

## **IMPROVED RURAL TRANSPORT DOCUMENT - UFFINGTON PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE**

1. **Introduction.** Uffington Parish Council welcomes the initiative to restore the previous bus service that served Uffington until 2016 when lack of use was a major factor in it being discontinued. Since then, many Uffington residents have found other ways to meet their specific transport requirements although there is still a small number who would benefit from improved rural public transport. We fully support any measure that will provide useful services to Uffington residents and, at the same time, reduce carbon emissions by reducing the number of cars journeys. To generate this response we advertised the proposed service (Route C) to villagers and this response incorporates many of the views expressed.

2. Notwithstanding the generic need to provide more ecologically sound transport solutions as stated in the introduction, we looked at the service need from the point of view of various groups/types of users and assessed the ability of the proposed route (Route C) to meet them. The 4 main use cases identified are examined and commented on in more detail below as well as addressing the 'Particular Questions related to service C'.

### **1 - School Runs to King Alfred's (KAs) Wantage.**

- a. There are approximately 20 children from Uffington that attend KAs this year and somewhere between 10 and 20 get on the bus each morning.
- b. The shaded journeys ('likely to be cost dependent'), if they run, are potentially the most useful for children going to KAs in Wantage but the timings are not right. The current, OCC provided, a bus service, picks up from Uffington at 07:45 and arrives at West Site 08:25 and Centre Site 08:30.
- c. From a potential school bus to Wantage perspective the position for this academic year is that OCC continue to provide a bus service, which picks up from Uffington at 07:45 and arrives at West Site 08:25 and Centre Site 08:30.
- d. Specific comments:
  - i. Size: a minibus would be too small to serve the current school route or even just Uffington.
  - ii. Timings – arrival at 08:38, with a six-minute walk to Centre Site would be too late (unless it passes Centre Site and makes that a drop off on the way), but that also misses out West Site.
  - iii. Similarly, timings a little tight for return pick up and would need to go past West Site as well.
- e. **Conclusions:**
  - i. The proposed (and shaded) timings do not match the needs of the KAs school run.
  - ii. The current 4-KA03A does provide the required service (route and timings). A slight re-jig of the proposed route into Wantage, size of bus and timings could solve the school bus issue and, if there was any way to combine the school and offer a rural service, then this could also save some costs/ improve the viability.

### **2 - A service for those without own transport.**

- a. The service should help people who are no longer able to drive and give young people some independence to get into Faringdon and Wantage.
- b. What is needed is a guaranteed bus (and return) to Wantage, on at least Wednesdays for the market and at weekends to give older children some freedom to get out of the village.

- c. Some of the arrival in and departure times in Wantage are too close together or spaced out to allow a sensible amount of time for shopping and/or doctors/hospital visits. A duration of around 2 hours is probably needed.
- d. Running past the doctors practice in Faringdon and Wantage would be helpful to older passengers but the frequency of service doesn't help in this respect.
- e. **Conclusions:**
  - i. The service could potentially address some of the needs of those without their own transport BUT timings and down time need to be adjusted to allow approximately 2hrs in each town.

### **3 - Journeys to Work in Wantage and Faringdon.**

- a. This would need to operate to get people to Wantage and Faringdon by 0830 (or earlier) and return around 1730.
- b. **Conclusions:**
  - i. The proposed service would meet this requirement for Wantage workers with minor changes to timings.
  - ii. The proposed service would NOT meet this requirement for Faringdon workers.

### **4 - Enabling Onward Journeys.**

- a. This proposed service would need to operate early/late to get people to Wantage and Faringdon by 08:00 (or earlier) and return around 18:30 to allow for onward connection times.
- b. The proposed service could meet the requirement for non-employment journeys onward journeys from Faringdon or Wantage - e.g. to Oxford, Swindon (S6 route), Didcot the service where there are links to national buses, coaches & trains, or even to take advantage of e.g. the EV car club from the Beacon car park.
- c. **Conclusions:**
  - i. The proposed service is unlikely to meet the needs of connecting workers to onward services without much later and earlier times which would allow for the additional connected journey times.
  - ii. The proposed service could meet the requirement for onward journey links, mainly for leisure travel.

### **3. Uffington, Baulking, Woolstone (UBW) Minibus<sup>1</sup>.**

- b. **Shopping/Medical Service.** The UBW minibus is a community run service is well used and provides, mainly, a twice weekly shopping service for those who do not have their own transport. It collects passengers from various points around the village (and also from other villagers en route) and drops them off at convenient points in Wantage for both shopping and medical appointments.
- c. **School Runs.** The minibus has NOT been used for school runs. On two previous occasions groups of parents proposed this in response to OCC changes which would disadvantage families with children at KAs. Our charges, on a cost recovery basis, were not unattractive and would have helped both parties but we would have required some involvement by the parents as drivers as our existing volunteers could not commit to covering 5 days a week.

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<sup>1</sup> Please connect with UBW Minibus email dated 14 September which gives a fuller perspective from the minibus team's perspective.

d. **Other Users.** The minibus is also used by villagers and non profit organisations , including Uffington School, for a variety of social and sporting activities. The two branches of use, community services and private bookings, are mutually supportive from a financial standpoint. The proposed bus service could undermine these and we would not wish to lose any of this income as it is doubtful whether the association would survive with the loss of either source.

e. **Conclusions:**

- i. The UBW minibus provides an excellent and valuable service for shopping and medical appointments in Faringdon and Wantage. Whilst the service is not quite 'door-to-door' is much more personalised than a bus service with more limited stops.
- ii. The proposed services could NOT match, apart from being daily as opposed to twice weekly, the minibus service, especially in providing those with limited mobility more accessibility to local services.
- iii. The proposed service could undermine some minibus services to the point of making the minibus no longer financially viable overall.
- iv. We would prefer to see any savings from not implementing the proposed service go towards helping to ensure that this service be continued in the longer term.

4. **Other Comments from Villagers.** The following is a selection of villagers' comments:

- a. The main thing to notice is that all parts of the proposals that actually make it WORK are 'cost dependent', which frankly means it won't happened in my opinion, without a major commitment of passengers to use it regularly.
- b. If you don't make buses frequent enough to rely on, people won't use them. If it's only once or twice a day, people generally won't bother.
- c. One other thing that might be worth mentioning in the consultation is that many of the amenities in Faringdon are now along Park Road (e.g., Waitrose, Tesco, White Horse Medical Centre). For residents of the villages, it would therefore be best if the bus turned off the A420 at the Park Road junction (A417) and entered Faringdon that way.
- d. It would be catastrophic if the new service drove the UBW bus out of existence, especially if it then itself disappeared (again).
- e. It seems like a great idea on the face of it, but I can't really see it ever being good enough for what we need, at which point it just feels like a token gesture from the bus company to enhance their coverage statistics.

5. **Conclusions.** The main conclusions from Uffington on this consultation are:

- a. We welcome any move that reduces carbon emissions and traffic congestion.
- b. We welcome any move which improves rural public transport.
- c. Any service must be affordable meet the needs of villagers (see above use cases for details) and not just be run when it is convenient for the operators as

this proposal appears to be. Unless these needs are met, the service is likely to fail due to lack of passengers as happened previously.

- d. We would not wish to see a situation where the proposed bus service undermines the financial viability of the minibus service causing it to cease operating.
- e. The only identified benefit from the proposed service, without modification, is to enable leisure travel to other travel hubs for onward travel.
- f. Uffington has adapted to using a range of transport solutions since the demise of the under-used bus service in 2016. These solutions now offer more tailored services to the different groups of users than this proposal. We would prefer to see any savings from not implementing the proposed service go towards helping to ensure that these other services can be continued in the longer term.

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