

Item 3: Procurement of bus service for Church Crookham Development – Fleet Area Bus Contract

Additional Appendix to be tabled at the meeting

From Church Crookham Parish Council:

The Parish Council resolved that they did not support the introduction of the two new bus services (Queensacre/Pondtail/Fleet/Calthorpe Park school) which required a £220K contribution from the QEB transport and highways fund but they did support a proposal to extend the 72 bus service into the Crookham Park Estate and they would support contributing a fair share from the QEB transport fund if additional funding was necessary to implement this change to the existing service. They felt that this would be a good interim solution to provide an immediate service to Crookham Park and that it would be more appropriate to look at the bus service requirements for Crookham Park again when the bus contract comes up for tender in 1 year and 10 months' time, when the Crookham Park estate would be more established and populated.

From Stephen Parker, Deputy Leader of Hart District Council:

Cllr. Wheale has briefed me in my capacity as Deputy Leader of Hart and Cabinet Member for Planning on the plans for the bus service serving the new Queen Elizabeth Barracks housing site, and that there is a suggestion that the bus service be deferred in favour of a taxi share scheme.

I have three concerns regarding the utility, functionality and sustainability of such a deferral.

The first is that if the bus service is to be sustainable long term, it needs to start sooner rather than later. If the residents get accustomed to using their cars for (particularly) commuting, few if any will later abandon their cars and take to the busses. The commuters are especially important as the road network in Fleet is under pressure, and getting a busful of drivers off the rush hour roads will help the congestion.

The second concern is that for the service to be sustainable sooner rather than later, it makes sense to route it through an existing area where it can pick up other travellers; an area where an existing service may have to be terminated for viability reasons would be give

HCC an additional win and provide viability support to the bus service designed to serve the development. Once the usage of the service builds up, it can then become viable in its own right and hopefully grow its demand.

Finally, if a restricted service is in place such as a taxi share, it is in my view less likely to grow a bus usage habit. Users will not perceive such a service as public transport, and some at least will simply take to their cars when the taxi share service is migrated to a bus service. Thus longer term sustainability may be lost, inevitably culminating in unnecessary private car use and possible loss of viability of the bus service.