

From: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste
Steve Pay, KCC Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 16 July 2019

Subject: KCC Bus Feedback Portal – Summary of Feedbacks received January to May 2019

Key decision: N/A

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Cabinet, 11 July 2019

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: This report presents results for the first 5 months of feedback from the bus feedback portal and explains how the results are being actioned with the bus operators.

Recommendation: Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report , comment on the actions taken and consider how and at what frequency results are published.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Bus Feedback Portal was introduced in January 2019 as a response to feedback received during last year's Big Conversation on rural transport..
- 1.2 The portal is designed to enable bus users to tell KCC about their experiences of using services and allows KCC to capture data and identify trends. Although the Council does not contract, control or regulate the operators nor fund the majority of their services, understanding these trends enables KCC to seek to address issues on behalf of Kent's bus users with operators accordingly.
- 1.3 This report and the more detailed summary (Appendix A) provides information on the feedback received from residents and bus users in the period between January and May 2019. It is provided for information but requests feedback from Cabinet to the outputs presented and any actions that they would like to see taken.

2. Summary of Report

- 2.1 Appendix A provides a summary of the feedback received broken down as totals, by month, by area, by operator and by complaint type. Due to the amount of complaints about Arriva in quarter 1, and Stagecoach in April and May, there is some more detailed analysis relating to these services.
- 2.2 The volume of responses is positive, averaging 53 per month. The higher volumes of responses in January and February most likely reflect the early interest in the portal and promotion of its launch. It is expected that more typical feedback volumes will settle to between 20 and 30 per month.
- 2.3 Unsurprisingly, the majority of feedback relates to complaints which account for around 92% of all comments received. Around 50% of feedback relateds to complaints about reliability, 12% were capacity related and 11% related to driver behaviour and conduct.
- 2.4 Ashford (14%), Maidstone (41%), Tonbridge & Malling (10%) and Tunbridge Wells (7%) districts account for over 70% of all feedback received which reflects likely owing to the complexity of some journeys and the high level of use of buses for school journeys in these areas.
- 2.5 Naturally given the proportion of the network that they operate, Arriva and Stagecoach account for 80% of all feedbacks received. Whilst there maybe a number of actors influencing this, some further, analysis of comments relating to Arriva in Quarter 1 and Stagecoach in Quarter 2 has been completed.
- 2.6 Analysis of Arriva feedback shows that around 60% of these related to reliability with capacity and driver behaviour also featuring. Over 50% of complaints received relate to 5 services; 5 (Hawkhurst to Maidstone) , 12 (Tenterden to Maidstone), 59 (Grafty Green to Maidstone), 71 (Kings Hill to Maidstone) and 89 (Coxheath to Maidstone but also including school journeys from Grafty Green). , Many relate to the reliability of school journeys which is known to be a common complaint in this area and was particularly problematic at the start of the school year.
- 2.7 Analysis of the Stagecoach feedback in Quarter 2 shows that whilst there was a spike in complaints, 75% related to one service; Service B in Ashford. All of the complaints concerned a road in south Ashford where bus priority measures have been recently introduced. Local residents have also expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of buses more generally.

3. Feedback and Actions

- 3.1 Public Transport officers have established portal results as a standing item on the agenda of all Quality Bus Partnership meetings which provides a more formal setting to highlight these trends with the operators concerned and to work with the opertors and District Councils to improve performance.

- 3.2 Less formally, feedback has and will continue to be shared with other operators by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste in his regular meetings with them. Public Transport officers also use the feedback as part of their periodic management meetings with bus operators.
- 3.3 Cabinet is asked to comment on how often they would want the results to be published including publically.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The bus portal was launched in January 2019 following feedback on the 'Big Conversation.' In the first 5 months, there has been an average of 53 responses made though this is expected to settle to between 20 to 30 per month.
- 4.2 Particular trends have been identified relating to specific services provided by Arriva and Stagecoach. Officers are seeking to address these concerns through the Quality Bus Partnership meetings and as part of regular management meetings with operator. .

5. Recommendation:

- 5.1 Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report , comment on the actions taken and consider how and at what frequency results are published.

6. Background Documents

- Appendix A – Summary of results

7. Lead Officers

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