

Surrey County Council Transport Review

Report of consultation events run in association with Bus Users UK



Bus Users
Working for passengers

Note from Surrey County Council	3
Foreword	3
Aims	3
Summary	3
Background to the Review	4
Events and summary of outcomes	5
Bus Users' observations on the consultation process	15
Appendices	17

Note from Surrey County Council – 27/05/15

When this report was written it wasn't know that a second consultation would be held on the proposals to change local bus services. SCC took this decision based on the feedback submitted in the first consultation which indicated a need to see the detail of the proposals before any changes were agreed. The views submitted in the second consultation will inform the final proposals for change. On 23 June the final proposals that have been drawn up following phases one and two of the consultation will go to Cabinet, the council's main decision making body for its consideration.

Foreword

Bus Users UK is a non-profit organisation that campaigns on behalf of all passengers to improve standards in travel.

As a representative body, we recognise the diversity of bus passengers and appreciate how difficult it can be to capture the views of such a disparate group. Our mission, however, is to ensure that the voice of all passengers is heard, which is why we were keen to work with Surrey County Council (SCC) to enhance its planned consultation process.

SCC has been tasked in its medium term financial plan with delivering £2million in savings from an overall budget of £19.39 million for the three years from 2015/16. The aim of this review is to 'make savings while maintaining the services that residents rely on most, services that get people to work, hospitals, schools and essential shopping.' To achieve this, SCC has sought the views of the people who use those services.

Bus Users has a great deal of expertise in engaging with the range of groups that make up bus passengers, expertise that was considered by SCC to be valuable to the review process. Through an innovative pilot programme specifically designed for this review, Bus Users worked with SCC to devise a number of events, telephone surveys and focus groups to ensure that the views and concerns of the range of passengers in Surrey were more fairly represented.

While not all the suggestions went to plan at the implementation stage, SCC is to be commended for its commitment to this consultation and to making every effort to capture and consider the views of all passengers.

Claire Walters
Chief Executive, Bus Users

1 Aims

Surrey County Council (SCC) has to make significant savings on its transport budget.

In order to save money while maintaining essential services, SCC has undertaken a local transport review and commissioned Bus Users to host a series of events to canvass the view of bus passengers.

The aim of these events was to target specific groups to ensure that as broad a range of views as possible was captured and represented within the consultation. These views would inform the final decision of the council's cabinet on 26 May 2015.

2 Summary

- SCC engaged Bus Users to provide expertise to its programme of public engagement as part of the consultation process
- Events were organised by SCC and local partners, including Bus Users, to gain the views of people affected by disability, the needs of local business and wider bus passenger groups. Where these events were held, the outcomes were extremely positive. However, there were some organisational

difficulties with events focused on the needs of elderly and younger people in Surrey and these events had to be cancelled at short notice. Bus Users attempted to gain the views of stakeholders in other ways, as did SCC

- Despite these difficulties the consultation received a significant response and SCC was satisfied with levels of participation
- While the exercise achieved its objectives, its overall success can only be determined if the views and input captured by the consultation process are reflected in the final decision taken in May
- While Bus Users was involved in the consultation process, it had no involvement in the transport planning and policy framework

3 Background to the review

3.1 Current spend and provision

Officers from SCC have been tasked in its medium term financial plan with delivering £2million in savings from an overall budget of £19.39 million for the three years from the 2015/16, as part of the Council's response to a reduction in Central Government financial support

- The consultation document issued by SCC notes that it currently spends over £19 million on local transport, of which £8.9 million is spent on subsidising local bus services
- Around 29 million bus journeys are made by people in Surrey each year, and more than half of these journeys are made on bus services in Surrey that are not used by enough people to pay for the cost of running them commercially
- SCC pays between 50p and £3.00 for each journey taken by a passenger on these buses
- Around £8.7 million is spent by SCC on concessionary bus in Surrey and SCC currently enhances the national minimum scheme (9.30am to 11pm Mon-Fri, any time at weekends) by enabling disabled bus pass holders to travel at any time of any day and offering a companion pass to qualifying pass holders who cannot travel without assistance
- SCC spends around £640,000 on community transport such as Dial-a-Ride, Community minibuses, voluntary car schemes and taxi vouchers
- Currently, around 31% of journeys are made by concessionary pass holders (mostly older people) or children
- Passenger numbers have remained constant in recent years, despite the service changes made in the previous SCC Bus Review (2010 to 2013)
- As the Surrey population grows older, and encouraged by the free travel offered, demand for concessionary travel continues to rise

3.2 Legal requirement to consult

There is an expectation in public law that Councils should carry out a consultation process ahead of any major changes to service provision.

The consultation must involve those people and groups directly affected by the changes and local bus planning must take account of all bus users. The people involved in the consultation should be given clear and sufficient information on the proposed changes to ensure they can make a well-informed response.

Finally, the Council Cabinet must consider all relevant issues and all responses to the consultation when making any decision, now and in the future, on changes to financial support to local buses, concessionary fares available to passengers, and provision of community transport for people who cannot use conventional local bus services.

3.3 Shaping the consultation

The role of Bus Users in the consultation process was to assist with engagement events. It was agreed that the communications and engagement team at SCC would take responsibility for the organisation and promotion of the events, using their in-house resources and contacts.

The aim of this series of events was to target representatives of business and business organisations (jointly with Surrey Connects) and organisations representing older and disabled people (jointly with the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People) as well as wider bus passenger groups in Surrey.

Pre-engagement meetings had already been held by SCC with various bodies such as Surrey and Sussex Association of Parish & Town Councils, Surrey Community Action, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, Disability Alliance Network Surrey, Age UK and Action for Carers Surrey.

For other stakeholders and the wider public a full consultation and engagement plan had been drawn up. All partner and stakeholder groups would be offered briefings as appropriate. Communications were sent out to stakeholders informing them of the public consultation and encouraging involvement. These were sent to:

- SCC Members, Borough Councillors, Local Committees, MP's, LEPS, Central Government
- District and Borough Councils, Parish & Town Councils, Resident Associations, Neighbourhood Forums, Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Employers & Business Organisations via Surrey Connects, Schools & Colleges, Phase Council, Public Health, Acute Hospitals, CCG's
- Equality organisation (disability and older people groups etc.), Faith Groups, Bus Users and North West Surrey Bus Users Group
- Community transport providers and service operators
- Internally – Schools and Learning, Adult Social Care etc.

In order to engage with passengers across the county it was decided to hold a number of 'Your Bus Matters' events at priority SCC locations to maximise the capture of diverse user groups. Your Bus Matters is an on-street, on-bus public consultation mechanism which has been developed over many years by Bus Users.

All of those involved in the consultation process were asked to detail the contribution the bus network makes to their members' lifestyles and choices, as well as outlining the impact any reduction in bus services would have on them as individuals, on other services or amenities, and on the local economy.

4 Events and summary of outcomes

4.1 Disability Forum, Park House, Leatherhead, Surrey 15 December 2014

Organisations represented included the Disability Alliance Network, Surrey Choices, Surrey Coalition, Age UK Surrey, Motability Woking Access Group, Surrey Deaf Forum, Swale House plus individuals and carers.

The meeting was led by Carol Pearson, Claire Walters (Bus Users) and Paul Millin (SCC) and focused on:

- The value of SCC's supplementary funding to the national concessionary fares scheme. The minimum national provision is to provide free travel to concessionary pass holders between 9.30am-11.00pm, Monday to Friday and all day Saturday, Sunday and Public Holidays. SCC provides additional funding to allow disabled people to travel for free without a time restriction. SCC also offers a companion pass (C+) to qualifying pass holders who cannot travel without assistance. This means a pass holder who needs assistance can take someone with them to enable travel, such as a friend, carer or relative, and this companion can also travel for free. Views were sought on the perceived value of these extra concessions.

- The importance of bus and community transport services and the impact of any changes.

Issues were raised over accessibility, visibility and publicity of the consultation exercise:

- Questions were raised as to whether the process had been accessible, especially to those with a visual impairment.
- Deaf or hearing impaired passengers had encountered problems trying to access information, noting that SCC had provided a QR code for information about Travel Smart but not an SMS number for the review.
- The consultation hadn't specifically mentioned people with learning disabilities, especially referencing the companion passes.
- Several representatives had only been made aware of the consultation by being invited to the meeting.
- There was widespread consensus that as SCC had the contact details of all concessionary pass holders, they should have been contacted individually and given the opportunity to respond to the consultation.

Response to the issues raised:

- The survey link has been on the SCC website since the consultation started and has been communicated via emails to all stakeholders in the process. The contact centre staff have been briefed in order to be able to assist with any issues
- Posters and hard copy surveys have been printed and distributed to multiple locations around the county. The survey has also been provided in easy read and large print formats, and has been distributed by our adult social care network, and is available on request via the contact centre
- SCC had brought bus operators and representatives of the hearing impaired community together to discuss issues and there has also been input from the Guide Dogs groups to advise on issues for visually impaired people.
- SCC's communications department has been tasked to ensure that the SMS number is included on future printed literature. It is already on the website for the review, although there are issues with using the text relay number through the contact centre.
- The Data Protection Act prohibited SCC from contacting pass holders as they had not given their consent in advance. The Surrey Disability Register, however, was attempting to contact as many people as possible.

During a break out session, groups were asked to consider the following questions:

What would be the impact on your quality of life if the additional concessions were withdrawn?

- It was strongly felt that this would reduce independence, choice and the ability to make spontaneous independent travel decisions among current pass holders.
- Pass holders would have to seek alternative travel arrangements which would have both a cost and time implication. It could also affect the lives of friends or family members who might be relied on to provide lifts or financial support.
- The ability of pass holders to engage fully in society would be greatly reduced or made more costly.
- There would be reduced opportunities for employment and education, given the difficulty of travelling outside of concessionary pass hours.
- Greater travel costs would reduce disposal income which would have an economic impact on town centres particularly.
- All of this would place additional stress and financial pressure on the user and their family, particularly if the pass holder is the main wage earner.
- There are currently 12,734 concessionary disabled bus pass holders with an additional 3,127 companion passes in circulation (2,859 of which are qualifying disabled pass holders and 268 qualifying older pass holders) so the impact of this change would be significant.
- People with learning disabilities who often need a travel companion would be particularly

vulnerable and could be left isolated. Any resulting mental health issues would place additional pressure on the NHS.

- The withdrawal of this concession should be seen in the context of wider cuts to benefits and services among people with disabilities.
- Any small saving made to the SCC Transport budget by making this change would be negated by the resulting increased burden on Adult Social Care, the NHS and the Department for Works and Pensions.
- There would be a negative environmental impact if bus users have to travel by car or taxi.
- It was noted that many parts of the county are rural and may not operate frequent post-9.30am bus services.

There were specific concerns that:

- Any final decision should be communicated far enough in advance that people can at least try to make alternative arrangements.
- Some felt that news of this consultation had not been effectively communicated, and that change, or even the possibility of change, can cause anxiety in some pass holders especially vulnerable people with a learning disability
- The way in which any changes are communicated needs to be considered in terms of the different needs and abilities of different communities.
- It was also strongly felt that aside from the consultation, drivers and operators needs to be more aware of the needs of people with disabilities. Infrastructure enhancements such as talking buses, GPS enabled buses, raised kerbs, effective RTPI and NFC enabled or 'talking' bus stops would make travel by public transport easier for all passengers.

What alternative provision would you want or need if your bus or community transport service was changed?

- Dial-a-ride and voluntary services were felt to be too inflexible and often have to be booked in advance, reducing the ability to make spontaneous travel choices particularly problematic for those with mental health issues or unpredictable illnesses
- There were different understandings of how a community service operates and a disparity in service provision across the county. Not all areas offer a text number for dial-a-ride for example, and while some areas accept travel companions others won't.
- Some of these inconsistencies between boroughs make travelling across boundaries complicated restrictive. Many booking systems were Internet-dependent and any alternative that was similar to dial-a-ride would need to be fully accessible.
- A dial-a-ride service, while welcome, was not felt to be a viable alternative to a time-tabled bus service. Voluntary services often require a donation which many disabled people cannot afford.
- It was recognised that working with Community Transport providers would make them less reliant on either SCC or borough and district funding.
- It was also felt that by working together, local authorities could enable Community Transport to cross boundaries and operate after 5pm, making it a more viable proposition.
- No option was felt to offer a genuine alternative to the existing bus provision.

It was felt that SCC could make greater use of the information generated by disabled and companion bus passes. These cards are smart card enabled and information about each journey is held by the operator. Some operators can differentiate between a companion and other bus passes which could provide useful information to SCC.

The meeting also considered the possible impact of no bus service:

- While some people use the bus pass intermittently, they are nonetheless reliant on timetabled services.
- Not everyone had a third party they could approach for help with transport and the cost of a taxi

was felt to be prohibitive.

- Some people would be forced to stay at home and become isolated while others might be encouraged to move out of the area.

The issue of cross boundary availability was raised by those living near the boundary for TFL. Returning from central London attractions late in the evening would be difficult if restrictions were applied. It was felt that SCC should negotiate with TFL to enable use of the companion pass in London. The issue of crossing the border to a cashless or oyster card system was also raised.

What impact would changes have on other services?

- Hospital visits and access to medical services and appointments would be more difficult to arrange and keep.
- There would be similar concerns for educational provision and employers may need to alter work patterns or face losing staff members.
- The financial burden on families would increase and result in reduced spending elsewhere.
- Less money spent in shops would have an impact on local town centres.
- This could lead to increased isolation as people find themselves unable to access services.
- Any cost savings to SCC would have to be offset against the financial burden placed on Adult Social Care, as people stay in their own accommodation.
- Given that carers save the government significant amounts of money, it was questioned why this group should be targeted by the cuts.
- Enhancements to the concessionary pass and companion pass should be seen as an investment in independence, leading to lower costs in the future. Reducing these enhancements was seen as a backward step towards isolation after so much work on inclusion, particularly now that SCC is recruiting an independent travel trainer that offers free travel training.

Other identified impacts included:

- Possible overcrowding with 9.30am being the time when disabled and older people are eligible to travel.
- There would be a greater demand for the Patient Transport services resulting in reduced availability or more pressure on the non-disabled community.
- If charities were to step in to replace some of the withdrawn provision for their particular area it could impact their ability to fund other work.
- There would be a significant impact on mobility: many people had relied on the concessionary pass to get to the meeting.

Summary

- The companion pass, and the extended time validity of the concessionary pass, are vital to users and the costs to Surrey County Council are proportionally small.
- Withdrawal would cause isolation, frustration, depression and greatly reduce independence in an already vulnerable and disadvantaged community; the loss would disproportionately impact on those who could least respond to or mitigate its consequences.
- This is a service which enables people to live a normal life. Any alternative provision needs to meet the requirements of the people it serves.
- People need to be able to access other services to engage fully in life.
- Suggested alternatives to the current bus service are not attractive mainly because they do not cross boundaries.
- Cuts to evening and weekend services would have the same effect.

Review of the event

People at the event gave their views openly and illustrated the impact that the proposals might have. While people often spoke as individuals rather than as representatives of their organisations, the event met the

objectives of SCC.

4.2 Business Forum with Surrey Connects, Surrey University Technology Park, 15 December 2014

Surrey Connects is an independent, business-led economic development company working in partnership with SCC to stimulate enterprise growth across Surrey. Organisations represented included East Surrey Hospital Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Allianz, Centrica, Siemens, Epsom Coaches, Alexander Dennis, University of Surrey, Surrey Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and the IOD.

The meeting was led by Mark Pearson, Chairman of Surrey Connects, Claire Walters (Bus Users) and Paul Millin (SCC). Representatives were asked the following questions:

What is currently working well and what would the impact be of any cuts to bus services?

The Royal Surrey County Hospital is trying to implement an integrated transport plan. Under current planning guidance, parking space provision has been reduced from 1 space per 25 employees to 1 space per 40 employees. They questioned how this was consistent with the likely planned reduction in bus service provision. They also noted that car parking is expensive with few hospital visitors likely to park all day and that congestion is a major issue when accessing their site.

Students and employees at the University of Surrey are reliant on public transport; the University currently spends £2million per annum on supporting local services serving postcode areas from which students are banned from bringing cars onto campus. Given that transport is a significant factor for students in selecting to study at the University, they would like to see cuts that have the least impact on their users.

The key issues for Bank of America Merrill Lynch are recruitment and retention of staff formerly based at their London sites. The decision to relocate to business parks in Surrey was partly driven by ease of access. Their issue is the connection from the railway station to business parks, where the current public transport offer was poor in comparison with TfL provision. These organisations were having to subsidise private transport in order to retain staff.

There was praise overall for the Park and Ride provision in Guildford. It was also recognised that most businesses in Surrey are small and have a different range of problems.

What doesn't work with the current network?

- In comparison with a central London location where the perception of public transport is good, there is a lack of understanding of how to access public transport among the Surrey population, where car ownership is generally high.
- Visitor parking at employment sites is limited with customers taking their business elsewhere if a parking space is too difficult to find.
- There is a stigma attached to bus use and a need to educate the population on how to access the local public transport network.
- There is a distinction between public perceptions of rail travel and perceptions of the local bus network.
- Infrastructure investment in bus passenger waiting facilities at Guildford station was needed.
- The journey needs to be considered from origin to destination: a break in the quality of the journey at any point affects the perception of the entire experience.
- Visitors seeking onward journeys from Guildford Rail Station were left with the impression of an unconnected network.

What are your views on the current bus offer?

- Poor punctuality.
- The lack of information on route availability

- The route network itself, particularly the fact that it remains relatively unchanged and has not taken into account the growth of business parks in recent years. This was attributed to a lack of forward planning in transport policy to integrate new areas of work.
- The unreliability of the Real Time Information system.
- Planned inter-connections not working.
- The quality of the vehicles themselves including the comfort of seats.
- The cost of individual fares (especially from rural areas).

As a result of these issues, several delegates said that they preferred to travel by taxi and several of the larger employers were having to pay for private vehicles to transport staff from the railway station to their sites. In addition to the cost to their business, these vehicles were adding to the congestion at key pinch points, made worse by their inability to use the Park and Ride sites or the bus station on these contracts.

Group discussion around changes and outcomes:

- Some of the issues raised were governed by national policy or other agencies outside of the control of SCC and so beyond the scope of the review.
- Some employers had suggested a level of collaboration between service providers that was either precluded by legislation or could not be justified by private companies seeking to make an individual profit.
- There was a ‘window of tolerance’ that defines whether a bus is early or late with excess running time built into schedules to allow for congestion.
- The issue of reliability with the RTPI system was recognised but assurances given that this was being addressed.
- While it was recognised that the bus network has not changed significantly in 50 years, it would be unnecessary to map an entirely new network as providers know where the population is based. It was also felt that changes to long-established service patterns, no matter how well communicated, would be poorly received.
- It was recognised that flexibility should be encouraged when operators seek commercial opportunities. However some of the routes suggested would be extremely peak intensive and run empty most of the day making them commercially unviable.
- It was agreed that some support is needed for commercial services for employers in Guildford especially employers on edge of town industrial estates, although it was pointed out that some existing services run close to business parks.
- It was suggested that employers had a role to play in raising awareness of travel opportunities among their employees: if staff had confidence in the bus service they would be more likely to use it, which in turn would encourage greater provision. In the meantime, however, employers need to retain their staff.
- If staff are to use bus services they need to be visible and reliable.

Paul Millin offered to facilitate a discussion with some of these businesses that provided private transport for their employees, to provide an opportunity to link up provision, thus reducing the cost to the organisations. It was suggested that senior managers lead by example and use local bus services themselves, as well as thinking creatively about encouraging their staff to do the same.

Review of the event

The outcomes of this event met the objectives of the review. The consultation and its likely impact were highlighted to those present and were disseminated throughout Surrey Connects. Members indicated that their organisations would respond individually.

This particular event presented an opportunity. Bus Users challenged the six big companies in Surrey to come up with a sustainable, collaborative and viable public transport solution to get their staff from stations to business parks.

These businesses could work with SCC and local operators to supply organisational data on what works well, identify where there are gaps (such as multi-operator season tickets with electronic top ups) and come up with initiatives to encourage take up of public transport.

Bus Users would willingly provide additional support to such an initiative.

4.3 Roving 'Your Bus Matters' events

A programme of roving street consultation events was designed in order to capture the opinions of local residents and existing bus users in various locations. The programme's locations were determined by SCC and covered Addlestone and Walton-on-Thames on Thursday 8 January, Oxted and Dorking on Friday 9 January and Godalming and Woking on Saturday 10 January. Stagecoach provided a bus and driver to act as a focal point and the event was led by staff from SCC and staff and volunteers from Bus Users.

The events were designed to raise awareness of the consultation and distribute copies of the consultation questionnaire. In all, 124 completed individual comment or complaint sheets were received during these events and roughly 600 copies of the consultation questionnaire were handed out. The comments/complaints were collated and have been forwarded to SCC for action and onward transmission to the operators concerned.

One noticeable feature was that there was an unprompted willingness amongst concessionary pass holder passengers to 'trade' a token fare for retaining existing service levels (recognising that this is not an option available to SCC).

The unprompted awareness of the review amongst the target population was low: awareness had not been raised by local media coverage.

4.4 Older Persons' Forum

This event was originally planned as a public meeting with the administration outsourced to Age Concern. Age UK Surrey was asked to identify suitable participants, specifically bus users and those representing their interests. The decision was taken by SCC not to proceed, however, due to the very low numbers of confirmed attendees.

Instead a telephone survey was carried out using three key questions to prompt conversation:

- What would be the impact on your quality of life if the bus network was reduced? What do you do now that would reduce or stop if your current bus journey was not possible?
- What alternative provision would you want or need if your bus service or community transport was changed?
- What do you think would be the impact on the retail, health, education or any other sectors in Surrey if public transport provision was reduced?

Some of the organisations contacted for this survey may have contributed separately to the SCC transport consultation (see Appendix 6.3 on page 16).

Summary of responses:

- Many comments reflected the perceived inadequacies of the current bus network, with infrequent and sometimes unreliable services and little or no provision in the evenings and at weekends
- There was a call for cheaper car parking and greater provision of parking spaces to compensate for the loss of bus services, while recognising the negative impact of increased pollution
- There was concern that bus drivers did not always wait until elderly passengers were seated before

pulling away

- Drivers did not ensure that elderly people were given priority seating over mothers with buggies
- The cleanliness of buses and anti-social behaviour such as loud music was a concern
- Among some passengers, local bus services contrasted favourably with services in their other home countries
- Many concessionary pass holders would be willing to pay a token contribution in order to protect services

The general view was that further reductions would impact commensurately:

- Regular and reliable bus services enable many people to engage fully with local services and activities
- Volunteering, in particular, plays an important role in many older people's lives and many organisations would not be able to exist without their help
- The bus often provides a lifeline for vital health facilities and hospital visits
- Older passengers would have to arrange alternative forms of transport that would have an impact on congestion and pollution and would incur a cost to the individual
- Older people would become isolated, unable to access services, contribute economically to town centres, or socialise
- There was concern that older people would become physically less active if bus services were reduced

4.5 Youth Forum

This event was originally conceived as two public meetings with the administration managed by SCC's Youth Services arm. The first meeting was to be made up of representatives from the FE sector and training providers, the second of young people. The decision was taken by SCC not to proceed, however, due to the very low numbers of confirmed attendees.

To encourage more young bus users to respond to the consultation, the Heads of the following colleges were contacted by Bus Users; Brooklands College, Esher College, Guildford College, Merrist Wood College, Richmond College, Salesian College, Strode College, West Thames College and Woking College.

In addition a number of schools in Surrey were contacted and Claire Walters, Chief Executive of Bus Users, was invited to visit Thamesmead College where the views of the pupils through tutor groups and class representatives on the School Council were gathered.

In addition, contact was made with Surrey Young Carers, which provided the results of a survey carried out with carers aged between 9 and 17 years old.

4.6 Thamesmead School Council

Summary of responses:

- The perceived high costs of travel were a significant factor for many as was having to pay adult fares
- Cashless buses were a major concern with some young people reporting that they had become stranded when they needed to get home, not knowing about the emergency option that drivers have
- The location of stops and routes and poor connections was prohibiting and made some journeys very complex
- The timing of buses and the infrequency of services often resulted in long waits, late attendance leading to punishments, and no leeway for poor traffic
- Many young people have to resort to 'parent taxis' leading to increased congestion and pollution while for others, this was not an option available to them

- Many services are cramped and overcrowded at peak times
- Young people are more reliant on bus services. So the choices of many school leavers, especially those who are less academic or from poorer backgrounds are restricted by the lack of available buses to specific educational establishments, unreliable or badly-timed services and cost. This leads to many dropping out after a few weeks and struggling to find suitable alternatives.
- Suggestions for improvements included reduced fares, especially off-peak, monthly deals/cards/travelcards, improved punctuality, increased frequency, friendlier bus drivers and Wifi.

4.7 Follow up telephone survey of Surrey schools

Pupils felt that there were not enough buses at peak times, or that they were arriving at college either too early or too late. Customer service issues were also raised with pupils believing that bus drivers are grumpy and impolite: there was the general feeling that drivers assume all young people will be rude and simply pre-empt this with rudeness themselves.

The cleanliness of buses was an issue despite pupils admitting that they do put their feet on the seats, that chewing gum gets stuck to seats, that food rubbish is often left behind and that body odour often leads to unpleasant smells. There was concern, however, that young people are attributed collective blame and are not treated as individuals.

4.8 Surrey Young Carers

Respondents were between 9 and 17 years of age and currently using the bus between 3 and 5 days a week. They were asked for what purposes they would use bus travel if it was free.

Responses included: providing social and emotional help (seeing friends and having time for themselves); physical activities such as playing sport or going to the gym; educational access to schools, colleges and after school activities; employment including going to interviews, getting a job and accessing work or volunteering, with the benefit of financial independence and contribution to the household income; helping with the caring role itself, getting to hospital or GP appointments, getting the family shopping, taking younger siblings to school and activities and, of course, getting home in an emergency.

Many identified the benefits of free bus travel: *“I could also access leisure centres and activities to reduce my stress levels and provide time-out from my caring role”* and *“Will help us get out of the house more, away from our caring roles”* and *“Won't have to walk everywhere, as my mum doesn't drive”*.

Several reflected on the money it would save from the household budget: *“My mum can't afford to pay for my bus travel as it costs me over £10 to get to college every week”* and *“Sometimes I cannot afford to go to the gym because I don't have enough money”* and *“I cannot afford to see my sister and nephew much because the buses are expensive”*.

One respondent commented: *“I would be able to get out and see my friends and get a break from my caring role without having to pester my mum for money when she has enough stress already.”*

5 Bus Users' observations on the consultation process

Whoever is given the final task of evaluating the consultation will need to assess whether the process of this consultation followed the highest standards of current best practice if the outcome and any subsequent changes to services are to have the understanding, if not the support, of the public.

The last bus review consultation conducted by SCC in October 2010 was commended by Passenger Focus as a 'most thorough and inclusive exercise'. It seems reasonable, therefore, that an evaluation should look at

this process and outcomes in the light of the criteria of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee:

- *At the outset, it is important to state that consultation should not be confused with notification, as asking people for input when everything is settled is not consultation.*
- *It is essential that all interested parties are identified early on in the process so that the consultation exercises can be designed and targeted accordingly.*
- *The consultation must be targeted to identify and engage with those who use the affected services and those who rely on or benefit from them.*
- *When consultation exercises need to reach a diverse audience, several approaches may be required to ensure their views are properly captured as a variety of different approaches may be required to reach a diverse audience – it is unlikely that a single method/approach will provide sufficient information.*
- *Community organisations can help provide an effective way of reaching people or groups whose voice might otherwise go unheard as, even when timing is tight and the consultation needs to fit into fixed timetables (e.g. a budget cycle) there may still be alternative ways of gathering views.*
- *Careful consideration should be given to how to alert potential consultees to the consultation exercise and how to get views from relevant sectors of the community and the economy by being proactive when disseminating consultation documents.*
- *Any consultation material needs to be effectively targeted and distributed so that those who rely on the affected services and those who contribute to them have all been made aware of the consultation and their opportunity to influence the process.*

The following three sets of questions should be posed:

Firstly:

- Did the consultation take place as soon as there was sufficient information for effective and informed dialogue?
- Was the consultation designed to influence the final decision of elected members?
- Was the consultation scheduled as early as these two factors would allow?

Secondly:

- Did the consultation make it clear why the changes were being considered?
- Did the consultation explain the impact on the individual by including, for example, details of all services that could lose funding, services that would not lose funding and other facilities that might have been effected (information at bus stops, travel centres etc)?

Thirdly:

- Did the consultation provide a sense of the size and impact of the proposals?
- Did it include details of alternative options and the reasons for not putting them forward?
- Was it clear how many people might be effected by each of these options?
- Were options given for alternative forms of transport such as demand-responsive transport or taxis?
- Was a timetable given for the consultation process?

Points for consideration:

- The SCC has effectively given 12 months' notice of cuts to the transport budget. The response period for the consultation was well within recommended guidelines. A window of 12 weeks from 8 October 2014 to 15 January 2015 was allocated for the public to respond although this was extended until 5 February 2015 due to the overwhelming response. 6,723 individual responses were received through the consultation process. 14 postal responses and 68 email responses were received, and hundreds of calls were fielded through the contact centre.
- The Council's Cabinet will make its final decision on 26 May 2015. This allows plenty of time for a thorough analysis of the responses and for a comprehensive and informed options paper to be

presented to the Cabinet. It should be made clear in the final report exactly how the consultation responses have been recorded and whether they have been taken into account in the final decision. The report should also set out a timeline for what happens next.

- There are concerns, however, that the period for implementation is extremely short (the final decision on the consultation is due in May 2015 and the next round of tenders for subsidised bus services will have been let by September 2015). This does not allow for further consultation on the impact of service cuts.
- It is also clear from the consultation that passengers need as much notice as possible of changes to bus services to give them time to make alternative arrangements.
- The engagement of SCC with bus operators during the 2010 bus review led to a number of services being made wholly or partly commercial, resulting in a major subsidy saving. Without revealing details to Bus Users, SCC has confirmed that similar negotiations have been undertaken as part of the current consultation.
- No specific information was offered as to what services might be cut: often the only indication given was whether a service was currently operated commercially and therefore unlikely to form part of the review.
- Feedback from the roving bus events suggested low public awareness of the consultation and the likely impact on public transport.
- A greater number of responses were received as the consultation deadline approached. So while it is difficult to assess whether all of this can be attributed to the roving bus events, the events certainly raised awareness of the consultation.
- Turnout at the disability forum on 15 December 2014 in Leatherhead was good although some had been unaware of the consultation until they were invited to the event.
- While the costs of running a consultation appear significant, they must be seen in the context of the savings that need to be made.

6 Appendices

6.1 Organisations represented at Park House on 15 December 2014:

- Disability Alliance Network
- Surrey Choices
- Surrey Coalition
- SCC and parent
- Age UK Surrey Motability /Woking Access Group
- Surrey Deaf Forum
- Swale House

6.2 Organisations represented at Guildford Technology Park 15 December 2014:

- East Surrey Hospital
- Bank of America
- Allianz
- Centrica
- Siemens
- Epsom Coaches
- Alexander Dennis
- University of Surrey
- Surrey Chamber of Commerce
- IOD

6.3. Organisations contacted as part of the telephone survey of older persons organisations 27 January to 2 February 2015:

- Action for Carers – Guildford Surrey (Carers of all ages to include young carers)
- Age UK Runnymede and Spelthorne
- Age Concern Merstham, Redhill & Reigate
- Age Concern Banstead
- Age Concern Mole Valley
- Age Concern Epsom & Ewell
- Age Concern Godstone
- Age Concern Dorking
- Alzheimer Society
- Community Connectors – Surrey
- Cranleigh Arts Centre
- 40 Degreez Centre (Young People)
- Domestic Abuse- Surrey (Male & Female via Sanctuary)
- Douglas Brunton Centre
- Esher Friendship Centre
- Faith Groups in Surrey
- Farnham Volunteer Bureau
- Guildford Volunteer Bureau
- Guildford & Waverley Mental Health Stakeholder Group
- Spelthorne Older People’s Forum via Spelthorne VAIS
- SCYP
- Surrey Voluntary Action.
- Voluntary Action In Spelthorne (VAIS)
- Woking Older People’s Forum via WVAS

6.4 Colleges contacted by Bus Users for Youth responses to Surrey plans 27 Jan – 4 Feb:

- Brooklands College
- Esher College
- Guildford College
- Merrist Wood College
- Richmond College
- Salesian College
- Strode College
- Surrey Young Carers
- West Thames College
- Woking College

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