

By: Bryan Sweetland – Cabinet Member for Environment Highways & Waste

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To: Environment, Highways & Waste Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 14th March 2012

Subject: Bus Services to Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides Members with an update of the current position regarding bus services to the new Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury, following a discussion at the previous Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 12th January 2012, the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report (presented in Appendix A) detailing the progress that had been made regarding the provision of bus services to the new Tunbridge Wells Hospital. The key points of context are:
- 1.2 The NHS Trust are obligated to provide enhancements to four specific bus routes as part of the planning consent for the hospital. The routes would provide direct services from Maidstone, Crowborough, Tunbridge Wells and West Malling via Tonbridge, Borough Green and Wrotham to the new facility.
- 1.3 The gross cost of providing the services is estimated to be around £11M over five years. The NHS Trust considers that this is unaffordable and there are concerns about the ongoing viability of some of the services. The NHS has therefore applied to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) for the removal of this condition subject to the completion of a Section 106 legal agreement securing a fixed financial contribution towards provision of bus services, proposed at £2.1M.
- 1.4 The NHS has fully funded interim bus services until 13th May, which are being administered by KCC (as agents to the NHS) to provide high frequency services to Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge town centres.
- 1.5 In January POSC resolved that:
 - a) Members note the background to the provision of bus services to the new Tunbridge Wells hospital; and
 - b) KCC immediately enter into negotiations to become party to the Section 106 agreement, whereby the NHS Trust funds the bus services and underwrites those not meeting the required levels of revenue. These services will seek to provide access to those communities as covered by Condition 29 of the planning consent.

2. Developments

- 2.1 As a result of the January meeting of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a special meeting of the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board was arranged to consider the situation. The JTB report is presented for Members' information in Appendix B and a verbal update of the outcome of the JTB meeting on the 27 February will be provided for the Committee.
- 2.2 The NHS Trust has now received detail information from Community Transport Providers and are developing a detailed proposal for providing enhancements to Community Transport.
- 2.3 Further details of the performance of the interim services are now available. The enhanced services carry around an additional 150 journeys each day to and from the hospital. This is encouraging given that the services have not been marketed and awareness is low. If there were no further increases in passenger numbers, the gross cost of providing the services over five years to the NHS is expected to be around £2.7M.
- 2.4 Officers are in discussion with the NHS Trust and TWBC to progress the matter and deliver an appropriate solution in line with the previous resolution from the Committee.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that:
 - Members note the current position with regards to Bus Services to the new Tunbridge Wells hospital.

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