

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	<b>Temporary public transport network arrangements during period of COVID-19 emergency measures – January 2021 lockdown</b>
<b>Date of decision:</b>	8 January 2021
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Director for Economy and Place
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	1. In line with section 3.7.9 all necessary decisions in the case of emergencies of the constitution
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	<p>Emergency consultation with senior council officers.</p> <p>Consultation with all Herefordshire public transport operators.</p> <p>All Members and a range of stakeholders were consulted on the review of the bus network carried out in 2014 which identified the core network. Members were also consulted during the Passenger Transport Review reported to Cabinet in April 2017 which set out the approach to the provision of services for public transport.</p>
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p>To operate a minimum service level of the core bus network during the new COVID-19 outbreak emergency response commencing 5 January 2021 as illustrated in appendix 1 below.</p> <p>To utilise remaining available contracted bus services to operate additional routes with the aim of supporting key worker journeys and opportunities for vulnerable members of the community (many of whom will hold a bus pass) to access food and medical services during the new COVID-19 outbreak emergency response commencing 5 January 2021.</p> <p>Service demands will be monitored and further amendments may be made in response to ensure that bus services are focused on supporting key workers and vulnerable members of the community.</p> <p>To suspend the time restriction on the use of concessionary bus passes to allow vulnerable members of the community to access transport for essential journeys at any time of the day.</p> <p>To continue to maintain concessionary fares reimbursements to bus operators at pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>It is anticipated that these temporary measures will be required until at least 28 February 2021 and may need to be extended further. If this is the case a further decision will be taken and recorded.</p>
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>To ensure public transport services are maintained at sufficient levels to meet the travel needs of key workers and vulnerable members of the community during the current COVID-19 emergency which commenced on 5 January 2021 and to provide support to at risk suppliers responsible for vital services.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Transport issued guidance on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 regarding maintaining essential bus services and supporting bus operators financially during the COVID-19 outbreak.</p> <p>By suspending the time restriction on the use of concessionary bus pass use, vulnerable members of the community will be able to travel by bus for free at all times of the day. This will allow them greater flexibility</p>

to make essential journeys such as for shopping or to attend medical appointments or vaccinations.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic the council has followed Department for Transport guidance by maintaining concessionary fares reimbursements to bus operators at pre-pandemic levels. This will be maintained through the January and February 2021 lockdown period to ensure operators have the financial support they need to continue operating vital services.

Data obtained during previous Covid-19 lockdown periods has shown that the public bus network in Herefordshire, both subsidised and commercial experiences a dramatic decline in passenger numbers during lockdown periods. Services have seen passenger numbers as low as 3% of normal levels and are not sustainable as commercial routes. To support bus operators by assisting them to reduce commercial operating losses whilst maintaining a suitable public transport network council contracted services have been redeployed to operate the core bus network. This will ensure operators receive adequate income to operate the routes whilst at the same time ensuring a suitable network is available for key workers and vulnerable members of the community.

The core bus network is defined in the council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) as the minimum level of service that will be provided. The network ensures links between market towns and Hereford City and a range of supporting routes which connect major villages with Hereford and the market towns. The core network also ensures the main arterial routes in to Hereford City are served by regular services. In summary this will provide:

2 hourly services between Hereford and each market town and main villages operating between 0730 and 1830 Monday to Saturday, no Sunday services will operate with the exception of service 33 Hereford – Ross on Wye

As indicated in point 2, after re-deploying contracted services to cover the core network an amount of vehicle capacity remained available for use. This will be allocated to operate other priority town services as follows:

**Hereford City services**

71B – Hereford / Credenhill

74 – Hereford / Newton Farm

77A – Hereford / Holmer circular

78 – Hereford / Rotherwas

78A - Hereford / Rotherwas

78X - Hereford / Rotherwas

79A – Hereford / Putson / Redhill

477 – Hereford / Canon Pyon

**Leominster Town services**

401 - Leominster town circular

402 - Leominster / Ridgemoor circular

403 - Leominster Southern Avenue circular

These services will generally operate Monday to Saturday with a frequency of hourly or 2 hourly.

<b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b>	<p>There are no additional financial risks - re-deploying contracted services to operate the core bus network will support bus operators financially during the new COVID-19 emergency period commencing 5 January 2021 whilst at the same time ensuring that services are maintained within current budget allocation. The cost of maintaining concessionary fares payments is within budget and forecast spend.</p> <p>Maintaining the core bus network ensures public transport remains available to the majority of vulnerable residents who still have essential travel needs such as for food shopping and medical appointments. As with the first lockdown help for residents will continue to be available through the council's Talk Community COVID-19 support network which coordinates with services such as Community Transport to ensure that residents without private transport are able to continue to receive medication and food deliveries. The service level will be closely monitored and if necessary amended to ensure suitable provision as widely as possible.</p>
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	<p>Not to progress temporary changes to the supported bus network or permit additional use of concessionary travel passes. This is rejected as these measures proved important in maintaining vital access for vulnerable residents and key workers during the first lockdown and are anticipated to be required for the new lockdown which commenced on 5 January 2021.</p> <p>Not to provide concessionary travel re-imbursement for operators at pre-Covid levels. This is rejected as government guidance continues to support this approach noting the importance of helping support viability of bus operators and ensuring continuity of service following recovery.</p>
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made</b>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: 8 January 2021

Richard Ball  
Director for Economy & Place