



Bus Services to Fullbrook School

Local Committee for Woking 12 June 2003

KEY ISSUE:

To receive a report on current bus services used by children living in Woking to get to Fullbrook School in the Borough of Runnymede. The report explores the possibility of extending these services from West Byfleet Station to the school itself.

SUMMARY:

An investigation has been carried out into the possibility of extending existing bus services in the Woking Local Area to Fullbrook School. However, extensive discussions with the bus companies have revealed that this would not be possible without adversely affecting other bus services or without considerable additional funding from the County Council, which is currently unavailable. The establishment of an open forum to explore how these difficulties could be overcome is recommended.

Lighting improvements on the route used by schoolchildren to walk between West Byfleet station and Fullbrook School are proposed.

CONSULTATIONS:

Consultations have been held with bus companies (Arriva Guildford and West Surrey and Tellings Golden Miller) and with officers from Surrey County Council's Passenger Transport Group.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree

- a. that the position with regard to extending bus services from West Byfleet station to Fullbrook School be noted;
- b. that an open forum of interested parties be established in order to explore ways in which a bus service to the school could be provided; and
- c. that improvements to the lighting of the footpath between West Byfleet station and Fullbrook School be carried out, following consultation with the Local Transportation Director, Runnymede.

Introduction and background

1. At its meeting on 19 March 2003, the Committee received a report giving details of bus services in the Woking local area. The report also mentioned that the Committee would receive a further report, at its June 2003 meeting, on bus services between Byfleet and Fullbrook School, which is in the Runnymede local area.
2. Fullbrook County Secondary School, for pupils between the ages of 11 – 17, is situated at the end of Selsdon Road, off Scotland Bridge Road. (See location plan, Annex A). There are bus services which take pupils from the Byfleet area to West Byfleet station. From here pupils need to walk, via public footpaths, to the school, a distance of about 630 metres. (This equates to roughly a ten minute walk). From the station, pupils cross under the railway by means of a subway, then walk along Woodlands Avenue, and a public Right of Way to Woodham Lock, on the Basingstoke Canal. From here, a second Right of Way leads to the Fullbrook Centre and thence to Fullbrook School.
3. Because of concerns for the safety of pupils while walking between the railway station and the school, a request was received from Cllr. Geoff Marlow to explore the possibility of extending the bus services to Fullbrook School, thus obviating the need for pupils to walk from West Byfleet Station.
4. (It should be noted that pupils of the school who live in Runnymede benefit from a Government pilot scheme whereby they are transported to schools in yellow buses. This is funded jointly by Runnymede Borough Council, the Runnymede Business Partnership and money from a Section 106 Agreement. However, this facility is not available to pupils living in Woking.)

Analysis and commentary

5. Currently the details of bus services for pupils in the Byfleet area travelling to Fullbrook School are as follows:
6. In the morning, pupils from Byfleet may travel via route 436, which operates between Guildford and Brooklands, (this is a double-decker, operated commercially by Arriva Guildford and West Surrey) or via route 471, which operates between Woking and Kingston. (This is a single-decker, specially diverted to Byfleet, operated by Tellings-Golden Miller on behalf of Surrey County Council).
7. In the afternoon, pupils bound for Byfleet may use route 436 (see above) or route 437, which operates between Woking and Chertsey. (This is a single-decker bus operated by Thames Bus on behalf of Surrey County Council).
8. A meeting was held on 10 April 2003 between Surrey County Council officers and representatives from Arriva and Tellings-Golden Miller, in order to

explore the possibility of extending the above-mentioned services.

9. In order to extend the bus services to the school, it would be necessary for buses to travel via Camphill Road, under the railway arch, over the canal bridge and into Scotland Bridge Road. However, there would be a number of problems, both operational and financial, associated with this.
10. The double-decker buses used by Arriva would not be able to travel under the railway bridge in Camphill Road, as this is of sub-standard height. This is a commercially-operated service, and so Surrey County Council does not have the power to force Arriva to use (say) two single-decker buses instead.
11. There would be additional time involved in travelling from West Byfleet Station to Fullbrook School and back again, with a total of four sets of traffic signals to negotiate. (At the railway and canal bridges). In addition, there are two schools in Camphill Road, which can be congested at school times. The extra time involved could have serious repercussions for these bus services on the rest of the route.
12. The bus companies estimate that between fifty and sixty pupils use these services every day. If the buses are to serve Fullbrook School, they would need to travel into Selsdon Road, which is heavily parked at school times. The bus would then need to turn round outside the school. This manoeuvre could be potentially dangerous with 50-60 schoolchildren milling about waiting to get on the bus, in addition to other pupils walking to or from school. The alternative would be for the bus to stop in Scotland Bridge Road. However, footways are not particularly wide, and it would be difficult to accommodate waiting schoolchildren safely. The bus would still need to turn round; the safest way of doing this would be to utilise the roundabout at the northern end of Scotland Bridge Road, adding further distance to the journey.
13. One way of overcoming these problems would be to provide a bespoke bus service between Byfleet and Fullbrook School. To accommodate the number of pupils involved, two single-decker buses would be required. However, with Surrey County Council budgets for bus service provision already over-committed, there is currently no possibility of providing this service.
14. Given the number of problems associated with extending the bus service from West Byfleet Station to Fullbrook School, there is little prospect of this happening in the near future.

Possible footpath improvements

15. Although there is little prospect of providing a bus service directly to Fullbrook School, there is scope for improvement to the route which takes pupils from West Byfleet Station to the school. The route is well surfaced and is generally open. However, the section of the route between Woodham Lock and the school is enclosed on both sides, and although lit, the lamp columns are spaced well apart. Thus it may be intimidating to use this path on dark winter afternoons. It would be possible to install some additional lamp columns which would reduce pupils' fear of crime.
16. It is suggested that two additional lamp columns on this section of the route would provide a substantial improvement to lighting levels. However, this section of the route is in Runnymede. Therefore it will be necessary to liaise with the Runnymede Local Transportation Director (LTD) on this issue.

Further suggestions

17. It is clear that there are operational and financial difficulties in providing a direct bus service to Fullbrook School for pupils from the Byfleet area. Following discussions with the divisional member, it is suggested that it may be useful to organise an open forum, to which interested parties could be invited (bus companies, representatives of Fullbrook School, pupils' parents, local Members and Surrey County Council officers) to explore in more detail the needs and concerns of those travelling to Fullbrook School and how these could best be met.

Financial implications

18. The cost of providing two additional lighting units is estimated to be £1600. Funding would need to be identified in discussion with the Runnymede Local Transportation Director.

Sustainable development implications

19. There are no sustainable development implications.

Crime & disorder implications

20. Provision of additional lighting on the footpath between Woodham Lock and Fullbrook School should reduce the fear of crime for pupils walking between West Byfleet station and the school.

Equalities Implications

21. There are no equalities implications.

Conclusions and reasons for recommendations

22. Currently there are operational and financial constraints which preclude the extension of bus services from West Byfleet Station to Fullbrook School. The establishment of an open forum may help to identify ways of overcoming these difficulties.
23. There is scope to improve the level of lighting on the footway leading from Woodham Lock to Fullbrook School.

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