement by operators.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 179 Bath - Writhlington via Timsbury, Farmborough, Paulton and Midsomer Norton

The Council supports a full Sunday timetable and evening journeys (Mon-Sat) between Bath and Writhlington via Timsbury, Farmborough, Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Route map and timetable details are at: [First Service 179.pdf](#). Separate arrangements apply for each of the Sunday service; the evening departure from Bath at 19:40 (Mon-Sat); and the later departure at 23:00 on Fridays and Saturdays only.

Sunday services	
Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£10,000
Patronage (estimated)	3,900
Concession journeys %	35%
Cost per passenger journey	£2.54

Monday – Saturday evenings 19:40 departure	
Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£21,675
Patronage (estimated)	2,035
Concession journeys %	16%
Cost per passenger journey	£10.67

Friday & Saturday evenings 23:00 departure	
Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£14,872
Patronage (estimated)	905
Concession journeys %	14%
Cost per passenger journey	£16.44

The daytime 179 service is operated commercially and is not affected by this.

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs.

In light of the cost the Council pays for each passenger journey the evening services are considered to represent very poor value for money. It is not considered likely that any commercial level of direct service would be feasible but more complex journeys (changing at Radstock to service 178) would allow passengers travelling from Bath at 19:30 to return to Hallatrow, High Littleton, Farmborough and Timsbury.

Options include:

1. Re-tendering of Sunday services with a view to retaining the service subject to the prices received from operators.
2. Withdrawal of evening services where value for money is very poor.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 672: Blagdon & Chew Valley service

The Council supports a daytime 672 service (Mon-Sat) between Blagdon and Bristol via the Chew valley and Dundry. The route map and timetable are at: [Chew Valley Transport Guide.pdf](#). North Somerset Council fund 25% of the costs of the service.

The 672 service is operated by Abus apart from the 18:10 departure from Bristol that is operated by Bugler Coaches.

Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£89,748
Patronage	15,812
Concession journeys %	47%
Cost per passenger journey	£5.69

The council also supports the complementary service 67 operated by Abus during School holidays at a cost of £3,542.

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs. Despite this it is recognised that alternative travel options in the rural area served by the service are very limited.

This service requires at least two vehicles and two drivers to operate because of the span of operation which covers commuter services and off-peak journeys in between.

Options include:

1. To reduce the service to operating Monday-Friday only, with no Saturday service. Operators have struggled to find resource available on Saturdays to run services and have to charge the Council a premium to provide the services.
2. To withdraw the service that departs from Bristol at 18:10, with the remaining service undertaken by one bus and driver. The last service from Bristol would therefore be at 16:45; the later 18:10 journey is the most costly element of service operation, but some users would have to change arrangements to use the earlier service.
3. To retain the first (06:53 ex Blagdon) and last (18:10 ex Bristol) trips on broadly the current timetable, but to operate off-peak services to/from Long Ashton Park & Ride where passengers will be able to transfer to the frequent MetroBus services for Bristol City Centre and Temple Meads

It is envisaged that a service would arrive in Long Ashton at around 10:30, and a return journey from Long Ashton to the Chew Valley and Blagdon

would operate around 16:00. In addition passengers returning to Chew Magna, Chew Stoke, Bishop Sutton and West Harptree would have the option of using service 67 which leaves Bristol at 13:05. Using Long Ashton P&R site as an off peak terminus also allows interchange to the 505 service to Southmead Hospital.

There is a reduction in service during the middle of the day but the service would be able to be operated by one bus and driver and significant savings would result in consequence.

Further surveys of patronage and concession use are being undertaken as part of this tender exercise.

Service 768: Clutton- Bath via Englishcombe & Clandown.

The Council supports a daytime (Mon-Fri) service that provides links between:

- Clutton and Farrington Gurney to Midsomer Norton and Radstock,
- Clandown, Camerton, and Timsbury to Radstock and Bath
- Englishcombe and Priston to Bath

The route map and timetable are at: [B&NES 768 leaflet.pdf](#)

Morning and evening peak commuter journeys between Writhlington and Bath use vehicles that operate on other contracts, but two further buses operate off-peak during the day. All services are operated by CT Coaches.

Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£106,500
Patronage	9,650
Concession journeys %	70%
Cost per passenger journey	£11.53

Consultation Issues

The cost of the service is partly offset by a developer contribution which will not be available after August 2018.

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs. Despite this it is recognised that there are limited alternative travel options in the rural area served by the service.

The service has suffered from repeated re-timetabling to adapt to changes in the commercial market, most recently replacing services between Clutton and Midsomer Norton when First withdrew the 379 in April 2017. This has damaged user confidence in the service.

Options include:

1. Retention of the peak services between Writhlington and Bath
2. Withdrawal of the developer-funded journeys between Clutton – Timsbury at an early stage
3. Replacement of off-peak services by development of Farecar (shared taxi services) for Midsomer Norton & Radstock area
4. Replacement of off-peak services by development of Farecar (shared taxi services) for Englishcombe-Bath services

Service A4: Chandag Estate Keynsham.

The Council supports one early morning trip (Mon-Fri) journey from the Chandag Estate (05:52 ex Charlton Road) to Keynsham town centre on service A4 operated by Bath Bus Company.

Contract Net Cost 2017/18	£1,539
Patronage	350
Concession journeys %	0%
Cost per passenger journey	£4.35

Usage and cost per passenger have been calculated from information provided by the operator.

The core service between Bath and Bristol Airport via Keynsham is operated commercially and not affected by this.

Consultation Issues

The Council faces a significant funding shortfall and is therefore looking at options to reduce supported service costs.

Subject to the cost per passenger being acceptable then:

Options include:

1. Retention of this journey if a lower cost can be negotiated.
2. Withdrawal of the journey