

APPENDIX H

ITEM 7

The bus review – announcements

I would like to make an announcement about the bus review. We are due to discuss this at the meeting of the Cabinet on 2 March. At the meeting, officers will present a summary of the 2,000 consultation responses that we have received so far. It is only right and proper that we should not take substantial decisions until we have fully considered those responses.

However, it is clear that there are a number of decisions that we can take now, particularly where they may help to address concerns that have been raised during the consultation.

Firstly, a number of members and head-teachers have raised concerns about the timing of possible reductions to school special services. Some head-teachers have asked for more time to work with parents on alternative ways of getting to school. Others have argued that schools in phases 2 and 3 should be encouraged to respond to the consultation. They may not have realised that decisions in principle made in phase 1 about school specials could also affect them.

Secondly, a number of people have asked why we are consulting on school specials, but have not consulted about other forms of school transport, such as the provision of free travel to faith schools. Why should the county council subsidise bus travel to some schools, but not to others?

I believe that these are very valid points, and I am grateful to the members and head-teachers for raising them. These are very difficult times for the county council financially, but it is vitally important that we should act **reasonably** within our available resources.

Accordingly, I am today announcing that school special services in phase 1 of the bus review will **not** be withdrawn from September 2010 as originally proposed. Instead, these services will continue for a further year, to September 2011.

We should use this additional year to tackle the concerns that have been raised in the consultation. If we subsequently decide that school specials should be withdrawn from phase 1, it would give us and the schools time to work with parents about alternative means of getting to school. The additional year also gives us time to consult schools in phases 2 and 3 about the principle of removing school special services.

We also intend to use this time to look in more detail at the other bus services funded by the county council, including travel to faith schools. I am asking officers to carry out a further study into whether these services should also be

brought within the scope of the bus review. This will include full consultation with those schools and parents who would be affected.

I must be absolutely clear about this. We still need to need to find substantial savings from the bus budget. I am most certainly not saying that the school specials will continue after September 2011 – that is a decision we will have to take later. But as a reasonable and listening council, it is right that we should respond to the concerns that have been raised about the timing of any reductions in service.

Ian Lake
Cabinet Member for Transport
9 February 2010

Ian Lake, Portfolio Holder for Transport, has today announced that school special bus services will continue for one more year. Schools have asked for need more time to help parents find alternative ways of getting their children to school.

I intend to support this work. I am providing an additional budget for the transport service to improve information about travel. Yesterday, we launched an innovative website designed to improve traffic and travel information, including travel by bus and train. I am providing an additional £50,000 to help the service to develop this website further and to provide other forms of information for people who do not have access to the internet.

My intention is that this money will fund further better information for the residents of Surrey to encourage car sharing and other initiatives to make the best use of available transport.

We have set the ambition for Surrey to be a world class authority. We may not be able to measure this by the depth of our pockets. But we should be able to say that our residents are amongst the best informed in the country about the many transport services that are available to them.

Andrew Povey
Leader
9 February 2010