

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CHESHIRE EAST CONSULTATION ON SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES

SUMMARY

The view of Sandbach Town Council is that the proposed cost savings would have a number of undesirable impacts on the population of Sandbach and on the wider population of Cheshire. The proposed changes to services will lead to a significant reduction in bus services to and from Sandbach. The removal of services will particularly affect the elderly, the young, the infirm, those on low incomes and those people who cannot or do not want to drive a car. In addition all residents of Sandbach will be affected by the increase in air pollution and traffic congestion caused by the increase in car use (by those who have this option) and the impact on the social lives of Sandbach residents and the pub and restaurant trade by the withdrawal of evening services. The loss of the bus services and the impact to the people concerned is greater than the money saved by the reductions in support. Everything possible should be done to keep bus services alive for both social and environmental reasons. This response to the Cheshire East consultation on supported bus services details the specific impact of the proposed withdrawal of particular services to and from Sandbach and also details our view of the general impact of the loss of support for bus services across Cheshire East.

INTRODUCTION

Cheshire East Council announced a consultation on proposed £1.6 million cost savings on its current supported bus budget. The proposal has a number of services to be completely withdrawn. There are also a number of services that would no longer be run on weekday evenings and / or at the weekends. The Little Bus service is also proposed to be subject to reduced funding. The purpose of this document, prepared by the Bus Services Consultation Working Group, is to detail Sandbach Town Council's response to the consultation request (reference Town Council meeting on 1st June 2017)

2 IMPACT ON SERVICES TO SANDBACH

2.1 Services Completely Withdrawn

The withdrawal of Cheshire East support for bus service numbers 32, 319, SB1, SB2 and SB3 will lead to a reduction in the public transport links to and from Sandbach.

Service 32

The withdrawal of the 32 service will particularly affect Ettiley Heath. The quoted alternative bus services the 78, 12, 37 and 38 are also being subject to potential withdrawal of service. The local rail service is also mentioned as an alternative to get to Crewe but this does not take into account the fact that passengers have to get to and from the stations at the beginning and end of their journeys. The purpose of the buses should be to provide these integrated

links. It is also difficult for the infirm and elderly to walk to and from the stations. Elderly residents of Warmingham who attend Ashfields surgery have been particularly alarmed by the withdrawal of this service. The feeling expressed was that a reduced service would lead to them feeling isolated.

Service 319

The withdrawal of Cheshire East support for bus service numbers 319 will lead to the elimination of a direct bus link between Sandbach and Holmes Chapel. The consultation states that access to Holmes Chapel would be provided through the proposed route C (Service 42) but currently this service has no stop in Sandbach and so this will mean a change in busses leading to increased journey time.

SB1, SB2 and SB3

The withdrawal of Cheshire East support for services SB1, SB2 and SB3 would lead to the elimination of the only bus services that are internal to Sandbach alone. These services could be a lifeline for the elderly, infirm and those on low incomes. The expense of these services do deter people from using them. It is a fact that shorter journeys are less value for money. If the expense was lower the services would be used more widely and not just by disadvantaged groups. Hence, these services could be a potential way of reducing traffic in Sandbach. In our view these services should be promoted as Sandbach is expanding and there is limited room in the Town for more car parks.

Service 78

The recent registration of D&G to change their commercial journeys on the 78 service, shown on the Cheshire East website, would mean the shortening of the route for the 78 so that it starts and ends at Coppenhall. This announcement combined with the proposal to withdraw support for the evening and Saturday service would result in no service for Sandbach. This service is a vital one for people to attend Leighton Hospital, as patients or visitors, and the removal of the service would be a serious loss for the people of Sandbach.

2.2 Services Partially Withdrawn

The consultation proposal also contains a proposal to partially withdraw support for some services. The services particularly affecting Sandbach are the 37, 38 and 78. The proposal to withdraw the evening services for the 37 and 38 would impact Sandbach residents who want to travel for social or leisure reasons. The times quoted for the last bus 18:27 for the 37 and 18:48 for the 38 mean that an evening out in another Cheshire East town will be out of the question for bus users. In addition the evening buses bring trade to Sandbach by people seeking a night out in Sandbach. We are particularly concerned about the impact on the pub and restaurant trade by the proposed cuts to evening services as these services are well used and bring trade to Sandbach. The evening services on Friday and Saturday night are well used.

3 GENERAL IMPACT OF LOSS OF CEC SUPPORT FOR BUS SERVICES

Elderly People

The elderly often need bus services to access shopping, leisure and healthcare facilities. Bus services provide a lifeline for the elderly living in estates in Sandbach and without it our Cheshire East Residents would be isolated and vulnerable. As the demographic of the Sandbach area shows an increase in the numbers in the 60+ age group the cutting of bus services is especially serious.

Disabled and Infirm

The disabled and infirm need bus services to access shopping, leisure and healthcare facilities. Bus services provide a lifeline for the disabled and infirm of Sandbach and without it our Cheshire East Residents would be isolated and vulnerable.

Impact on Hospital Services and the Ambulance Service

Buses are used by people in Sandbach, as patients or visitors, to attend Leighton Hospital. The removal or reduction of the bus services to the hospital would be a serious loss for the people of Sandbach and will impact Leighton hospital leading to more cars in an already overcrowded hospital car park. There will also be an adverse impact on ambulance services as patients who are disabled, ill or infirm and unable to access a car may call on the already pressurised ambulance service for assistance.

Young People

Young people need bus services to access shopping, work opportunities and leisure. Bus services are an important transport link for young people on estates in Sandbach and without the links many choices will be denied to young people without access to other forms of transport.

Impact on Sandbach Trade

The withdrawal of bus services will have an impact on Sandbach town trade. People come to Sandbach to visit the indoor and outdoor markets, the farmers markets, the shops, pubs and restaurants. Many people who come arrive by bus and we should be encouraging more people to arrive by public transport, both within Sandbach and from the surrounding towns, due to the increasing traffic on the roads and the growing problems with traffic pollution and air quality problems within Sandbach. We are particularly concerned about the impact on the pub and restaurant trade by the proposed cuts to evening services as these services are well used and bring trade to Sandbach. In addition we are concerned that the removal of evening bus services could

increase the temptation amongst some people to drink driving.

Air Quality:

The increase in the number of homes being built in the Cheshire East area, particularly in Sandbach, is leading to deteriorating air quality. Reducing bus services encourages those people that can into their cars and hence contributing to a further reduction in air quality. The additional road traffic will be especially detrimental along Middlewich Road, which has been designated an Air Quality Management Area. Cutting bus services has a negative impact on the efforts to combat climate change.

People on low incomes

People on low incomes are will be adversely affected by cuts to bus services as they often cannot afford alternative services such as Taxi or private transport.

Little Bus services

These services are reported to be well used and so it is hard to get one when you need it. There have also been reports of residents ringing to use the services but finding the line engaged.

People who do not drive or prefer not to

The bus services are also important for residents who do not drive or prefer not to, to travel to and from their place of work. Everything possible should be done to keep bus services alive for both social and environmental reasons.

Ways to improve the income from bus services

- **Explore different pricing policies to encourage greater use of existing services**
- **Integrate more effectively bus and train service timetables**

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Approved by Council 20.7.17