

**Cheltenham Borough Council**  
**Council – 17 October 2016**  
**Petition against changes to the C bus route**

<b>Accountable member</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</b>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	<b>Managing Director Place and Economic Development, Tim Atkins</b>
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<p>The following petition was received by Council on 18 July 2016.</p> <p>“Proposed change in C bus route should be in consultation with bus users.”</p> <p>As the petition had in excess of 750 signatures it is entitled to a debate at Council.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Council are asked to decide a course of action as required by the Petition Scheme.</b>

<b>Financial implications</b>	<p>None arising from this report.</p> <p><b>Contact officer:</b> , <b>@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242</b></p>
<b>Legal implications</b>	<p>The petition must be considered in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme made pursuant to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The petition will be considered in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules varied in so far as necessary to comply with the attached Process.</p> <p><b>Contact officer: Peter Lewis, Head of Legal Services</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:Peter.lewis@teWKesbury.gov.uk">Peter.lewis@teWKesbury.gov.uk</a> Tel:01684 272 012</p>
<b>HR implications (including learning and organisational development)</b>	<p>None arising from this report.</p> <p><b>Contact officer:</b> , <b>@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242</b></p>
<b>Key risks</b>	No risks identified in the report.

<b>Corporate and community plan Implications</b>	
<b>Environmental and climate change implications</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Property/Asset Implications</b>	None arising from this report  <b>Contact officer: David Roberts@cheltenham.gov.uk</b>

## 1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The petition provisions in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 aim to address the perception nationally, as revealed in the results of the Place survey, that the community is unable to influence local decisions.
- 1.2 The Council's Petition Scheme (based on the national model scheme) is designed to ensure that the public has easy access to information about how to petition their local authority and they will know what to expect from their local authority in response. Included within the Scheme is the requirement to have a full Council debate should a certain number of signatures be achieved. Cheltenham Borough Council has set that threshold lower than that recommended by the legislation at 750 signatures.
- 1.3 The legislation also recommends a 15 minute maximum period for the debate and recognises that the issue may be referred to another committee where the matter is not one reserved for full Council. The purpose of the requirement for Council debate therefore, is not to ensure that the final decision relating to the petition issue is made at that Council meeting but to increase the transparency of the decision making process, ensuring that debates on significant petitions are publicised with sufficient notice to enable the petition organiser and public to attend. It also ensures that local people know that their views have been listened to and they have the opportunity to hear their local representative debate their concerns. The outcome of debates will depend on the subject matter of the petition.

## 2. The petition

- 2.1 The Council received a petition at its meeting on Monday 18 July 2016. The wording of the petition is set out in the Executive Summary of this report.
- 2.2 Mrs Doreen Spiers (Friends of Springbank) and Andy Hayes (Hesters Way Partnership) were nominated as the petition organisers.
- 2.3 The Council is therefore required to debate the petition for a maximum of 15 minutes in accordance with the Petitions Scheme approved by Council on the 13 May 2010. A process for dealing with a petition was produced by officers and is attached as Appendix 1 as a process to be followed for the debate at this meeting. The debate should conclude with one or more decisions taken pursuant to the Petition Scheme as follows
  - taking the action requested in the petition (provided the matter is reserved to full Council for decision)
  - referring the matter to Cabinet or an Appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee (including Overview and Scrutiny) for further consideration
  - holding an inquiry into the matter

- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
- taking no further action on the matter

### 3. Officer comments

#### 3.1 Background

**3.2** On 1st May 2016, Stagecoach implemented changes to the route of the C Bus. Previously, this route served Springbank Way and the Springbank shops on a loop. See map below of the former route:



**3.3** The C route would no longer run along the length of Springbank way from the junction with Hesters Way Lane to the Springbank Shops.

**3.4** In mitigation, Stagecoach extended the route of the B bus, so that it now serves Pilgrove Way.

#### 3.5 Reasons for the change

**3.6** The change to the route was taken for commercial reasons, and as the route is not subsidised, there was no opportunity for the county council to influence the proposals prior to the changes being implemented. Stagecoach stated that the revisions were driven by the need to make punctuality improvements to Service C.

**3.7** In further statements, Stagecoach have explained that although the decision was not an easy one to make, they feel they have calculated that most customers using the affected stops on Springbank Way will need to walk a maximum of 2 minutes further for their nearest bus. In some cases, walking time decreases because the new route for Service B is actually closer than the current Service C.

- 3.8** They went onto state that they had not been delivering the levels of punctuality on Service C that they or their customers expect. They cited increasing congestion (in part due to fuel price changes), poor traffic light priority at key junctions, parking concerns on residential streets (including but not exclusively at school times) that had all played a part in making journeys run late. The relatively tight turn-around time between journeys (a necessity of the then route length) meant that small delays regularly escalated into gaps in their timetable and complaints from customers.
- 3.9** Stagecoach had explored adding an additional vehicle to the three they used on the route, but stated that the service was not taking enough revenue to justify the 33% cost increase to solve the punctuality problem. They had also discounted reducing the number of journeys (to give each bus more time) as they felt that this would lead to a reduction in the appeal of the service as a turn-up-and-go route, with a risk that revenue had diminished as a result.
- 3.10** Stagecoach have stated that their decision to cease serving Springbank Way was not an easy one, as they always seek to make positive changes to encourage growth and development. They feel that they found the best compromise for the majority of their customers. They have stated that the time saving of 2 to 3 minutes per trip would be significant enough to address the punctuality challenges.
- 3.11 Potential Impacts on the Springbank community**
- 3.12** The removal of the bus service from the length of Springbank Way, however raised a number of concerns with local residents. Primarily these were:
- How would elderly and infirm people be able to access local services?
  - Was an impact assessment carried out?
  - Why was there not any consultation with service users / residents?
  - Additionally whilst this is not a subsidised route, what means of an appeal or challenge do local residents have?
  - How will the removal of the route along Springbank Way affect the potential redevelopment of the Springbank shops site?
- 3.13** The loss of the C route affects a 400m length of Springbank Way, where it is known that there are many older people living. Unfortunately, precise data for this catchment area is not available. Using data for the Springbank ward as whole shows the following:
- At the 2011 Census, 7.6% of the population (501) were aged over 65 and 5.9% (386) aged over 75. This was slightly less than the Cheltenham average of 8.1% and 7.9% respectively.
  - 11.2% of households (313) were formed of older people living alone, compared to the Cheltenham average of 12.8%.
  - 22% (614) of the Springbank households did not have access to a car. This was the same percentage as for Cheltenham as a whole.
  - There were 5.6% of the population (368) who recorded their health as being either bad or very bad, compared to 3.9% of the population of Cheltenham.
  - There were 7.9% of the population (522) who stated that their day to day activities were limited a lot, compared to 6.5% of the population of Cheltenham.

- 3.14** So whilst there are a slightly lower proportion of older people living in Springbank when compared to Cheltenham as a whole, there is a higher proportion of people that have bad health or whose ability to carry out day-to-day activities is limited.
- 3.15** Stagecoach have stated that no impact assessment was carried out, nor consultation with users / residents. They gave 56 days notice of the changes to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.
- 3.16** As the service is a commercial service, the Borough Council, nor County Council have a right of appeal to the changes.
- 3.17** It is uncertain about any impact on the proposed redevelopment of the Springbank shops.
- 3.18 What has happened since?**
- 3.19** Since the changes have been made, Stagecoach have stated that punctuality has increased by 2.37% (May to August when compared to Jan to April). They are unwilling to share passenger numbers due to commercial reasons.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1** Council are asked to decide a course of action as required by the Petition Scheme.

<b>Report author</b>	<p><b>Contact officer: @cheltenham.gov.uk, Tel: 01242 26</b></p> <p><b>Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager</b></p> <p>Richard <a href="mailto:Gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk">Gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>01242 235354</b></p> <p><b>Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:rosalind.reeves@cheltenham.gov.uk">rosalind.reeves@cheltenham.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>01242 774937</b></p>
<b>Appendices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Risk assessment</li> <li>2. Process for dealing with a petition at council</li> </ol>
<b>Background information</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council's petition scheme – report to Council 13 May 2010</li> </ol>

## **Process for dealing with petitions at Council**

The following is the recommended process to be followed for the debate of a petition at the Council meeting in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme. The Council Procedure Rules shall be suspended in so far as necessary to facilitate this process.

### **1. The Mayor will remind members of the procedure to be followed**

### **2. Statement by the petition organiser**

The Mayor will invite the petitioner organiser or their representative to come to the microphone and speak for up to 5 minutes on the petition.

There will be no questions and the petition organiser/their representative will take no further part in the proceedings.

### **3. Clarification on the background information in the officer's report**

Members will be invited to ask any questions for clarification as to the facts in the officer's report.

### **4. Statement by the relevant Cabinet Member**

The Cabinet Member whose portfolio is most relevant to the petition will be invited by the Mayor to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes on the subject of the petition. They may wish to refer to the background report from officers circulated with the papers for the meeting.

They may also wish to propose a motion at this point; if so, the motion must be seconded.

### **5. Debate by members**

Where a member has proposed a motion (which is seconded), the usual Rules of Debate (Rule 13) will apply.

If there is no motion, the Mayor will invite any member who wishes to speak on the petition to address Council for up to a maximum of 3 minutes.

When the 15 minutes set aside for the debate (as laid down in the Council's Petition Scheme) is up, the Mayor may decide to extend the time allowed for the debate but will bring it to a close when they feel sufficient time has been allowed.

### **6. Conclusion of Debate**

The debate should conclude with one or more decisions taken pursuant to the Petition Scheme as follows:

- taking the action requested in the petition (provided the matter is reserved to full council for decision)
- referring the matter to Cabinet or an Appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee (including Overview and Scrutiny) for further consideration
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
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The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	No risks identified at this stage until Council decide what action to take on the petition.										

**Explanatory notes**

**Impact** – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

**Likelihood** – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6  
(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

**Control** - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close