

October 2007	ITEM No.
Executive Decision Report	
CHANGES TO THE SUPPORTED BUS SERVICE NETWORK – ROUTE 73	
Portfolio Holder: Cllr T Ojetola – Highways & Transport	
Report Author: E M Vokes – Transportation Manager	
Accountable Head of Service: A Millard – Planning & Delivery	
Accountable Director: B Newman – Sustainable Communities	
Purpose: To recommend short-term continuation of current supported services on Route 73 pending a full tender.	
Wards affected: Aveley, Belhus, Grays, Ockendon, W Thurrock	Key decision: Yes
This report is Public	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 That the current supported service arrangements on Route 73 be extended until 31 March 2008.**
- 1.2 That beyond 1 April 2008 the current supported service is subject to full tender and appropriate consideration of subsequent tender returns.**

2. INTRODUCTION:

- 2.1 This report describes an urgent decision that has been taken in respect of one of the Council's supported bus routes within the Borough.

3. BACKGROUND:

- 3.1 Route 73 is a commercial service operated by Ensignbus from Monday to Saturday between Tilbury, Chadwell, Grays and Lakeside.
- 3.2 During the evening from Monday to Saturday, and all day on Sunday, the service is extended from Lakeside to serve Ockendon and Upminster. This extension is supported by the Council, and was the result of a short term tender to directly replace parts of Arriva's commercial Route 373 that were withdrawn in March 2007. An Executive Decision to this effect was made on 5 April 2007.

- 3.3 The April agreement ended on Sunday 30 September. The need to resolve the issue of service continuity has not previously been picked up largely due to the current Passenger Transport Manager vacancy. An appointment to this post was made on Friday 28 September.
- 3.4 Ensignbus contacted the Council to enquire as to an extension of the service approximately 10 days prior to the end of the contract, despite their requiring 56 days notice to terminate the service with the Traffic Commissioner (and additionally writing to us at the end of August proposing minor amendments, at which point the termination was also not referred).

4. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 4.1 Figures supplied by the operator reveal that over 8,000 trips were made on the supported services during the three months between May and July 2007. There is no robust means by which the Council is able to verify these figures.
- 4.2 On the basis of these figures, the current level of subsidy for the parts of the services supported by the Council is as follows:
- Monday to Friday evenings only - £170 per day / £2.93 per pax
 - Saturday evenings only - £170 per day / £3.43 per pax
 - All day Sunday - £500 per day / £1.73 per pax

Costs per passenger are favourable against the Bus Services Review Panel's absolute limit of £5.00.

- 4.3 From the usage of the service indicated, it is recommended that support for the service be continued. The operator has not registered an interest to continue the service commercially at this stage, but has proved willing to extend the current arrangement.
- 4.4 Formal tendering of the service through the Council's four approved operators would normally take at least two months, staffing issues notwithstanding.
- 4.5 It is therefore recommended that an extension to the current arrangement until 31 March 2008, with a view to procuring a longer term arrangement thereafter depending upon prevailing circumstances. The extension to March 2008 will allow the new Passenger Transport Manager to pick up the long-term issue.
- 4.6 As with the current service, all options going forward are unbudgeted within the original Supported Services cost centre. Continuing the service in the current financial year will require savings to be identified within the overall highways and transport service or elsewhere within the Directorate or Council as a whole.
- 4.7 Continuation of the supported parts of Service 73 in the longer term after April 2008 will require a realignment of budgets.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

- 5.1 Supporting local bus services promotes social inclusion through enhanced access to employment, leisure and other key services. Access to sustainable modes of travel is an objective of the Community Strategy.

6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY:

- 6.1 This item has not been considered by Overview & Scrutiny.

RELEVANT POLICIES

Thurrock Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (March 2006)
 Bus Services Review Panel Final Report (March 2006)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

(Prepared by: Tim Madden

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The financial implications are explained within the report (paragraphs 4.2; 4.6 and 4.7).

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

(Prepared by: Rosemary Lyon

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There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. It would not be appropriate to undertake a further tendering process now for the period up to 31 March 2008. A new procurement process in respect of this route will be undertaken for the period from 1 April 2008 which will comply with the Council's Contracts Rules

DIVERSITY & EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Authority should note that bus services form one of the most important elements of public transport provision in Thurrock. Bus services are particularly important for young people, the elderly and households without access to a vehicle, especially those living in remote areas, who need to travel to educational institutions, workplaces, shops and leisure facilities. Supported bus services, by their very nature, assist people in areas that are not normally served by commercial operators.

The supported bus service reduces car dependency without compromising the freedom and opportunities of lower-income households and those living in more remote locations. The commercial service covering this route was withdrawn in March 2007 (section 3.2 of the report). If the supported service is withdrawn, there will be no bus alternative for this route. Due consideration should be given to the impact the absence of this service will have on those residents without access to a vehicle.

The Authority should also note that the continuation of the Bus 73 service to Ockendon and Upminster is essential to promoting social inclusion as this service crosses a range of neighbourhoods and communities, and carry's passengers from a variety of socio-

economic backgrounds. In so doing, the service facilitates economic mobility.

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OTHER IMPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND PAPERS

As above

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ED2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS BY A CABINET MEMBER OR AN OFFICER

A. Report Title: Changes to the Supported Bus Services Network (Route 73)	
B. Report Author(s): E M Vokes	Tel: 01375 652091 E-mail: evokes@thurrock.gov.uk
C. Decision Maker: Cllr T Ojetola	
D. Position held: Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport	
E. Key decision: YES	F. Delegation ref: Cabinet 19/12/07
G. Is the decision urgent? YES	
H. If yes, state why. Cessation of current arrangements with effect from October 2007	

I. DECISION (strike out whichever does not apply) : I agree the recommendations in the attached report for the reasons given in the report	
	
Signed:	Date: 24.10.07

URGENCY

Democratic Services will arrange for the completion of the following:	
J. I confirm that in my opinion a decision on this matter is urgent and cannot reasonably be delayed:	
Signed:	Date:

To be completed by Democratic Services

Date decision received by Dem. Services: 24 October 2007	Date decision published: 11 December 2007 (with Cabinet Agenda for 19 December)
Implementation date: immediate	
Relevant O & S Committee: Cllr Veryard, as Chair of Environment O/S Committee emailed and telephoned to confirm his approval to this decisions	