

Passenger Transport Group
Hampshire County Council

By Email: environment.bus.review@hants.gov.uk

2 August 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

Response to HCC Consultation on Proposals to Change Street Lighting, Supported Passenger Transport Services and the Concessionary Travel Scheme in Hampshire

Rowlands Castle Parish Council (RCPC) noted the above Consultation and considered its response at its Meeting on 16 July 2018. It was agreed to comment as follows:

Proposal 1: To switch off street lights on residential streets for part of the night.

RCPC understands the rationale but would welcome local consultation on specific proposals so that the community is involved in the decision making. It will be essential to be able to counter concerns about security for many may describe this as a 'burglars' charter'. What is the Police view of these changes? There needs to be greater justification before a final decision is made.

Notice needs to be taken of the need for lighting around essential public services like Rowlands Castle Station where the last train from London arrives around 1.20am.

Proposals 2 & 3: To make operational changes to the current public bus and ferry services which HCC supports, including the frequency and/or days of services. Also to replace some supported public bus services with alternative forms of community transport such as Taxishares and Call and Go

RCPC would urge HCC to study the specific commentary in its attached paper which sets out suggestions to reduce the operating costs of our local First Group operated Bus Route 27 (Rowlands Castle to Havant & Emsworth), together with the alternative S106 Transport Contribution options that appear to be available to replace existing developer contributions funding the current service and which expire in January 2019. Whilst appreciating the flaws inherent in mixing capital and revenue budgets, these have been accepted as a funding solution for the existing bus service and at least merit consideration in this debate.

The aforementioned paper also highlights key elements in the Hampshire Local Transport Plan and East Hampshire District Council Local Plan Joint Core Strategy which should steer strategic planning in the county.

As is the case nationally, the concessionary bus pass scheme makes no allowance for means testing. RCPC accepts that this would not be a practical solution in the short term but is something that deserves more consideration. For instance, is it right that well off residents should receive concessionary travel? In principle, RCPC supports the proposed 50p single journey charge for concessionary bus pass holders as a revenue-raising exercise, albeit its effects locally on Route 27 will be minimal, This still leaves £1.66 per journey for HCC to subsidise. RCPC recognises that bus pass holders in Rowlands Castle would be very seriously affected if the Route 27 bus was replaced by a taxi as all concessions would then be withdrawn under this proposal.

The population of Rowlands Castle Parish is set to expand in the coming years as new housing is completed. New developments such as Land South of Oaklands (Oaklands II and III), Land at Oaklands House, Land East of College Close, the Keyline site will create c 200 new dwellings in the Parish, including properties specifically designed for those 55+ years old, all of which are close to the existing Route 27. These new developments are likely to provide additional patronage, both for the short journeys to and from Rowlands Castle village centre, and beyond for Havant and Emsworth. Public transport facilities, including

Rowlands Castle station and the London-Portsmouth railway line (again on Route 27), are consistently used as a justification for new development in the area. In addition, 700+ new dwellings are planned for Horndean and 2,000+ for Emsworth. This development will add to traffic both within and beyond the Parish. It is essential the public transport service is maintained to combat further traffic congestion from new development for the good of the environment.

RCPC believes it is crucial that HCC ensures that the fabric of public services continue to exist so protecting the core funding given to frontline community transport seems appropriate. Subject to the above commentary, RCPC supports the first 2 proposals, making operational changes to current bus and ferry services and replacing some services with alternatives where revenue deficits dictate this to be the only viable way forward. If there isn't the demand then RCPC recognises that cuts have to be made accordingly. Looking at Route 27, which is currently dependent on developer contributions for its continued operation, RCPC would like to see alternative modes of public transport discussed with the local community should the decision be made not to maintain the subsidy. It is essential that changes are not made without adequate consultation. For example, as we have said could a change to the Route increase patronage or significantly reduce cost? Some local residents, many of them elderly and/or infirm, use the bus for a very short journey back home from the village centre and would be unlikely to replicate this by taxi. Do we want to stop such people going out?

Proposal 4: To reduce the amount of printed material and make better use of electronic information.

RCPC is worried about the suggestion that greater reliance be placed on the internet than printed material. Some people struggle with the internet - or don't have access to it - so how do they fare? If the bus services are to be replaced or modified then it is essential that this does not coincide with a change in the way that information is disseminated. RCPC cannot see that the bus companies could be relied on to plug the gap as they are under similar pressure to manage down costs. Information at bus stops as to the current timetable - and ideally whether the expected bus is running - is integral to an efficient bus service.

Proposal 5: To reduce the amount of support available to organisations that provide, promote or support transport services

Reducing support to organisations that promote public transport seems to be short-sighted. How can the services acquire more patronage if they aren't to be encouraged? The need to promote the railway line to attract new users is recognised in the Community Rail Partnerships (East Hampshire's being an active group which includes Rowlands Castle). What is the justification in changing this approach?

Proposal 6: To remove the use of the Older Person's Bus Pass on Taxishares, Dial-a-Ride and Call and Go service

Removing the Old Person's bus pass on taxishares etc is worth considering but would have to be staggered as the impact in one fell swoop could be up to £9 per return journey on Dial-a-Ride. Would such a move hit those genuinely financially-stretched is it a facility mostly used by the relatively well-off? How many people use this concession? Without more detail, the potential impact is unknown. If fewer people then use Taxishare services, (and numbers are unlikely to increase if the cost rises!) then this must threaten the service in the long run - especially if the means of publicising it are reduced too.

Finally, and by way of an overall observation, the more older people (those who predominantly benefit from these policies) are encouraged to get out, then the healthier they will remain, both physically and mentally, and therefore the lower the requirement for care/health spending. This is obviously all but impossible to quantify but is an observation borne of sound common sense.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this Consultation.

Yours faithfully



Lisa Walker
Clerk to Rowlands Castle Parish Council

Enc: RCPC's Accompanying paper