

## 22/1132      Stagecoach Bus Service 500

To note statement from Stagecoach

Stagecoach has recently undertaken a series of network reviews across the West of England in response to changing demand post covid alongside new pressures on costs of operation and resources available. As part of these reviews, we have been working closely with Oxfordshire County Council to look at alternative solutions and where possible with West Northamptonshire Council.

Unfortunately, these reviews highlighted to the council where the cost of operating the services outstripped the revenue received.

The history of the 500 service is that it had been supported with money from housing developers as part of their S106 obligations. This was a pot of money which covered the service until September 2021. At this stage we reduced frequency and have been able to continue to August this year. However, we are still not able to cover the costs based on the current frequency.

We had raised the fact that we were having to reduce the frequency and removal of the Sunday service on the 500 earlier in the year and provided the West Northamptonshire Council with 10 weeks notice of this change along with a timetable. There has been no offer of funding for the Sunday service to be reinstated.

We were also in the position where the 200 was going to be cancelled from the same date. We managed to get temporary funding at the very last minute to keep this service operating giving the council more time to look and consider alternative options. We have yet to have the follow up meeting on this. I will however share the responses I am getting from residents in Brackley when we are able to have our review meeting with West Northamptonshire Council. We need to review this by mid November to enable us to consider the future beyond mid January.

We are later than planned with our communication as we were held up waiting for tender awards in the Banbury area made by Oxfordshire County Council which we couldn't release to the public until they had all been approved.

We have been funded through central government support due to covid however, this funding was due to expire at the end of October and we therefore had to put plans in place to mitigate this. To put the 500 changes into context for you the 500 (without the funding for covid ) is losing a considerable amount of money (estimated to be £250k per annum) and the Sunday service was recently carrying an average of 8 passengers per trip. It is almost impossible to run anything less than hourly and it be attractive enough to carry more passengers.

"Every September we see changes in demand to the previous school year and therefore monitor all of our services, particularly in the first couple of weeks when students return. In the short term, we will be running a duplicate bus for the morning and afternoon trips whilst we collate the information."