

8 Sept, 2011

333 Bus service petition

Ward(s) Willenhall South, Willenhall North, Bentley and Darlaston North, Darlaston South, Short Heath.

Portfolio: Councillor Ansell - Transport and Environment

Report:

Council was presented with a petition presented by Councillor Madeley on 11 July 2011 regarding the withdrawal of the 333 bus service through the Wolverhampton and West Walsall Bus Network Review. This report sets out the response of the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services to the petition.

Petition wording

"We (the people named below) are all residents living on the present route of the 333 bus which travels between Walsall and Wolverhampton. We are all regular users of this service and will be greatly inconvenienced, and in many cases will be rendered housebound if the service is stopped. The area covered by the 333 takes in many estates through to the two major towns and is thus a lifeline to all of us. We would ask you to rethink the decision to stop this service.

Background information

Bus Network reviews are being conducted on across the West Midlands. Dudley, South Solihull, North Walsall, West and South Birmingham, and East Birmingham and North Solihull now benefit from new, improved and easy to understand bus networks providing more frequent services to key destinations.

Network reviews are carried out by Centro in partnership with bus operators and local authorities. They are the result of demands from passengers and businesses for a more modern and effective system. Therefore extensive public consultations were carried out prior to each review.

Indicative figures show that the North Walsall Bus Network Review, which came into effect in April 2010, led to a 4.5% increase in bus use in the first 12 months on National Express West Midlands services.

The Wolverhampton and West Walsall Bus Network Review was implemented on 24 July 2011. Public Consultation was carried out in February and March 2011 with exhibitions in Darlaston, Willenhall and Walsall town centre as well

as a number of locations in Wolverhampton, letter drops to all affected households, one on one interviews conducted with residents in key areas and a wide ranging media campaign including online consultation reply forms.

Members from all wards within the review area were invited to attend one of two sessions to meet Centro and put across their views and ask questions. These were held at 6pm on 28 March 2011 and 2pm on 30 March 2011. They were also sent a members briefing pack which set out how to respond with their views and contact details in case they wanted further input.

Service 333

Previously Service 333 operated between Walsall, Darlaston, Bentley, Lodge Farm and Wolverhampton. The consultation showed a demand for Bentley, Lodge Farm and Willenhall to have a more direct service to Walsall.

In addition people in the Darlaston, Kings Hill and Wednesbury areas requested a more direct service to Manor Hospital and Walsall.

National Express West Midlands (NXWM) made the decision to replace Service 333 with 2 new direct services (40 and 41) as well as new service 38 serving Manor Hospital. Also bus operator Midland operates and enhanced Service 9.

Service 9 operates between Walsall and Lodge Farm via Darlaston. This service follows the same route as the 333 between Walsall and Lodge Farm and new early morning/afternoon peak and Sunday journeys have been introduced by Midland. The company has also invested in brand new vehicles on this route.

Service 41 operates between Willenhall and Walsall via New Invention.

Links from Darlaston to Willenhall maintained by more direct Service 327 which operates every half an hour.

There is also a new Service 40 which provides new links for Bentley Lane to Wolverhampton via Willenhall and quicker links to Walsall for the whole of Lodge Farm and Bentley.

New Service 38 maintains the very high frequency of buses between Darlaston and Walsall while also providing a new link to the Manor Hospital and Kings Hill, following significant local campaigning.

Bentley and Lodge Farm gets improved evening and Sunday service thanks to new evening and Sunday journeys on the 9 (Sunday only), 40 and 41.

Darlaston still maintains a high volume of services that stop on St Lawrence Way, adjacent to the ASDA store, throughout the day and week. These include:

Service 9 (Walsall – Lodge Farm via Darlaston and Bentley)

Service 34 (Walsall – Stowlawn via Darlaston)

Service 38 (Walsall – Wednesbury via Darlaston)

Service 39 (Walsall – Wolverhampton via Darlaston)
Service 45 (Woods Estate – Darlaston)
Service 79 (Wolverhampton – West Bromwich via Darlaston)
Service 327 (Willenhall – Wednesbury via Darlaston)

Well publicised exhibitions were held prior to the implementation of the review in Willenhall, Darlaston and Walsall Town Centre. This time members were invited to briefings sessions with one at 3pm and one at 6pm on 23 June 2011. All Councillors were either given or sent a briefing pack which explained the new network.

Following the implementation of the review services are monitored to determine their success and comments from passengers and members are fed in to the monitoring process. Through the Voluntary Multilateral Agreement signed by all participants bus operators are expected to keep services the same for a year to give them a chance to settle. However changes can be made if there are obvious problems.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel note the contents of this report.

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