

**From:** Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Subject: Big Conversation Programme Update and Maidstone and West Malling Public Consultation Report**

**Classification:**  
**Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 20 September 2018

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee

**Electoral Division:** Countywide

**Summary:**

This paper provides an update on the Big Conversation Programme. It outlines the results from the public consultation on proposed changes to bus service in Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling carried out between 22 January to 19 February and, confirms the costs for each of the pilots and proposes that the 5 proposed pilots will be implemented from early June 2019.

The 5 pilots are proposed as:

- Maidstone Feeder Bus
- West Malling Feeder Bus
- Dover Feeder Bus
- Tenterden Taxi Bus
- Sevenoaks Taxi Bus

**Recommendation:**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and comment or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2018 the Authority launched the 'Big Conversation' consultation to explore options for delivering better, more sustainable transport to rural communities not currently served by commercial operators.
- 1.2 The main objective of the programme was to evaluate whether alternative transport models could deliver a more cost effective and efficient approach when compared to those services we currently subsidise.
- 1.3 The twelve-month pilots will serve to test different models of delivery in relation to:
  - Reducing the current £7m gross annual budget for subsidised bus contracts
  - Assisting rural accessibility for those without alternative means of travel
  - Helping to tackle social isolation
  - Providing resilience and continuity of services
  - Improving the sustainability of services
  - Understanding viability of charging
  - Providing the "right transport solution, in the right places for the right price"
- 1.4 The budget for the Big Conversation programme is £500k and supports a fixed 12-month operation for the pilots. This budget includes the public consultation and scheme development costs which totalled £82k, with the remaining budget (£418k) set aside to deliver and operate the pilot schemes.
- 1.5 In October 2018 five preferred pilots were identified and full business cases have been prepared for each. The five pilots were presented at the Bus Summit held on the 30 October 2018 and are as follows:
  - Maidstone Feeder Bus
  - West Malling Feeder Bus
  - Dover Feeder Bus
  - Tenterden Taxi Bus
  - Sevenoaks Taxi Bus
- 1.6 This report sets out the detail of the proposed changes, the consultation outcomes and recommendations for changes that are provisionally planned for implementation from early June 2019.

## **2. Pilot Summary**

**Summary information for each pilot is as follows:**

### **2.1 Maidstone Feeder Bus Pilot**

- Local consultation shows overwhelming support for the changes to the service for the 12-month pilot period
- Amendment to the current contract delivered by Nu Venture and Arriva for the Service 13 and 59 respectively
- One off investment to build a layby outside Morrisons Store, Sutton Road
- The services provide a better, more frequent service to the existing users of the 13 and 59 service.

### **2.2 West Malling Feeder Bus Pilot**

- Local consultation shows overwhelming support for the changes to the service for the 12-month pilot period
- Amendment to the current contract delivered by Nu Venture for the Service 58
- Changing terminus point to Maidstone Hospital has reduced infrastructure costs as Lunsford Park required extensive work
- The services provide a better, more frequent service to the existing users of the service

### **2.3 Dover Feeder Bus Pilot**

- There has been local support through the working groups with a consensus that parishes are keen to work with the Authority to promote the schemes
- To restore regular bus services to the residents Staple, Northbourne and Great Mongeham where currently there is no public transport provision. This may also improve the local economy in Dover district

### **2.4 Tenterden Taxi Bus Pilot**

- There has been local support through the working groups with a consensus that parishes are keen to work with the Authority to promote the schemes
- The service will provide a direct benefit to the residents in the villages surrounding Tenterden by providing regular services into the town Monday – Friday where currently there is no or limited public transport provision. This may also improve the local economy in Tenterden.

## 2.5 Sevenoaks Taxi Bus Pilot

- There has been local support through the working groups with a consensus that parishes are keen to work with the Authority to promote the schemes
- The services will provide a direct benefit to the residents of Fairseat, Stansted, West Kingsdown and Otford by providing regular services to Sevenoaks Monday – Friday where currently there is no public transport provision. This may also improve the local economy in Sevenoaks.
- Proposal is to maximise use of vehicles deployed under their local school contract at Grange Park

2.6 The anticipated 12-month pilot costs are provided below. These costs are within the original budget and includes a 15% contingency budget.

Pilot Costs - March 2018	Maidstone	West Malling	Dover	Tenterden	Sevenoaks
<b>Base Cost Estimate (£) Total £638,106.77</b>	<b>225,841.45</b>	<b>169,031.12</b>	<b>112,786.25</b>	<b>65,472.95</b>	<b>64,975.00</b>
<b>Total Income/funding (£) Total £306,998.58</b>	<b>103,613.00</b>	<b>160,483.58</b>	<b>3,750.00</b>	<b>35,152.00</b>	<b>4,000.00</b>
<b>ESTIMATED NET ANNUAL COST (£) £331,108.19</b>	<b>122,228.45</b>	<b>8,547.54</b>	<b>109,036.25</b>	<b>30,320.95</b>	<b>60,975.00</b>

## 3. Summary of consultation

3.1 Two pilots amended current services (Service 13/59 in Maidstone and 58 in West Malling) and therefore public consultation was undertaken for four-weeks between 22 January and 19 February 2019. These consultations outlined the detail of the proposals and invited comments on these and any equalities or other impacts on service users and residents.

3.2 A range of promotional activities supported both consultations including;

- direct communications to KCC Members, Parish Councils, associated stakeholders and others registered on the KCC consultation directory;
- posters on buses;
- public events and
- the use of bus inspectors travelling on affected services and engaging with users.

Engagement from local parish councils was on the whole exceptional and has facilitated an excellent level of engagement with residents.

3.3 112 responses were received for in respect of the proposed changes to services 13 and 59 in Maidstone and 111 were received in respect of changes to service 58 in West Malling.

3.4 The following themes were identified in both consultations:

- The majority of responses were submitted by individuals, but a small number responded as an organisation including Parish Councils.
- Around 65% of responders were from individuals aged 65 and over.
- The majority of responses; approximately 65% across both consultations, were submitted by women.
- Overall, respondents agreed with at least one of the proposals presented
  - In Maidstone, 66% of service users agreed with the changes proposed to the 13 service and 72% agreed with the changes proposed for the 59 service.
  - In West Malling around 75% of responders agreed with the proposal two. Proposal one however was not well received and only 9% of respondents agreed with this proposal. Proposal 2 is now the preferred option.

3.5 A summary of the proposals for Maidstone and West Malling are shown in Appendices A and B and the consultation reports are attached in Appendix C and D respectively.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 The five pilot schemes proposed are within the remaining £418k budget set aside for the Big Conversation. The total cost of the schemes for the 12-month period is £331k.

#### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 The pilot schemes are proposed to operate for 12 months. Should these pilots prove to be successful, it is anticipated that they will become a regular service. If they are not, the Maidstone and West Malling pilots will revert back to their current service as it is now with the current operator.

#### **6. Equalities implications**

6.1 Both public consultations were supported by an EqIA and they have been updated based on the consultation responses. These are attached in Appendix E (Maidstone) and F (West Malling).

6.3 The EqIA process identified that there would be a greater positive impact on the elderly. Whilst the proposals were also supported overall by disabled persons and carers, negative impacts have been identified for these groups. Planned service changes have sought to mitigate this impact.

#### **7. Pilot Period**

7.1 The pilots proposed will operate for a twelve-month period. The timescales are as follows:

- Award Contracts to operators - 20 March 2019
- Operators assisted to obtain appropriate licences - 20 March to 18 Apr 2019
- Routes to be tested and developed with operator - 20 March to 18 Apr 2019
- Operators to register services - 19 April to 1 June 2019
- Service Implementation with quarterly reviews - 3 June 2019 to 31 May 2020

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 The responses for the changes proposed to the 13 and 59 services in Maidstone have attracted a high level of support demonstrating the potential service improvement that could be made by adopting the feeder model.
- 8.2 The changes proposed for the 58 service in West Malling received mixed responses. Proposal 1 was widely opposed due to the loss of the direct service to Maidstone Hospital. However, proposal 2 was widely supported demonstrating the potential service improvement that could be made by adopting the feeder model
- 8.3 Work remains ongoing with the operators to mitigate the most acute impacts and themes identified particularly those with Equalities implications.
- 8.3 The Pilots that will be developed are as follows:
- Maidstone Feeder Bus
  - West Malling Feeder Bus
  - Dover Feeder Bus
  - Tenterden Taxi Bus
  - Sevenoaks Taxi Bus

## **9. Recommendation(s):**

- 9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and comment or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste.

## **10. Background Documents and appendices**

- Appendix A - Summary of Maidstone changes
- Appendix B - Summary of West Malling changes
- Appendix C - Maidstone Bus Pilot - Consultation Report v1
- Appendix D - West Malling Bus Pilot - Consultation Report v1
- Appendix E - EQIA Maidstone Bus Pilot - Post Consultation
- Appendix F - EQIA West Malling Post Consultation

## **11. Contact details**

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## Appendix A - Summary of Maidstone changes

### 13 - Hollingbourne, Otham, Leeds, Langley, Maidstone

The 2 most highlighted themes from the open responses were:

- Increased Frequency
- Concern over changing buses

A high proportion of responses also included requests for additional bus stops or service links to further improve this pilot. These have been passed on to Public Transport for consideration, many of which are already being investigated following feedback from parish councils.

	Current service	Proposed service
<b>Destination</b>	Maidstone Town Centre	Morrisons, Sutton Road
<b>Number of Journeys</b>	6 return journeys	10 return journeys
<b>Connections</b>	No Connections Required	Maidstone Town Centre every 10 minutes, Headcorn and Tenterden every 30 mins
<b>Estimated Total Journey Time (Hollingbourne – Maidstone)</b>	36 minutes	42 minutes

<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't need to change buses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More frequent journey opportunities</li> <li>• Connections to Headcorn and Tenterden</li> <li>• Shelters on Sutton Road upgraded with Real Time Information</li> <li>• Less buses will travel on the A274 between Maidstone Town Centre and Morrisons helping to ease congestion</li> <li>• New opportunities for commuters to travel to Hollingbourne Station</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less journey opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to change buses</li> </ul>

## 59 - Grafty Green, Ulcombe, Kingswood, Chart Sutton, Boughton Monchelsea, Maidstone

The 2 most highlighted themes from the open responses were:

- Increased Frequency
- Concern over changing buses

A high proportion of responses also included requests for additional bus stops or service links to further improve this pilot. These have been passed on to Public Transport for consideration, many of which are already being investigated following feedback from parish councils.

	Current service	Proposed service
<b>Destination</b>	Maidstone Town Centre	Morrisons, Sutton Road
<b>Number of Journeys</b>	3 return journeys	6 return journeys
<b>Connections</b>	No Connections Required	Maidstone Town Centre every 10 minutes, Headcorn and Tenterden every 30 mins
<b>Estimated Total Journey Time (Grafty Green – Maidstone)</b>	50 minutes	62 minutes

<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't need to change buses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More frequent journeys</li> <li>• Ability to travel to Headcorn and Tenterden</li> <li>• Bus will serve Morrisons on Sutton Road</li> <li>• Less buses on the A229 and the A274 between Maidstone Town Centre and Morrisons helping to ease congestion</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less journey opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to change buses</li> <li>• Heath Road at Loddington Lane in Boughton Monchelsea and Linton Road (A229) will no longer be served by the 59. Alternative stops would be at Church Street, Boughton Monchelsea or Linton Crossroads</li> </ul>





