

Member Briefing

Number: 1410

Title: Community Transport public consultation

Summary: The Council will commence a 12-week public consultation in relation to the future provision of Community Transport, starting on 27 February 2020

Background

Community Transport in Cheshire West and Chester is transport for residents who are unable to access conventional public transport, including residents attending day centres.

Cheshire West and Chester Council provide over 100,000 Community Transport journeys a year for approximately 800 residents. The existing contract to provide this service is due to end in March 2021. Users of the service are invited to take part in a public consultation to share their views in order to inform future service provision.

In all parts of the UK, every day, thousands of Community Transport staff and volunteers are helping people to stay independent, participate in their communities and access vital public services and employment. Community Transport provides flexible and accessible community-led solutions. This is often the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, often older people or people with disabilities.

Typical services include, community bus services, dial a ride and group hire services, voluntary car schemes and school or college transport, which transports residents, from home to a specified destination.

*The Council's Community Transport services operate **alongside** commercial bus services, as well as bus services which the Council has to help sustain through its own funding. Bus services across the country have been under a lot of pressure for many years, and many have stopped operating.*

Whilst, this consultation is about Community Transport, these services cannot be seen as separate from other bus services which the Council wants to sustain. The Council is conducting a wider review of our work to protect and extend bus services, including for school pupils and in rural areas. The views collected through this Community Transport consultation will help ensure this wider review fully reflects residents' views.

What is happening

A public consultation on future Community Transport provision will commence on Thursday, 27 February. Consultation documents will be available online, in Council buildings, libraries and Vivo day centres.

Consultation events will take place at venues throughout the borough 2 - 20 March. In addition, officers will ensure existing service users are contacted through on bus surveys during the same period.

Consultation events - March 2020

Details of venues for consultation events are shown below.

Every venue will host a morning drop-in event between 10am and noon, and an afternoon drop-in event between 4pm to 6pm (with the exception of Tarvin Community Centre when the afternoon event will take place between 3pm and 5pm).

Mon, 2 March	Tues, 3 March	Wed, 4 March	Thurs, 5 March	Fri, 6 March
Wyvern House, The Drummer, Winsford	Frodsham Community Centre	Forum Shopping Centre, Chester	*Tarvin Community Centre	
Mon, 9 March	Tues, 10 March	Wed 11 March	Thurs, 12 March	Fri, 13 March
Neston Community Youth Centre	Tarporley & District Community Centre		Ellesmere Port Civic Hall	
Mon, 16 March	Tues, 17 March	Wed, 18 March	Thurs, 19 March	Fri, 20 March
	Parade Enterprise Centre (Blacon)	Malpas Village Hall (Known as Jubilee Hall)	Northwich Memorial Court	

The consultation document contains four main themes:

1. Increasing the number of residents using the service

There is a proposal to provide the service to a greater number of residents for example, transport routes to college for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), rural transport routes and routes to medical centres. It is also proposed to offer communities an opportunity to start their own volunteer Community Transport driver schemes. This would include advice on how to set up a scheme, and how to operate taking into account safety and legal regulations.

2. Reviewing the routes in operation

Community Transport routes are arranged around requests for transport received from residents, there is a proposal to look at the demand for more regular routes. This proposal will provide the potential to add extra routes and vehicles meaning more people are able to access the service in the future. It may reduce the availability of Community Transport at school times.

3. Tackling the climate emergency

It is the Council's ambition to become a carbon neutral borough by 2045. There are proposals to use more environmentally friendly vehicles.

Some areas of the Borough are served by Community Transport on multiple days each week whilst others have much less provision, the new proposals are looking to remove some duplicate routes, reducing unnecessary mileage, making routes as efficient as possible.

4. Fares charged for the service

Fares charged for the service, which have not risen in five years currently contribute around 15 per cent of the total running costs with the remaining costs of over £1 million subsidised by the Council.

The Council would like residents to provide their thoughts on what they would consider to be a reasonable fare for Community Transport services. The Council would also like views on annual fare reviews which may impact on changes to fares during the life of the contract.

The consultation questionnaire is available online:

cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/communitytransportconsultation views can be emailed to: CommunityTransport.Consultation@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or dropped off on one of the Community Transport buses.

When it is happening

A 12-week consultation commences Thursday, 27 February 2020.

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