

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources
DATE	9 <sup>th</sup> March 2017
DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
TITLE OF REPORT	Kingswells Bus Services
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/057
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise Members on the current position regarding bus services for the Kingswells area and to identify options for ensuring continued public transport provision in the area.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

(a) Approve the amendment of the Crematorium Bus Service 94 to provide a shuttle service connecting Kingswells Village with Kingswells Park and Ride; and

(b)

; and

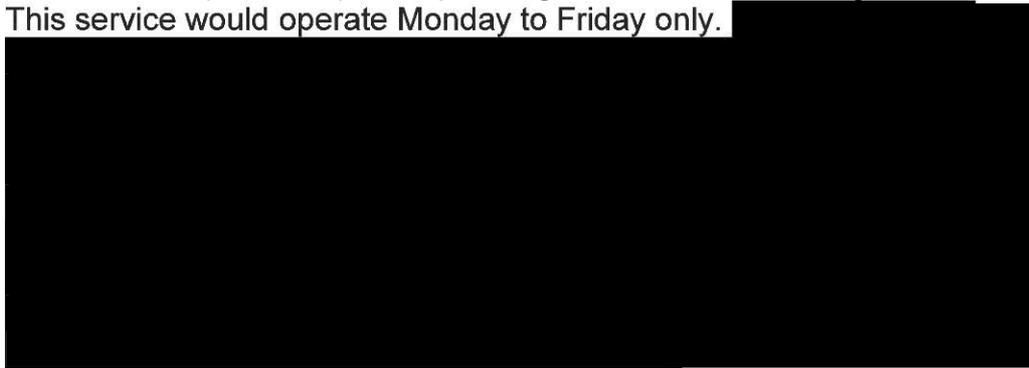
(c) Request Officers to further investigate options for providing bus services in Kingswells and report to the appropriate committee to provide an update and/or to seek approval for service provision.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

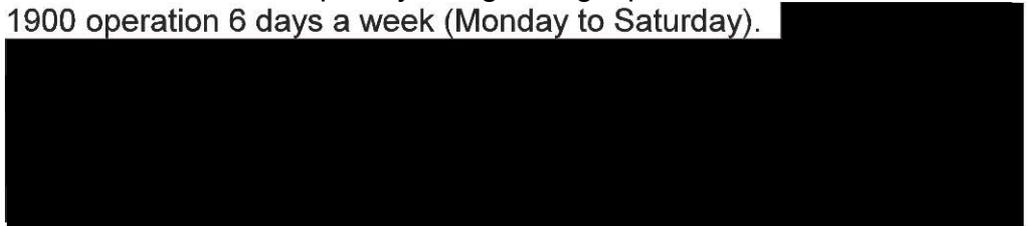
- 3.1 As no commercial operator is planning to operate services in Kingswells village commercially from April 2017. The Council is required to consider what provision will be required in the area and if the Council should provide such a service. [REDACTED], depending what may be offered, particularly given there is a considerable passenger base in the area. Officers have investigated 3 options at this time:

- Operating an amended Service 94, Crematorium bus service, which currently operates under contract to the Council.
- Supported shuttle bus service between Kingswells Village and Kingswells Park and Ride (P&R).
- Support to an operator to encompass Kingswells within an existing commercial service.

3.2 Officers have worked on an amended Service 94 timetable, this would utilise the existing bus to provide a shuttle around Kingswells in the morning and afternoon peak with off-peak services operating to the Crematorium (from ARI) and operating a shuttle around Kingswells. This service would operate Monday to Friday only.



3.3 Officers have also investigated the option of a standalone shuttle bus service operating around the village linking into services at the P&R site with the operator providing through ticketing. The operation would be on a 30 minute frequency using a single peak vehicle on a 0700 to 1900 operation 6 days a week (Monday to Saturday).



3.4 Officers have also investigated the options of amending an existing commercial bus service to service Kingswells village.



#### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Local Transport Authorities have a duty under sections 63-64 of the Transport Act 1985 to secure the provision of necessary public

transport in its area that it deems would not be provided except by action taken by the Council.

In considering the transport for an area the Council will give consideration to provide a minimum level of service taking into account the financial resources at its disposal and value for money as indicated by cost/demand relationships. In determining priorities for subsidised service provision, the Council will have regard to:

- Minimum level of service defined by population (e.g. an area of population more than 4000, we would aim to ensure there is at least an hourly service).
- Application of maximum walking distances i.e. that in urban areas, all properties are within 400m walk to a bus service.
- Access is available to appropriate facilities, i.e. shopping facilities, GP practice etc. (this does not need to be local, alternative facilities would meet the required need).
- Priority Trip purpose – i.e. Work, Education, Shopping, Health etc.
- Consideration may also be given to specific social needs within particular communities.

4.2 Under the Local Transport Strategy the Council has committed to increase public transport patronage by making bus travel an attractive option to all users and competitive with the car in terms of speed and cost. In order to achieve this there is a commitment to review the provision of bus services to ensure existing services meet peoples' needs, and where necessary consider provision of supported services where these are deemed socially necessary.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

### 5.1 Background

5.1.1 First Aberdeen currently operates the bus service x40 between Dubford and Kingswells via Bridge of Don P&C, Union Street, Westburn Road and Kingswells P&R. This service operates up to every 15 minutes in peak times and every 30 minutes off-peak, Monday to Saturday. This is the main bus service for Kingswells Village during the daytime.

First Aberdeen operates a variation to the service 11 in evenings Monday to Saturdays and Sundays to operate from Northfield to Kingswells, via Woodend. This is the main bus service for Kingswells Village during the evening and Sundays

- 5.1.2 On Friday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016, First Aberdeen indicated to Officers their intention to withdraw services x40 and 11 from Kingswells Village, with a likely timescale of Christmas 2016. The reasons provided by First Aberdeen were that the existing patronage levels are not sufficient to offset the costs for running the service. First Aberdeen noted the distance required to travel to access Kingswells and to route around the village took considerable time and therefore required considerable levels of resource which comes at a cost that can no longer be sustained.

First Aberdeen formally wrote to the Council on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September to advise their intention to withdraw services from Kingswells following which the matter was disclosed in the public domain.

- 5.1.3 Officers have been collating and responding to feedback from residents to date and have shared feedback received with First Aberdeen and other bus operators in the area, namely Stagecoach North Scotland. Officers in conjunction with First Aberdeen engaged with the community over two public drop-in sessions in Kingswells during October 2016.

- 5.1.4 The Chief Executive wrote to First Aberdeen on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September requesting that they reconsider their position with regards to the withdrawal of services, in recognising the importance of bus services for the community of Kingswells.

The Chief Executive also wrote to the Minister for Transport and the Islands, Humza Yousaf MSP, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2016 requesting an urgent meeting to discuss the provision of local bus services in Aberdeen. A response is awaited.

In addition the Chief Executive wrote to the chair of the Disability Equity Partnership, Dame Anne Begg, on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016, asking this group for information on how the withdrawal of bus services affect those with disabilities and seeks their support in any meeting involving the Minister for Transport and the Islands.

Members will be aware of Mr Yousaf MSP's recent announcement of a Scottish Transport Bill, which follows on from the UK Bus Services Bill going through Westminster. To paraphrase he advised that the bill: a) would enable councils to establish "Lothian Buses-style municipal bus companies"; b) facilitate public versus private bidding wars for newly-franchised routes; c) help save important but unprofitable local services by allowing councils to bundle them up with more popular routes in franchise deals; and d) require operators to publish standardised information on fares, timetables and punctuality."

- 5.1.5 Following the consultation events and feedback provided to First Aberdeen officers and Elected Members have met with First Aberdeen on numerous occasions to discuss the next steps. First noted that following consultations there was nothing further suggested that they feel could be undertaken to make the service viable, other than financial support to retain the service, which was not an option the Council could proceed with.
- 5.1.6 As a consequence, First Aberdeen has formally lodged a withdrawal registration with Aberdeen City Council and the Traffic Commissioner for service X40 between ARI and Kingswells and service 11 between Woodend and Kingswells and with effect of Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2017.
- 5.1.7 Officers have met with Stagecoach North Scotland on numerous occasions to discuss the service withdrawal. Stagecoach had initially indicated that they would be interested in operating a service in the area and did provide a number of options. However Stagecoach has since advised they will not be in a position to provide a service to the area. Stagecoach are however currently consulting on service changes to be implemented from the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017 and these do include the provision of a service around Kingswells Village on a service operating between Elrick and ARI. This however operates only a handful of services a day in the off-peak only, which would be of no benefit to the vast majority of bus users in Kingswells who travel inbound in the morning peak.
- 5.1.8 The result of the withdrawal will mean Kingswells village will have no bus services operating around it, leaving only services operating from the P&C site which for some residents would result in up to a 1.5 mile walk to their nearest bus service. Kingswells has long been an area of concern as we know patronage is low. The village itself does not perform overly well, although there are still valuable levels of bus use. Officers have been reviewing passenger data which indicates there are in the region of 900 passengers travelling from Kingswells into Aberdeen every week and it is assumed that a reflective number are

also travelling outbound from Aberdeen to Kingswells every week. There are significant passenger numbers during peak hours.

## 5.2 Bus Service Options

5.2.1 As no operator has stepped in to provide a commercial service the Council needs to consider whether a [REDACTED] service should be provided following the aforementioned criteria. Officer recommendation would be that a service should be introduced.

5.2.2 Feedback from residents has indicated that they feel a minimum half hourly daytime service Monday to Saturday would meet their needs and less frequent services in the evenings and on Sundays would be acceptable. Residents have also advised that a shuttle service around the village which links in with services at the P&R would also be acceptable, provided this operated frequently and didn't result in 2 fares requiring to be paid.

5.2.3 There are a number of options available for providing supported services which include:

- [REDACTED] standalone service - service between Kingswells and City Centre. This would likely be on an hourly basis in line with aforementioned criteria. [REDACTED]

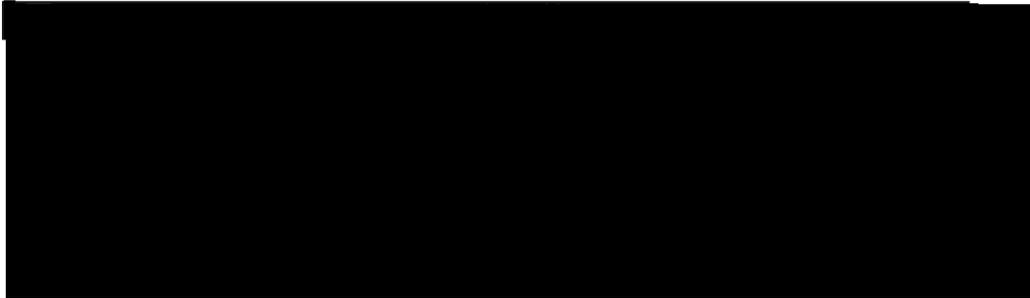
- [REDACTED] Kingswells shuttle service - service operating around the village linking in with [REDACTED] services operating from the P&R site. This could operate on an approximate 30 minute service and would allow passengers to connect with the high frequency services operating from the P&R site. Consideration would need to be given to through ticketing so that passengers did not have to pay twice. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] amend an existing commercial bus service to serve Kingswells – This would be to provide [REDACTED] journeys to Kingswells on an existing bus service. This would depend on operator's willingness [REDACTED] for such a service [REDACTED]

Officers have worked on some of the above options and explored these further with bus operators to get an indication of what would be viable [REDACTED].

5.2.4 Amended Service 94 to provide a Crematorium bus service and a Kingswells shuttle service:

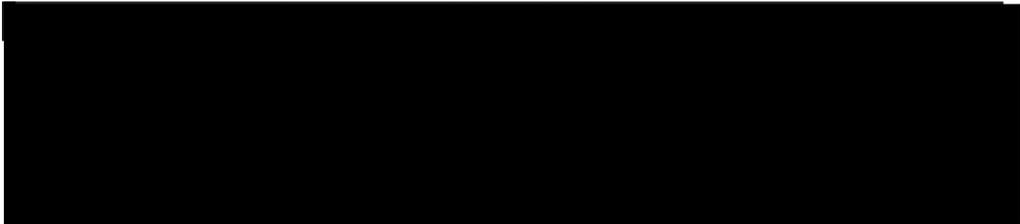
- Officers have worked on an amended timetable for the Service 94, Crematorium Bus Service. This would utilise the existing bus to provide a shuttle around Kingswells into/out of the P&R along with operating to the Crematorium (from ARI) between 09:00 – 16:30 and operating a shuttle around Kingswells into/out of the P&R between 06:30 – 08:33 and 16:40 – 19:03. This would operate Monday to Friday only. This service would provide connections between the village and the P&R every 15-20 minutes in the peak times and every 60-75 minutes in the off-peak. A copy of the draft timetable is appended to this report in Appendix 1.



- With this service there is the option to provide passengers with free transport around Kingswells to the P&R, meaning they do not have to pay for the shuttle and onward transport. If the existing service 94 fares were charged

█ The current fares are as follows:

- Adult Single: £0.70 | Adult Return: £1.00
- Child Single: £0.35 | Child Return: £0.50



█ This option would leave the village with no evening, Saturday or Sunday service with the nearest alternative services being available at the P&R █

### 5.2.5 Kingswells to P&R Stagecoach Operated Shuttle service:

- Officers have also investigated the option of a standalone shuttle bus service operating around the village linking into the Stagecoach X17 service at the P&R site with the operator providing through ticketing. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The operation would be on a 30 minute frequency using a single peak vehicle on a 0700 to 1900 operation 6 days a week (Monday to Saturday). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This option would leave the village with no evening or Sunday service with the nearest alternative services being available at the P&R site [REDACTED]

### 5.2.6 Augmented commercial bus service:

[REDACTED] Officers have also investigated the options of amending an existing commercial bus service to service Kingswells village. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This option would provide the village with the most convenient service and has potential to allow growth, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## 5.3 Conclusion

5.3.1 There is an option to provide a bus service almost immediately [REDACTED] by amending the service 94 and this would meet the majority of needs for the community. It is therefore recommended that this is introduced without a fare being charged.

5.3.2 It is recommended that Officers continue to explore options [REDACTED] to identify the most viable options [REDACTED] and for these to be presented to a future committee to allow a full decision to be made [REDACTED]

## 6. IMPACT

### **Improving Customer Experience –**

Transport affects every individual in Aberdeen and by ensuring the public transport network covers the City appropriately assists in meeting customer expectations and ensures services meet the needs of customers.

### **Improving Staff Experience –**

These services will allow staff to deliver on their duty to provide socially necessary bus services.

### **Improving our use of Resources –**

A consistent approach to delivery of public transport in the City will ensure that local environmental factors, changing priorities and customer needs are considered as well as available budgets are taken into account on a reviewed basis

### **Corporate -**

The operation of bus services links to the Community Plan vision of creating a *sustainable City with an integrated transport system that is accessible to all.*

The Smarter City document sets out that we will provide and promote a sustainable transport system, which reduces our carbon emissions and that we will work with our partners to seek to reduce the levels of inequality in the city.

The actions in the Action and Delivery Plan assist in the delivery of actions identified in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2013, in particular the Thematic Priority – Older People (*Older people in Aberdeen have increased independence*) and the Multi-lateral Priority – Integrated Transport (Aberdeen is easy to access and move around in) and the Underlying Principle – (A presumption for community based access to services (Services are accessible to all citizens in the ways which meet their needs)

The provision of bus services will assist delivery of the 5 year Corporate Business Plan, in particular the Community, Housing & Infrastructure Directorate's aims to support the delivery of a fully integrated transport network.

#### **Public –**

The proposals contained within the report are intended to ensure there is operation of appropriate transport services for the communities detailed. This report will be of interest to the public as the citizens of Aberdeen have a vested interest in the public transport network and accessibility to services.

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) has not been completed, as all aspects were considered as part of the Local Transport Strategy.

### 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

7.1 There is a high risk that [REDACTED] there will be no bus service for Kingswells. This will significantly impact residents, particularly in their ability to attend work, education, social activities and healthcare, and in some cases will result in social isolation.

7.2

[REDACTED]

7.3 There is a medium risk of adverse publicity and repute for the Council if a supported bus service is not introduced or if residents do not feel the services are sufficient. We will ensure any decision is managed through our communications team and details are fully set out with regards to the reasoning for any decision and ensure officers continue to engage with the community and work in collaboration.

7.4 It is envisaged that in the medium term the wider situation requires to be resolved satisfactorily, most likely within a new legislative framework introduced by the Scottish Transport Bill. Members should be aware that there are potential risks in effectively subsidising bus services without proper consideration of and strict adherence to the legislation, albeit it is understood that in these emergency circumstances the Committee may consider it necessary to take action in order to quickly put in place a short term solution.

### 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

### 8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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