

Meeting of:	Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 16 April 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Environment and Regeneration
Report Title:	Local Bus Services in the Vale of Glamorgan
Purpose of Report:	To provide an overview of the past, present and future aspects of local bus services in the Vale of Glamorgan in response to Requests for Considerations received from Councillors S. Campbell and Ewan Goodjohn.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter, Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Kyle Phillips, Operational Manager Transport Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	None.
Policy Framework:	The report comes under the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report has been provided in response to two Requests for Consideration forms received from Councillor S. Campbell and Councillor Ewan Goodjohn. • The Request forms are included within the Agenda for the meeting scheduled for 16th April 2024. • The report provides a summary of the past historical aspects such as the deregulation of bus services under Transport Act 1985 and the role the Council has in supporting and monitoring the overall commercial network. • The report also provides a summary of current services provided and the recent regional tender exercise under Welsh Government's 'Bus Network Fund'. • Finally, the report provides information on future developments and plans of Welsh Government. 	

Recommendation

1. That the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of the report.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To enable the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to consider local bus services in the Vale of Glamorgan.

1. Background

- 1.1 Councillors S. Campbell and Ewan Goodjohn, both submitted Requests for Consideration forms in relation to bus services in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 1.2 The Requests are closely aligned to each other and so a report has been produced to outline the Council's current position and future developments.
- 1.3 The report covers past legislative changes, a breakdown of the current situation in terms of routes operated across the Vale of Glamorgan and future plans of Welsh Government.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 The PAST

- 2.2 The deregulation of bus services in the U.K. outside of London was applied to local bus services in 1986 under the Transport Act 1985, which abolished 'Road Service Licensing' for local bus services and removed the public sector's role in setting service routes, frequencies and fares that allowed for the introduction of on-street competition for local bus services between operators.
- 2.3 Under the Transport Act 1985, Local Authorities were however given the power to support specific unprofitable services deemed socially necessary, although such services must be procured via an 'open tender' process, unless what is known as 'de minimis' arrangements with a specific service operator to revise an existing service schedule to provide the required service route/frequency can be applied at an agreed price between both parties.
- 2.4 This has been the situation to date, with Local Authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan Council monitoring the overall commercial network being supplied by operators and then taking a decision on what it can provide in addition to improve the available network within budget.
- 2.5 Prior to Covid supported local bus services were provided using the Council's established budget for supported local bus services (£470,000) and the Bus Services Support Grant (£380,490), as well as some minor time limited provision using Section 106 funding for sustainable transport from new developments in an area. Indeed, Section 106 funding currently supports the Council run 'Greenlinks Community Transport' service.
- 2.6 The bus services that were supported through the Council established budget and BSSG were:

7 - Cardiff Bay, Llandough Hospital, Lower Penarth, Penarth Town Centre (Mon to Fri – daytime)

88 - Waterfront (Morrisons), Cadoxton, Bendrick, Sully, Cosmeston, Penarth Esplanade (Mon to Sat – daytime)

94 - Cadoxton, Coldbrook, Bendrick, Sully, Cosmeston, Penarth, Cogan, Penarth Road, Grangetown (Evenings)

96 - Barry Westend, Colcot, Golwg-y-Coed (Crematorium), Wenvoe, Culverhouse Cross (Port Road), Ely, Canton (Evenings)

100 - Coldbrook, Cadoxton, Barry Town Centre, Barry Island, Highlight Park (Port Road East), Cwm Talwg (Sunday)

303 - St Donat's, Marcross, Monknash, Broughton, Wick, St Bride's Major, Southerndown, Ogmored-by-Sea, Ogmored, Ewenny (Daily)

304 - Boverton, Eglwys Brewis, St Athan, East Aberthaw, Rhoose, Cardiff Airport, Barry, Dinas Powys, Llandough Hospital, Cardiff Bay (Mon to Sat Eve and Sun/BH)

305 (formerly 89a/b) - Murch, Eastbrook, Lower Penarth, Penarth Esplanade, Penarth Town Centre, Penarth Marina, Cardiff Bay (Mon to Sat – daytime)

320 - Pontyclun, Miskin, Hensol, Clawdd Coch, Pendoylan, Clawdd Coch, Gwerne-y-Steeple, Petereston-Super-Ely, St Bride's-Super-Ely, St Fagans, Fairwater (Mon to Sat – daytime)

321 - Pentre Cwrt, Vale Business Park (B4268), Llysworney (Penyrheol Terrace), Cowbridge, Aberthin, Maendy, Ystradowen, Brynsadler, Pontyclun (Mon to Sat – daytime)

B3 - Garden Suburb, The Knap (Lakeside), Barry Waterfront (Morrisons & Barry Dock Interchange), Barry Town Centre, Gibbonsdown, Cadoxton (Mon to Sat – daytime)

X2 - Colwinston (A48), Pentre Meyrick (A48), Cowbridge, St Hilary (A48), Bonvilston (A48), St Nicholas (A48), The Tumble (A48), Culverhouse Cross (A48), Cardiff Bay (Mon to Sat eve and Sun/BH)

- 2.7** As the Covid pandemic spread and lockdowns commenced across the country, local bus services were maintained with additional Welsh Government funding to ensure essential workers could continue to get to work, as well as help maintain the industry through this period. Without this financial assistance, many operators would no longer be in business today. It should also be noted that the wider population were advised not to use public transport for non-essential travel, which in turn has led to a very slow return to pre-pandemic patronage levels.
- 2.8** 'Bus Emergency Scheme' (BES): This was the scheme initially set up by the Welsh Government to maintain operators farebox revenues to pre-pandemic levels.
- 2.9** 'Bus Transition Fund' (BTF): As we have emerged from the pandemic, patronage has still not attained pre-pandemic levels and operators were having to consider widescale cuts to both commercial and supported service provision, especially as the Welsh Government had decided to end its BES funding in July 2023 and replace it with a less favourable scheme, the 'Bus Transition Fund' (BTF) for the remainder of the 2023-24 financial year only. This is why service changes were introduced around this time, including the loss of Service 88 (Barry – Penarth via

Bendrick and Sully) and Services 97/97A in Barry being replaced by Services B1/B2.

2.10 With the knowledge that BTF was to end on 31st March 2024 and no further funding replacement announced, the S.E Wales regional authorities (including the Vale of Glamorgan Council) working with their local bus operators identified all services that were to be withdrawn without any more funding from Welsh Government, or indeed from each local authority. The cuts and reductions proposed by operators were considerable across the board and could have meant the further withdrawal of Services 7, 93, 100, 303, 304, 305, 320, 321, B1, B2, B3 and X2 in the Vale alone, in addition to reductions to remaining services.

2.11 All Welsh local authorities agreed to tender all such services identified for withdrawal based on existing schedules and the Vale of Glamorgan Council was no exception tendering for the services identified above, including Service 88 that had been withdrawn following an end to BES funding, but excluded Service 7 which was tendered by Cardiff Council.

2.12 The local bus service network throughout Wales was facing decimation at this stage.

2.13 THE PRESENT

2.14 Following the recent tenders by S.E Wales regional authorities and others throughout Wales, the Welsh Government announced at the last-minute new funding for 2024-25 going forward. This has been called the 'Bus Network Fund' (BNF). Working regionally, it has been determined that in addition to local authorities individual existing budgets for supported local services (i.e. £470k VoGC), the new BNF will cover all services tendered despite the significant increase prices received, as well as the other supported services not tendered at existing contract prices (i.e. Services 94/96 evenings and Service 905 in the Vale of Glamorgan).

2.15 The Vale of Glamorgan Council tendered and is in the process of formerly awarding new Contracts for Services which came into effect this month:

- 88 - Waterfront (Morrisons & Barry Dock Interchange), Cadoxton, Bendrick, Sully, Cosmeston, Penarth Esplanade (Mon to Sat Daytime)
- 93 - Barry Waterfront (Morrisons), Cadoxton, Coldbrook, Dinas Powys, Penarth, Cogan, Penarth Road, Grangetown (Mon to Sat Daytime)
- 100 - Coldbrook, Cadoxton, Barry Town Centre, Barry Island, Highlight Park (Port Road East), Cwm Talwg (Sunday only)
- 303 - St Donat's, Marcross, Monknash, Broughton, Wick, St Bride's Major, Southerndown, Ogmored-by-Sea, Ogmored, Ewenny (Mon to Sun)
- 304 - Boverton, Eglwys Brewis, St Athan, East Aberthaw, Rhoose, Cardiff Airport, Barry, Dinas Powys, Llandough Hospital, Cardiff Bay (Mon to Sun)
- 305 - Murch, Eastbrook, Lower Penarth, Penarth Esplanade, Penarth Town Centre, Penarth Marina, Cardiff Bay (Mon to Sat Daytime)
- 320 - Pontyclun, Miskin, Hensol, Clawdd Coch, Pendoylan, Clawdd Coch, Gwerne-y-Steeple, Petereston-Super-Ely, St Bride's-Super-Ely, St Fagans, Fairwater (Mon to Sat Daytime)

321 - Pentre Cwrt, Vale Business Park (B4268), Llysworney (Penyrheol Terrace), Cowbridge, Aberthin, Maendy, Ystradowen, Brynsadler, Pontyclun (Mon to Sat Daytime)

B1 - Highlight Park, Colcot, Gibbonsdown, Barry Town Centre, Barry Waterfront (Morrisons, Asda), Barry Island (Mon to Sat Daytime)

B2 - Cwm Talwg, Colcot, Gibbonsdown, Barry Town Centre, Barry Waterfront (Morrisons) (Mon to Sat Daytime)

B3 - Garden Suburb, The Knap (Lakeside), Barry Waterfront (Morrisons & Barry Dock Interchange), Barry Town Centre, Gibbonsdown, Cadoxton (Mon to Sat Daytime)

X2 - Newton, Laleston, Bridgend, Colwinston (A48), Pentre Meyrick (A48), Cowbridge, St Hilary (A48), Bonvilston (A48), St Nicholas (A48), The Tumble (A48), Culverhouse Cross (A48), Cardiff Bay (Mon to Sun)

- 2.16** The existing 'de-minimis' contract for Service 94/96 (evenings) continues.
- 2.17** The contract for the Welsh Government supported Service 905 (Cardiff Airport Rail Link) continues for 2024-25, with provision for 2025-26 to be confirmed by WG later in the year (i.e. on an annual basis).
- 2.18** Service 7 was tendered by Cardiff Council, but it is now understood that Cardiff Council did not extend provision as it previously was through to the Vale (i.e. Llandough and Penarth); therefore, this service now only runs between Asda, Ferry Road, Cardiff Bay Retail Park and Cardiff City Centre. However, officers will be meeting with Cardiff Bus and Cardiff Council to look at ways the missing links can be re-introduced.
- 2.19** Service 93S (Grangetown to St Cyres) was also tendered by Cardiff Council and remains as it was.
- 2.20** The re-instated Service 88 (Barry – Penarth via Bendrick and Sully) will now also serve the new Barry Dock Interchange.
- 2.21** In addition, Services B1, B2 and 93 will provide the same level of service on Saturdays, as they do on weekdays, which will also mean they will run during Christmas week when Cardiff Bus normally applies Saturday timetables only.
- 2.22** The only commercial services that now operate in the Vale of Glamorgan are:
 - 92 - Penarth Town Centre, Cogan, Penarth Road, Grangetown (Daily – daytime and evening)
 - 94/94b - Cadoxton, Coldbrook, Bendrick, Sully, Cosmeston, Penarth, Cogan, Penarth Road, Grangetown. 94b: via Bessemer Road, Cardiff (Daily – daytime)
 - 96 - Barry Westend, Colcot, Golwg-y-Coed (Crematorium), Wenvoe, Culverhouse Cross (Port Road), Ely, Canton (Daily – daytime)
- 2.23** The additional funding provided by Welsh Government for the BNG across Wales was in the region of £39m and the VOGC has been successful in gaining approximately £2.01m of this, to keep services as they are today.
- 2.24** To put this into context if the £2.01m had not been made available then the Council budget and Bus Services Support Grant would have only able to pay for the X2 and 303 services, as an example.
- 2.25** It should also be noted that any reduction in Councils supported bus budgets will see a similar decrease in the amount of BNG that is allocated.

2.26 **The Future**

- 2.27 While the funding made available from Welsh Government has been more than welcomed to keep bus services as they are, there is currently no guaranteed funding past March 2025. This leaves us, once again, unsure of what our bus network will look like from April 2025.
- 2.28 In March 2024 Welsh Government launched their Roadmap to Bus Reform: [Our Roadmap to Bus Reform: Towards One Network, One Timetable, One Ticket \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/our-roadmap-to-bus-reform-towards-one-network-one-timetable-one-ticket)
- 2.29 Welsh Government are aiming to improve bus services throughout Wales through its 'Bus Services (Wales) Bill' about making them:
- Easier to use** - with better real time information.
 - Accessible** - so everyone feels confident to use the bus.
 - Responsive** - taking passengers to where they want to go and when they want to go there.
 - Seamless** - connecting to rail, walking, cycling and road networks.
 - Faster** - with fewer delays and traffic jams.
 - Provide better value for money** - for passengers, bus companies and government.
 - Greener** - with low emission buses.
- 2.30 Some of the above are already being progressed, as operators and government are investing in 'greener' bus fleets and improving information about bus services (e.g. real time/electronic information at bus stops).
- 2.31 Working with Transport for Wales, the Council is also looking to provide a new '**Bus Service Guide**' for the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.32 The Welsh Government has also outlined its action plans to improve bus service provision through its 'Bus Services (Wales) Bill' by:
- Setting up '**Welsh Partnership Schemes**' to work with bus companies so communities have better bus services.
 - Setting up '**Welsh Franchising Schemes**' where a local authority can give bus companies the right to run some or all the bus services in an area.
 - **Set up and run their own bus service.**
 - **Sharing of information** that will enable local authorities to ask for information on bus routes so they can plan bus routes better. It'll also help provide better information to passengers.
- 2.33 In essence we are in the process of almost coming around full circle since the deregulation of local bus services in the mid-eighties, albeit still working with commercial operators to deliver services.
- 2.34 However, the timescales outlined on the reform document have the franchises rolling out between 2026 and 2028. It is therefore imperative that continued funding is made available for current services while this transition takes place.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Long-term: The supply of good quality public transport using supported local bus services to help plug gaps in the local commercial network will assist the Council's plans to locally address the Climate Change Emergency and realise a net-zero carbon future
- 3.2** Integration: The provision of supported local bus services integrates with the commercial network to help plug gaps in the local public transport network, enabling it to be more holistic for the wider community and its passenger transport requirements for access to services, employment, education, health facilities, shops and social events etc
- 3.3** Involvement: The provision of supported local bus services are required by many within the local community and visitors to the area. The timetables and routes of supported service provision is often the outcome of continued consideration of service requests and requirements proposed by users/potential users.
- 3.4** Collaboration: The provision of supported local bus services is often as a result of collaboration between the Council, Welsh Government and service operators/suppliers, especially when it comes to plugging gaps within commercial networks.
- 3.5** Understanding Root Causes of Issues and Prevention: Commercial service provision often leave gaps in service provision depending on area, day and or time of day, as the most profitable/viable areas/times are served leaving the non-profitable/non-viable areas/times void of service provision. The Council's ability to intervene and supply supported local bus services in such areas and/or on such days and times, but with regard to budget, prevents the exclusion of many from being connected to the wider community due to lack of service provision.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** None as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** None as a direct result of this report.

Employment

- 5.2** None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** None as a direct result of this report.

6. Background Papers

None