

Dear John

I have been asked by the chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny panel to respond to the email you submitted to the panel on 10 November in which you raise a number of points regarding the recent review of bus services. We discussed many of these points at our meeting with yourself and a representative from Brill Parish Council on 16 October and as a result have extended the timescale for withdrawing Service 30 both to allow time for you to discuss the issue at a Parish Council meeting and now to explore other funding options to maintain the service.

I think we have all agreed that the original letters were sent but not delivered and following this incident we will email as well as post such letters to parish clerks in future. This was a particular issue for the Brill / Oakley area as other parishes across the county received their letters without a problem and we have extended the deadline for service 30 by over a month as a result. Your point that this was a request for feedback is correct as the decision to cut the budget for bus routes was made by the Council earlier in the year through the Medium Term Plan budget setting process.

In terms of bus services in the Oakley area it is important to point out that these are not cuts to the overall level of service as there are now more buses running than before. Instead, as we explained at our meeting, in order to achieve the required savings without cutting the number of journeys offered we have had to rationalise the number of destinations offered to make better use of public subsidy. It is not the case that all cross boundary services are being withdrawn, as the number of services to Thame for example are increased, but that by creating a network of journeys around one or two centres then bus services can be offered more efficiently, providing more journeys to a greater number of villages.

Service 30 can't be linked with other routes to deliver this improved efficiency and so we have offered buses from Oakley and Brill to Thame five days of the week (to include market day) as well as journeys to Aylesbury and Oxford. I fully understand that there are a number of passengers from Oakley and Brill using the 30 on a Friday and that they are used to Bicester as a destination. Bus users from other villages in the area, however, have traditionally always used services to Thame and Aylesbury and have found the facilities offered by those towns acceptable.

At our meeting in October I felt that you and Christine understood and accepted the reasons why we were not able to continue to fund Service 30. Given the strong local feeling you expressed I was keen to explore all options and made the offer to fund the service in partnership with the parish councils if they felt this was a suitable priority. I would point out again however that County continue to subsidise bus services from Brill and Oakley providing access to local services but, for the reasons outline above were not able to maintain this particular route.

I understand that you are still exploring alternative sources of funding to support Service 30 and that we have deferred any decision until the end of this month as a result.



Submission to
Overview and Scr...

Yours sincerely

Val Letheren
Cabinet Member for Transport