

Briefing note on proposed changes to supported passenger transport services and the Concessionary Travel Scheme in Hampshire

Context

1. The county council is trying to make cuts of £80m to its overall budget by April 2023 of which its Economy, Transport and Environment department must deliver £10.3m in savings. This consultation paper sets out how it proposes to make savings to the transport services it supports. The county is either looking to reduce the level of subsidy and/ or the levels of services it provides. The need to make savings is reinforced by changes to uses of these services since the Covid-19 pandemic. Any comments to the county must be submitted by **Sunday 24 July**.
2. The county currently supports Dial-a-Ride, Call & Go and Taxishare services. It also subsidises three bus routes in Rushmoor. These are: Route 7 – Hartley Wintney to Aldershot; Route 9 – Cove to Farnborough; and Route 41 – Ash to Farnborough which it jointly supports with Surrey County Council. Total spend on these services across Hampshire is £3.5m a year. Other bus routes in Rushmoor are run as commercial operations without public subsidy.
3. The consultation proposes to make savings in seven areas. These are:
 - 1) Reducing the number of times per day that a supported bus or community transport service operates; the number of days per week that a bus or community transport service operates on supported routes; and which days of the week a public bus or community transport service operates on supported routes.
 - 2) Making operational changes to the current public bus and community transport services – to reduce services based on the current (lower) usage since Covid-19.
 - 3) No longer providing travel vouchers as an alternative to the Disabled Person's Bus Pass.
 - 4) Removing the use of the Older Person's Bus Pass and Disabled Person's Bus Pass on Taxishare, Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go services
 - 5) Introducing a £1 fare for all single Taxishare journeys, increasing in future years in line with inflation.
 - 6) Working towards a common fare approach for Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go schemes across Hampshire while reducing the subsidy of these services – fares would be set at around £6 for a local return journey and £8 for a longer return journey, with future increases in line with inflation.
 - 7) To increase the fees charged for replacement of lost bus passes to cover the administration costs from £14 to £20, increasing in future years in line with inflation.

Our response

4. It is regrettable that any public body should make savings that disproportionately affect people with disabilities and on low incomes who make more use of these subsidised services. Rushmoor in particular has some of the highest rates of deprivation in the county. It seems unfair also that the county has relied on changes in services between 2019/20 and 2021/22 when vulnerable people in particular would not have used these services as the basis for making savings.
5. The county has also not made clear what levels of changes are proposed to the three bus services in the borough it supports (Proposal 1). A reduction in support for Bus Route 41 could in turn result in further cuts from Surrey County Council.