

Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee

From John Mole – Vice-Chairman of Oakley Parish Council

Firstly I wish to thank the Chairman of the Committee for allowing me to submit the concerns of Oakley Parish via e-Mail, since I can not attend in person

- We are aware that Bucks County Council had to make cuts to bus services across the County. The cuts imposed have meant a disproportional (and unfair) bias against rural communities, especially those which are on the periphery of the County.
- These communities, whilst in Buckinghamshire often have links socially and economically across the County boundary. I have had feedback from Iver, Cheddington as well as locally from Brill and Ludgershall that cross-County cuts have caused great anguish and upset in the villages.
- There was no consultation with the villages of the changes to bus services. I have been told that a document dated 29th July 2009 was sent to Parish councils by Mr A Clarke, Group Manager Transport Services. I can categorically state this document DID NOT arrive at Ashendon, Ludgershall, Brill, Oakley or Ickford Parish Councils.
- I have since read this document and it appears not to have been a consultation document, but a request for comments.
- The first we knew of the cutting of services in the village was through the bus driver in late September.
- A deal' communication was received from Mr Clarke at the start of October, the parish clerk immediately asked for more time to look at the proposals.
- Parochially, the number 30 bus from Oakley, Brill and Ludgershall on a Friday morning to Bicester was very well used by elderly residents in the villages to go to the local market and buy produce for the weekend. Bicester is a compact town with all services within a very short distance of the bus stop.
- Neither Ludgershall nor Oakley has a village shop.
- The alternative of a bus to Thame (where there is no Friday market) or the much vaunted 90 minute ride into Aylesbury is just not realistic for elderly residents. The first does not give the services that our residents need (e.g. a market, a compact shopping centre, their optician / dentist or their local bank manager). The second is just a long drawn out journey to a spread-out large town, they do not want to go to.
- A petition of 150 people within Oakley has been signed registering that the bus service should be kept.
- A proposal from Val Letheren, Cabinet Minister for Transportation, to jointly fund a bus service was voted against by Oakley Parish Council on the grounds that the Parish already pays Bucks County Council to provide a bus service and that 8% of the Parish Council precept should not be used subsidising BCC (our 2009 precept is already allocated to other projects).
- Despite losing this important service, even the elderly residents do not see why we should pay twice for the service. It is seen as tantamount as a double taxing and a 'Post Code lottery', discriminating against rural communities.
- If the Parishes concerned had been consulted as they should have been, something more agreeable and suitable to all concerned could have been worked out.

Thank you, John Mole