

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY, 18 JUNE 2019
title: 280 BUS ROUTE TO SKIPTON
submitted by: COLIN HIRST – HEAD OF REGENERATION & HOUSING
principal author: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider the provision of a one-off grant payment to Lancashire County Council to support the continuation of the 280 bus service between Clitheroe and Preston, and Clitheroe to Skipton.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To support a high quality of life, sustaining vital and vibrant towns and villages meeting the needs of residents, visitors and businesses
- Corporate Priorities – To sustain and strong and prosperous Rabble valley
- Other Considerations – To ensure that access to services is available to all.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Public Transport subsidies are not a District Council function. These matters fall into the responsibilities of Lancashire County Council as the Public Transport authority. However the availability of public transport cross cuts a number of key areas relevant to the roles and responsibilities of the Borough Council. This issue is being considered due to the wide ranging socio-economic factors that the Borough Council needs to take into account.

2.2 Prior to April 2016, the local bus service linking Preston, Clitheroe and Skipton via Mellor Brook, Whalley, Chatburn, Gisburn and Barnoldswick, was operated by Transdev on behalf of the County Council as part of the tendered bus service network. The service operated every hour during Monday to Saturday daytime and every two hours on Sunday daytime.

2.3 At that time the County Council significantly reduced its financial support for tendered bus services across the whole county, and Rotala Preston Bus made the decision to operate the service on a commercial basis.

2.4 Service 280 currently provides many links between Preston and Skipton across a wide area of Central Lancashire, through Preston, South Ribble, Ribble Valley and Pendle, including running past the Enterprise Zone at Samlesbury. The service currently operates Monday to Saturday daytime, every hour between Preston and Clitheroe, extending every two hours through to Barnoldswick and Skipton.

2.5 The service is used by a number of students living in Lancashire accessing Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, Preston Cardinal Newman College and Skipton Craven College.

2.6 According to ticket machine data and on-bus surveys there are approximately 170,000 annual passenger trips (559 per day) made on Service 280. Just over a third of these annual passenger trips (60,000) are older or disabled concessionary passholders.

2.7 Rotala notified the County Council that from 16 June 2019 the company would withdraw the entire service as it is not commercially viable for them to run it.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Whilst a number of areas will continue to be served by regular services using routes via Blackburn, certain locations, such as Gisburn and residences throughout the length of the A59 will no longer have access to any bus service. The County Council has sought to identify alternative operators to run the service in the place of Rotala however no operators came forward. A key consideration with such services is that it is often vital that there is no break in service to protect usage levels and provide certainty and confidence to the community.

3.2 The County Council has had a bid to operate the service under an alternative model which would provide service to the route but would require subsidy in order to operate. This proposal would see the route between Clitheroe and Preston operated as a commercial route, with the stage between Clitheroe to Skipton being subsidised.

3.3 Lancashire County Council has approached Ribble Valley Borough Council to assist in supporting this route for its first year together with Pendle Borough Council. The County Council is requesting that this Council provides support of £10000 for this first year of operation which will enable the operator to develop the business and move towards it being a commercially sustainable route. The offer to consider assisting the County Council in funding the route is therefore proposed on the basis that it is only for the first year of operation, a position which has been acknowledged by the County Council. Any future funding support if it were to be requested would be the subject of further consideration by this Council.

3.4 This route provides a vital lifeline for many of our residents who live along the A59. The previous bus operator had given notice and the 280 service would have ceased on 14 June 2019. It is difficult to determine whether the County Council would have subsidised the route without support from this Council but given the short timescale and the impact on our resident if the 280 service was terminated, our support was essential if the service was to definitely continue. The Chairman and Chief Executive have agreed that we inform the County Council that in principle and subject to this Committee's agreement, we provide support of £10,000.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – Transport subsidies are not a district Council function. Responsibility lies with the Upper tier authorities and as such this Council does not have a specific budget cost centre to make bus subsidy contributions. The proposal is to give a one-off grant to Lancashire County Council to ensure this bus route continues. There is currently £5,810 unallocated in the Council's Voluntary Organisations Grants Budget for 2019/20 which could be used to part fund this proposal. The balance could be funded by bringing forward grant from the 2020/21 budget which we will ensure is accounted for when we prepare next year's estimates.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The procurement of the service would be a matter for the County Council as public transport authority.
- Political – None
- Reputation – The matters dealt with in this report demonstrate the Council's willingness to work in partnership to support its local community.
- Equality & Diversity – Public Transport can be key to ensure accessibility is maintained for a large part of the local community.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Agree to the request from Lancashire County Council to provide financial support of £10,000 as a one off payment to the operation of the 280 Preston –Skipton service for a period of twelve months only and that the cost be funded from the Council's Voluntary Organisation Grants budget in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

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