

## **Bus Service Changes Effective Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017**

Following the implementation of the Central Bedfordshire Passenger Transport Strategy which was adopted in November 2016 there will be some changes to bus services and routing with effect from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. Below is a list of frequently asked questions and answers that may be asked by customers. A list of all services affected and the changes that will occur is attached.

### **What are these changes?**

Central Bedfordshire Council are implementing their newly adopted Passenger Transport Strategy to bus services within the area that are currently funded by the Council. This will mean that from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 bus services operating after 6:30pm on Mondays to Fridays, after 3pm on Saturdays and all day on Sundays will no longer be funded.

Whilst the Council are withdrawing funding for these services the bus operator may choose to continue running them commercially. Concessionary bus passes will still be able to be used at any time of the day.

### **Why are these changes happening?**

Central Bedfordshire Council consulted on a draft Passenger Transport Strategy from April – July 2016. This strategy means that the Council has a clear and open policy to apply across the area regarding funding allocation to local bus services.

The consultation received over 1000 responses and was advertised on buses throughout the area as well as on the Central Bedfordshire Council website and through many other media channels. Responses were received in both paper and electronic format from individuals, town / parish councils, businesses and other organisations across the authority. All of these comments were considered and a number of changes made to the draft strategy before it was put before the Full Council in November 2016. At this meeting the strategy was adopted. The changes due to occur from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 are the result of the new strategy being applied to bus services that currently receive funding from the Council.

#### **Central Bedfordshire Council**

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

**Telephone** 0300 300 8000

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Why have these changes not happened before?**

Currently the government is reducing the amount of money it spends in many areas – this is known as austerity and has resulted in the reduction in funding provided to local authorities. Decisions have to be made by local authorities as to where the funding should be allocated. Bus service funding is only a discretionary (optional) service and local authorities are not obliged to fund buses. This is why less money is being allocated to bus services and these changes are now occurring.

### **Has the Council thought about the impact these changes will have on the disabled, elderly and other vulnerable groups?**

As part of the development of the Passenger Transport Strategy an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out. This found that the changes agreed within the Passenger Transport Strategy would not be detrimental to any specific group of residents within Central Bedfordshire and the strategy prioritises delivery of transport services to the elderly and vulnerable.

### **Our bus driver has said the route's being cancelled. Will there be any replacement?**

We have asked bus companies to inform their drivers of the changes that are occurring on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May so they can pass the information on to you. In most cases drivers will do their best to try and inform you of any changes. Although there are some services that are being cancelled in nearly every case there is either an alternative service serving that location currently or there will be another service starting on or after 2<sup>nd</sup> May but this may not be provided by the current operator. Please refer to the bus service changes spreadsheet to see what will be changing on or after 2<sup>nd</sup> May. This is online:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/transport/public/bus-timetables-routes.aspx>

### **I like travelling to a town outside Central Bedfordshire. What will be happening to services operating from Central Bedfordshire into Herts / Bucks / Cambs / Milton Keynes / Bedford?**

Central Bedfordshire Council currently fund some services crossing over into other areas and this funding will be ending for services that operate predominantly within the other area or where the other local authority no longer wish to have a reciprocal arrangement regarding cross border funding. Whilst we will try to ensure as many existing services as possible continue there may be some changes to the cross border services and priority would be given to the parts of the services or towns wholly within Central Bedfordshire.

#### **Central Bedfordshire Council**

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

**Telephone** 0300 300 8000

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

### **If Central Bedfordshire Council stop funding the service why can't the bus company just keep operating it?**

Unfortunately, without funding from the Council, it is very difficult for bus operators to cover their costs on poorly used routes and the costs of operating a bus can be up to £500 per day, per vehicle depending on the length of the route. Even with a reasonable amount of passengers operators cannot cover their costs without assistance from the Council. We have worked with bus operators to identify which services are not used in great numbers with a view to supporting those that benefit the most number of people.

### **When I get on the bus at 10am there's always lots of people on there. Why are you reducing the service? Why is it not viable?**

We recognise that some bus services are well used especially by concessionary pass holders. Unfortunately whilst some journeys may be busy others at less popular times of the day may operate with only a handful of people or even empty at some times and these journeys can cause the whole service to become unviable. If there are journeys that regularly run empty or with a small number of people on the Council have to look at whether we should still support the service or whether it could be revised to operate when the most number of people need it and will use it. The cost per day of operating one bus is in the region of £300 - £500 per day so even if one or two journeys are busy this is not enough to make the service viable overall.

### **Can I still use my bus pass before 9:30am?**

The Council were originally proposing to stop concessionary travel prior to 9:30am but due to the amount of comments regarding this during the strategy consultation this was removed and you will be able to continue using your pass 24 hours a day for travel within Central Bedfordshire. Bedford Borough Council have recently introduced a scheme to pay £1 to travel prior to 9:30am so whilst your journey commencing within Central Bedfordshire will still be free if you need to make an onward journey within Bedford Borough prior to 9:30am you will have to pay for this.

### **My bus pass is expiring in June. Will I still receive a replacement?**

If you have used your bus pass within the past 12 months then for June 2017 renewals you should receive a replacement in the post a week or so before the old one expires. If you have not used your pass within the last 12 months but wish to retain this benefit please ask the Customer Service Agent to note this on your concessionary pass record and you should receive a replacement. Going forward, the Council is looking at ways of improving the pass issuing / renewal experience for customers.

#### **Central Bedfordshire Council**

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

**Telephone** 0300 300 8000

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**My regular bus service has changed. Will I still be able to use my pass on the new bus?**

Concessionary passes are valid on all buses operating within Central Bedfordshire regardless of operator. The ENCTS concessionary pass scheme is a mandatory scheme by central government and local authorities have to administer it and follow its rules.

**We'd be happy to pay something towards our bus journey as part of our concessionary bus pass in order to keep the bus services going.**

The ENCTS concessionary pass scheme is a Government scheme that states that all local authorities must offer free travel for pass holders from 9:30am to 11pm weekdays and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. We are unable to change these rules and as such cannot start to accept any payments as part of the concessionary scheme. Pass holders are free to pay the full adult fare for their journey rather than use their concessionary pass should they wish to support the bus service further.

**We used to have two bus services at this location giving us several travel options. Why have you reduced it to only one service now?**

As part of the new strategy we have had to look at locations which have two or more services funded by Central Bedfordshire Council. We have had to consider what users would need as an essential service (ie to access doctors, pharmacy, shops etc). In general we consider two supported services as a poor use of funds which could be used in other areas to improve service to locations which have very little public transport provision. In the locations where services have reduced from two to one the remaining service generally allows connections at nearby locations onto other services allowing travel to main towns which may no longer be available directly. Similarly towns / villages that have a railway station are seen to benefit from this transport link and this has been taken into account as part of the decision regarding any reduction in bus services.

**We used to like travelling on the market day services and they were well used – why have you stopped these?**

There are several Tuesday only services operating to market towns outside Central Bedfordshire. These are seen as a luxury and nearly all locations they serve have an alternative bus route to access essential local services. Whilst these Tuesday only services are well patronised due to the costs of operating a vehicle on a service (covered above) they are not viable without Council funding even with 40 – 50 passengers travelling each week. We are looking at possible alternatives for some parts of these services.

**Central Bedfordshire Council**

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

**Telephone** 0300 300 8000

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Why are some services continuing to operate outside of the strategy times?**

Bus operators are free to operate whatever route they choose on a commercial basis so some services previously funded by the Council may continue to operate after funding is withdrawn – this will be entirely at the bus operator's discretion. Some other services are funded from money from large developments (Section 106 funding) and these services will continue to operate outside of the strategy times. This developer funding is controlled by clauses agreed through the planning process and is not bound by the Passenger Transport Strategy.

### **I've heard of Section 106 funding. Can this money be used to keep my service running?**

As part of our recent work we have identified several pots of S106 money that can be used to keep services running that would otherwise have been reduced. Going forwards our aim is to try and utilise as much of this money as possible to keep the bus services at their current levels. Unfortunately in some areas there have not been many large developments and there is none of this money available. S106 is generally site specific and so, in areas where there have been no developments, we are unable to reallocate S106 money from other locations.

### **There is another route that operates nearby, can it be diverted to serve our location?**

In looking at the current bus service network we have looked at a number of options for diverting existing routes to serve more places and have made several changes. Unfortunately every extra diversion comes with a time cost which over the course of a day's operation can add quite a lot of extra time into the existing route and makes the journey much longer for current passengers. Some services are operated commercially by bus operators and the Council are unable to reroute these services as that is up to the bus operator. We are happy to work with bus operators to divert existing commercial routes but ultimately the final decision would be up to the operator.

### **I regularly use Dial-a-Ride services within Central Bedfordshire. Will these be affected by the changes?**

At present the Dial-a-Ride services will continue unchanged although as part of the new Strategy we will be examining how the Council funds these services going forwards however the Council has committed to continue to fund Dial-a-Ride services in the future. Either the Council or the current Dial-a-Ride operators will keep users updated with developments as they occur.

### **I use the Central Bedfordshire Travel Aid scheme. Will this be changing?**

The Travel Aid scheme has remained unchanged for over 30 years and at present has a very low takeup. The scheme will remain the same at the present time but we are examining options regarding how to redevelop / relaunch the scheme.

#### **Central Bedfordshire Council**

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

**Telephone** 0300 300 8000

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**My bus to / from work has been cancelled / I can't travel home on a Saturday evening now. What can I do?**

We have committed to fund services which benefit the highest number of people and unfortunately there are some services which are not well used but do provide a link for a small number of people which we are no longer able to subsidise. Similarly, bus patronage on Saturday afternoons / evenings in general reduces after mid-afternoon and we can no longer fund these services. Central Bedfordshire Travel Choices [www.cbtravelchoices.co.uk/home](http://www.cbtravelchoices.co.uk/home) or 01582 813018 can advise you on other options for travel including car / taxi sharing, walking and cycling options.

**Where can I get information regarding the revised bus services?**

The Council will be updating information at all bus stop locations fitted with timetable cases during April 2017 in preparation for the changes to take effect on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. Information will also be publicised on the Central Bedfordshire and Travel Choices website and via Central Bedfordshire libraries and drop in centres. Unfortunately we will not be producing a printed booklet as the Council no longer has the funding to do so. Bus operators will also be doing additional publicity if their routes are affected.

**You are still replacing bus shelters and putting in Realtime screens / raised kerbs. Why can't this money be used to keep the buses going?**

We have a small amount of money to maintain our existing infrastructure and sometimes receive some additional funding to improve the local environment, although this is not guaranteed. If this money is allocated it can only be used for its intended purpose for infrastructure and cannot be reallocated to fund bus services. Sometimes Section 106 money (mentioned above) is also allocated for improving bus stops but the use of this money is bound by agreements in the planning process and as such it cannot be reallocated.

**I often use the services provided by community bus operators Flittabus / Ivel Sprinter / Wanderbus. Will these be affected?**

These organisations are staffed by volunteers and receive no regular funding from Central Bedfordshire Council apart from concessionary pass reimbursements although we work closely with these organisations. As the vast majority of their services are not paid for by Central Bedfordshire Council they will be continuing as normal.

**Central Bedfordshire Council**

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

**Telephone** 0300 300 8000

**Email** [customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)