

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 10.00AM

Agenda Item No.

4A

**PETITION TO WITHDRAW THE THREAT OF CUTS TO TfL ROUTES IN
HERTFORDSHIRE**

Report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment

Author: Adrian Hardy, Passenger Transport Hub Manager (01992 588800)

Executive Member: Derrick Ashley, Environment, Planning & Transport

Local Members: Nigel Bell, Morris Bright Caroline Clapper Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Kareen Hastrick; Anne Joynes, Peter Knell; Alan Plancey; Seamus Quilty; Leon Reeve, Derek Scudder and Mark Watkin

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To advise County Council of the receipt of a petition relating to the proposed withdrawal of on-going support to Transport for London (TfL) for the funding of 2 cross-boundary bus services.
- 1.2 To provide background and context to the current funding arrangement with TfL and an update on negotiations to date.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Notice of intention to present a petition containing 1,000 or more signatures has been received pursuant to the County Council's Petition Scheme. The petition states:-

"We the undersigned are appalled by the threat by the Conservative controlled Hertfordshire County Council to withdraw all funding for the well-used 142 and 258 bus routes from Watford to Brent Cross and to South Harrow respectively. These cuts would threaten the very existence of these services from March 2016. We call upon the County Council to withdraw the threat of cuts to these bus services and to reach an agreement with Transport for London to guarantee the continuation of these routes."

- 2.2 The County Council's Petition Scheme provides that officers will prepare a report for Members setting out the background and other relevant information of which they are aware relating to the subject matter of the

petition but will not give a recommendation as to how the petition should be dealt with.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 The petition which is the subject of this report has been received in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme (Annex 22 to the Constitution).
- 3.2 The deadline for receipt of motions from Members in respect of this report under Standing Order 9(3) is noon on 18th February 2016.
- 3.3 Paragraph 44 of the Petition Scheme provides that the Petition Organiser will be given three minutes maximum to present the petition and will not otherwise be allowed to speak at the meeting. There will then be a short debate by Council.
- 3.4 Paragraph 47 of the Petition Scheme states:-

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests or not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate. Where the issue is one on which the Council executive are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. If the Council do not decide to deal with the petition in some other way, it will (at the discretion of the Chairman) be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appropriate Cabinet Panel or to officers for consideration and report to the local member and Group Spokesmen.

4. Background and Other Relevant Information

- 4.1 The County Council has been providing financial contributions to cross boundary bus services between London and Hertfordshire via Transport for London (TfL) since 1993. Such agreements have been regularly reviewed with the latest arrangement coming to a close in March 2016.
- 4.2 The current agreement was reached in July 2013 covering the financial years 2013/14, 2014/15 & 2015/16. The value of the current agreement is £390,000 per year and supports 5 of the 16 TfL services that serve the southern areas of the county;
 - 107: New Barnet – Edgware
 - 142: Watford Junction – Brent Cross
 - 258: Watford Junction - South Harrow
 - 292: Borehamwood – Colindale
 - 298: Potters Bar – Arnos Grove
- 4.3 In total there are 16 TfL services that operate within the County but only the above services are included in the agreement. The total value of the

five services is £11.3m, with the County Council contributing less than 4% of the total contract value.

- 4.4 Officers have been in regular contact with representatives from TfL and last met in November 2015 where it was indicated that due to current budget pressures the County Council would be unlikely to be able to continue to support TfL bus services operating within the county beyond the end of the current agreement.
- 4.5 This meeting was followed up with a letter to TfL in December 2015 to confirm the County Council's position. A response was received from TfL on 3rd February 2016 and is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.6 In previous discussions TfL has acknowledged the difficulties faced by neighbouring shire counties and have stated that should the County Council withdraw funding there will be no immediate effect on services or service frequencies. It has further stated that should TfL decide to review these services in the future, this would be subject to a full consultation process, to which the County Council would be invited to contribute.
- 4.7 In a press release from Peter Bradley, Head of Consultation, TfL in January 2016 he said *"We have no plans at this stage to make any changes to any of the routes that run between London and Hertfordshire. If we were to make any changes in the future, we would undertake full consultation with stakeholders and customers in the normal way, as we do for any changes proposed to the London bus network"*.
- 4.8 This matter is due to be reported to the Environment, Planning & Transport Panel on 8 March 2016.

5 The Petition

- 5.1 The petition calls upon the County Council to withdraw the threat of cuts to the 141 and 258 services and to reach an agreement with TfL to guarantee their continuation.
- 5.2 Current and on-going discussion with TfL has indicated that funding can be withdrawn with no immediate impact on services. If and when TfL review service provision of the routes they have undertaken to fully consult both users and stakeholders, including the County Council. At that time an informed view of the potential impacts can be taken.

6 Financial Implication

- 6.1 An efficiency saving of £390,000 would be achieved if TfL make no changes to service provision and County Council support ceases from 1 April 2016.

Background Information

None

APPENDIX 1

Transport for London



Mr Tom Hennessey
Business Manager, Transport, Access and Safety
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Surface Strategy and Planning
Transport for London

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020 3054 0133

2 February 2016

Dear Tom

Hertfordshire County Council Cross Boundary Support 2013-2016

Thank you for your letter of 18 December 2015, advising us of your intention not to continue with the supporting the cross boundary services (routes 107, 142, 258, 292 and 298) beyond March 2016. You also ask what the likely impact this will have on the frequency on the routes.

At this point we have not had the opportunity to look at the routes in detail, although the current frequencies generally correlate to the usage made of them. Therefore any significant changes would have an adverse impact on those who currently use the bus services, either wholly within the county or between Hertfordshire and the London area.

Given the timescales and the work involved in reviewing the routes, together with the Mayoral election later in the spring (and the restrictions placed on organisations such as ourselves during the six week pre-election period), it is unlikely that consultation on changes, if any, would take place until much later in the year.

The loss of this funding is significant, especially given the recent Comprehensive Spending Review announcement, which means that the DfT general grant (also known as our revenue grant) will be significantly reduced in phases over the next three years until its elimination in 2019. TfL will therefore have to cover all its operational costs from non-DfT grant sources of income and this places us in a very challenging position.

I would appreciate therefore if you are able to reconsider the complete withdrawal of funding. Given the size and scale of the bus network that TfL

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provides in Hertfordshire, we are of the view that it is the County Council's duty to provide a fair financial contribution towards its provision.

I would be grateful for your serious consideration to a contribution in 2016/17 and beyond.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'P Bradley'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Peter Bradley
Head of Consultation