

Agenda Item No. 4(b)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

25 October 2016

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

**PETITION – BUS SERVICE 122, REINSTATEMENT OF SERVICE FOR
RIDGEWAY, DALE CLOSE AND THE WOODLANDS**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To consider the County Council's response to a petition requesting the reinstatement of a bus service for Ridgeway in Shirebrook, Dale Close in Nether Langwith and The Woodlands area of Whaley Thorns.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

A petition was received by the Cabinet Member on 19 January 2016, requesting that the County Council reinstates a local bus service for Ridgeway, Dale Close and The Woodlands. Additional signatures were received on 21 June 2016 and both sets of signatures have been taken into account for this report.

It was resolved that the Strategic Director, Economy, Transport and Communities should be asked to investigate the matters raised in the petition (Minute Nos. 1/16 and 63/16 refers).

Until October 2015, Ridgeway, Dale Close and The Woodlands were all served by local bus service 122, which operated between The Woodlands, Shirebrook and Leen Valley. Service 122 provided an hourly bus service from approximately 09:00am through to 17:00pm, Monday to Saturday and was operated by TM Travel under contract to the County Council.

The Council is required to periodically retender all of its contracted services. The contract with TM Travel for Service 122 expired on 24 October 2015 and could not be extended further. Consequently, prior to the expiry date of this contract, the service was retendered by the Council, with a view to securing replacement provision from 25 October 2015 onwards.

The tender for the replacement contract specified continuation of Service 122 to an unchanged route and timetable. However, as well as submitting tender bids fully compliant to the tendered specification, bus operators are also able to submit additional proposals which propose an alternative specification to the tender, including an alternative timetable and/or route.

An alternative tender submission was received from Stagecoach East Midlands, which proposed replacing Service 122 with extensions to Stagecoach East Midlands' existing commercial Services 12 and 23, at a significantly reduced subsidy cost for the Council (a saving of £38,375, or 65.7%, per annum). Stagecoach East Midlands' tender submission acknowledged that its alternative solution would not be able to directly serve three roads on the route of Service 122. This was due to a mixture of the roads being too narrow to accommodate the size of vehicle used and insufficient time available in the vehicle schedules to accommodate the extra time needed to serve these roads.

The roads that could not be directly served by Stagecoach East Midlands' alternative tender submission were confirmed as Alandale Avenue/Ridgeway in Shirebrook, and Dale Close and Devonshire Drive in Nether Langwith. All other roads on the route of Service 122 would continue to be either served by existing alternative commercial bus services, or through the contracted extensions to Services 12 and 23 proposed by Stagecoach East Midlands.

The contract was subsequently awarded to Stagecoach East Midlands for its alternative tender submission, with the revised services commencing 25 October 2015.

Current Situation

Since 25 October 2015, the route of Stagecoach East Midlands' Service 12 has been extended and now operates along Leen Valley Drive. This has maintained a bus service, and has improved the service frequency for Leen Valley Drive to a half hourly service, from approximately 09:30am though to 16:30pm, Monday to Saturday. The Woodlands is now served by an extension to Stagecoach East Midlands' Service 23, which has maintained an hourly service for this area from approximately 09:20am though to 16:30pm, Monday to Saturday. A plan showing these routes is attached.

As Leen Valley Drive and The Woodlands are now served by extensions of otherwise commercial bus services, that operate along a much longer route than that which Service 122 offered, passengers in these areas are now also able to directly travel as far Mansfield. Prior to 25 October 2015, such journeys would have required a change of bus. Fare paying passengers in these areas additionally benefit from being able to travel anywhere on these extended services by paying a single fare, where previously two separate fares would have been required, given the need to change buses. Fare

paying passengers are now also able to benefit from the full range of day, weekly and other period tickets offered by Stagecoach East Midlands, which are also valid across its network of bus services in the area.

Most other areas previously served by Service 122, continue to be served by continued commercial sections of Service 12 or 23, or the hourly Stagecoach in Chesterfield commercial Service 82.

Unfortunately, three areas which were previously on the route of Service 122 no longer directly benefit from a bus service (Alandale Avenue/Ridgeway, Dale Close and Devonshire Drive). The maximum additional walking distance to the nearest bus stops to access alternative bus services is 0.2 miles for Alandale Avenue/Ridgeway and Dale Close and 0.4 miles for Devonshire Drive. For those unable to access the nearest alternative bus stop, Clowne and District Community Transport provides a weekly Dial-a-Bus service to Mansfield Woodhouse Morrisons, as well as the aCTive travel service, which provides transport to health appointments.

Conclusions

Most of the former Service 122 route continues to be directly served by alternative bus services. In some instances, these alternatives offer enhancements to those previously available through Service 122.

The Woodlands continues to receive an hourly daytime bus service, Monday to Saturday, through the contracted extension to Service 23. Unfortunately, it is not logistically possible to restore a direct bus service for Ridgeway or Dale Close (or Devonshire Drive), within the current resources used. Restoration of a bus service for these areas would require reinstatement of the former Service 122, at significant additional cost. Given these areas close proximity to regular alternative bus services, regrettably, the cost of this cannot be justified. For those unable to access the alternative bus services, Clowne and District Community Transport provides transport more tailored towards door to door provision, which may be more appropriate for those with restricted mobility.

Local Member Comments

Councillors Joan Dixon and Marian Stockdale have been invited to comment on the petition.

Councillor Joan Dixon made the following comments:

“I can understand the frustrations of the petitioners and welcome the changes to services which have mitigated the situation for those living on the Woodlands and in the Leen Valley. However the altered service, whilst providing a better link to Mansfield, has meant that the communities on Devonshire Drive and Dale Close now have no service. This means

elderly people now have a considerable walk to the bus stop and a steep, uphill walk back. In particular, on Dale Close, the old people's bungalows are farthest from the bus stop. If an opportunity came to reinstate these stops, I would strongly support it. The Community Transport option does little to mitigate this as places are limited and most residents access services in Shirebrook.

In general, where there is to be a substantial change in service provision, it would be good if the relevant elected members were notified and consulted whilst the negotiations were in process as their local knowledge would highlight issues such as these."

Councillor Marian Stockdale made the following comments:

"I have concerns regarding the withdrawal of the above provision in areas of high dependency. The Ridgeway area is isolated now the 122 has been withdrawn. When Langwith Road was closed around 12 years ago for the removal of the bridge for almost two years the regular service was rerouted down Pear Tree estate. It hasn't been put back since with the service still following the Pear Tree route. I question why. The only service on that road is Chesterfield 83 so no service is available to Mansfield along Langwith Road. This isn't ideal for elderly or those around the Ridgeway area in adjacent housing. I find it to be a very diluted service in an area that is very isolated now as people have to walk more than the required distance accepted by the authority policy. Is there any chance of redirecting one of those buses back to Langwith Road service in order to provide a Mansfield service again to the area?"

(3) Financial Considerations The Council must ensure the finite funds are best targeted to provide service provision while being mindful of best value. The contract for Service 122 that ran until October 2015, previously cost the Council £52,412 per annum. The lowest cost tender received that would have maintained Service 122 after October 2015 was £58,330 per annum. The alternative tender that was awarded to Stagecoach East Midlands and which provides bus services through extensions to Services 12 and 23, costs £19,955 per annum, saving £38,375 per annum (65.7%) when compared with the lowest tender cost received to maintain Service 122.

(4) Environmental and Health Considerations Whilst a direct bus service would improve accessibility for affected residents, for those unable to make their own way to nearby alternative bus routes, Community Transport is available.

(5) Social Value Considerations The existence of a bus service improves the attractiveness of bus travel relative to car travel and increases

the accessibility of non-car owners to key services and employment opportunities.

(6) **Transport Considerations** As set out in the report.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources and property considerations.

(7) **Key Decision** No

(8) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(9) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Anthony Crompton, extension 36733.

(10) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That:

- 10.1 The Cabinet Member notes it is not possible to fulfil the petitioners' request to reinstate a bus service for Ridgeway and Dale Close within the existing resource and that restoration of the former Service 122 would incur significant additional cost, which cannot be justified given the limited areas concerned and the proximity of these areas to alternative services.
- 10.2 The availability of the alternative Service 23 for The Woodlands, which maintains an hourly service for this area be noted.
- 10.3 The local Members and lead petitioner be advised of the views as set out in this report.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities