

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 8 JUNE 2011****PETITION TO SEEK AN INCREASED FREQUENCY OF SERVICE ON THE NO. 7 BUS ROUTE (BETWEEN NUNEATON, ATHERSTONE, MEASHAM AND ASHBY)****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****Purpose of Report**

1. To respond to a petition to be presented by Mr. I. D. Ould CC on behalf of Lead Petitioner Dr. David Hickie (Chairman of Witherley Parish Council) to the Commission. There are 247 signatures on the petition and it reads as follows:

*“We, the undersigned, petition Leicestershire County Council to revisit the recent changes to the number 7 bus route through Witherley Parish with a view to improving the frequency of service. We also ask that they undertake to consult with key stakeholders before future changes are made so that they can better assess the impact on local, rural communities.”*

**Background**

2. The petition relates to a change to the service in late August 2010 which reintroduced a bus service into Newton Burgoland, Congerstone and Bilstone but at the same time reduced the frequency of operation on service 7 from every 90 minutes to approximately every 2 hours.

**Detail of Service 7**

3. Service 7 operates Mondays to Saturdays between Ashby, Measham, Atherstone and Nuneaton. It operates through a number of rural villages in west Leicestershire, a timetable is attached.
4. Service 7 has seen the frequency of operation reduce in recent years. It was originally operated as an hourly network service but was identified as a candidate for a reduced frequency as part of a budget saving exercise which reduced the frequency to every 90 minutes in May 2007. The low usage on the service was not considered to be sufficient to support the continued provision of an hourly frequency.
5. There have been previous concerns raised in the Witherley area about overcrowding on the first bus into Nuneaton on which the elderly free concessionary bus pass could be used. Service 7 was the first departure post 9.30am between Atherstone and Nuneaton which meant on arrival at Witherley the bus was often full. The change in August 2010 was designed to resolve this.

## **Local Bus Service Support Policy Review**

6. The current bus support policy of the County Council is to provide an hourly, or better, frequency bus service within an 800 metre walk for 95% of Leicestershire residents. For the remaining 5% essential access needs will be provided for.
7. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) of the Council identifies budget reductions from the support for local bus services of £500,000 in 2012/13 and a further £500,000 in 2013/14. A review of the bus support policy will take place in late summer/early autumn 2011 with user consultation as part of this review. It is likely given the level of saving that the 95% policy will no longer be achievable across the county and service reviews focussing on lower frequencies will be one of the options to consider in the review.
8. Service 7 will be reassessed, as will all supported services, against any new bus support policy. However, against the background of the required MTFS savings, it is unlikely that there would be any additional service provision.

## **Circulation under Local Issues Alert Procedure**

Mr. I. D. Ould CC                      Mr. G. Jones CC  
Mr. R. Blunt CC                        Mr. J. G. Coxon CC  
Mr. N. J. Rushton CC

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Commission:

- (a) considers the information in this report;
- (b) notes that the policy for the support of Local Bus Services is the subject of a forthcoming Scrutiny Review Panel;
- (c) notes that Bus Service No. 7 will be assessed against the policy emerging from that review process.

## **Officers to Contact:**

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## **Background Papers**

Petition containing 247 signatures is held in the Chief Executive's Department.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix – Route for Bus Service No. 7