



Mr Tim Gornall
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Directorate of Transformation

John R. Harrison DipEnvP MRTPI
Assistant Director Planning

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Date: 16th January 2014

Your ref: WS010003

Our ref: M2/1/2

Please ask for: Mr. J.R. Harrison

Direct dial no: 01695 585132

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Dear Mr Gornall,

Subsidised Bus Services - Budget Proposals

Thank you for your email received on the 20th December 2013 making West Lancashire Borough Council aware of Lancashire County Council's proposals to reduce the amount of money being spent to subsidise bus services by withdrawing subsidies to bus services operating of an evening and at weekends.

Whilst the Borough Council understands the budgetary pressures currently experienced by the County Council, it has significant concerns regarding the proposed reduction to subsidised bus services. In particular, the Borough Council considers that some of the proposed reductions in bus services in West Lancashire would undermine existing major regeneration proposals and severely restrict the ability of the Boroughs residents to access jobs and services including healthcare.

In some parts of the Borough a lack of transport already acts as a barrier to residents gaining employment and the Council would not like to see this situation worsened. The Council also has concern over the lack of detail in the current consultation and feels that usage figures for the proposed services to be cut, as well as an understanding of the level of subsidy would be beneficial to allowing the Council to make a more informed decision.

I note that with the withdrawal of the evening services for the 12A and the 375, evening services to Skelmersdale, Burscough and Ormskirk will no longer exist. The Council has significant concerns regarding this proposal as it believes that this lack of service has the potential to have a detrimental effect upon the local economy in these areas. As well as reducing opportunities for late night shopping/evening markets, this proposal will have a major impact upon the night time economy of all three towns and compromise access to services, such as health care, for local residents. West Lancashire also has two large, successful educational establishments (West Lancashire College and Edge Hill University) who both run evening courses. The Council has a concern that by removing evening services the competitiveness of these establishments may be affected, as well as reducing access to education and training to those who may require it most.

Skelmersdale is the largest town within the West Lancashire and has relatively low car ownership levels. The proposal to cease late night buses raises two primary concerns. Firstly, the proposal is at odds with the Councils regeneration proposals for Skelmersdale Town Centre which include the provision of bars, restaurants as well as a cinema, providing a much needed night time economy in the town. Our concern is that the proposal would undermine the work currently being undertaken by the Council and its partners (which include the County Council) to market the site to the leisure industry.

Secondly, the Council is working to maintain and attract business into the town. The withdrawal of the evening bus service into the town, when many businesses in Skelmersdale operate evening shift patterns, will undermine the Councils efforts and will place the town at a disadvantage when seeking to maintain/attract investment.

In relation to health care the Council has concerns over the potential impact on patients, visitors and staff regarding the removal of evening and weekend services to hospitals. With regard to the cancellation of evening and weekend services for the 375 and 300 services, the Council note that there is no alternative provision available and both services provide a link to the main adult services hospital for the Borough in Southport. The 375 also provides a link to the children's service at Ormskirk hospital for residents. When services for Ormskirk and Southport hospitals were reconfigured there was an understanding that residents would be able to get to the respective hospitals by public transport. Similarly, we also have concerns regarding changes to the 611 and 612 services which link Wrightington Hospital with Wigan. We believe that these proposed service cuts may cause disruption to residents in West Lancashire, Sefton and Wigan and in particular, there may be an impact on relatives wishing to visit those ill in hospital. It may also prejudice the implementation of a significant programme of investment within the Wrightington Hospital site currently proposed by the Hospital Trust. As such, the Council has strong reservations about the cuts to these services.

Furthermore, the Council has concern regarding the removal of some services serving rural parts of the Borough. With a lack of evening and some weekend services, access to employment, as well as services will be greatly reduced and may cause rural isolation, particularly amongst the elderly and disabled users. Although the consultation mentions the use of alternative provision such as dial-a-ride no detail is provided regarding how dial-a-ride is to be used or whether additional funding is to be provided. The Council would like to see options for providing alternative forms of transport for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups considered as part of this consultation.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, then please contact my colleague Mr Dominic Carr (dominic.carr@westlancs.gov.uk) 01695 585194.

Yours sincerely,



JOHN HARRISON
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PLANNING

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