
Subject: AYLESHAM AND RURAL AREA DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE AGREEMENT

Date: 24 January 2023

Decision taken by: Councillor Martin Bates, Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services

Report of: Ashley Taylor, Planning Policy and Projects Manager

Decision Type: Executive Key Decision

Call-in to be Suspended: Yes (*The Chairman of the Council has agreed to suspend call-in for the reason set out at paragraph 2.11*)

Authority: Paragraph 12 of Section 3C (General Responsibilities Delegated to All Members of the Executive) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To seek approval to enter into a contract with East Kent Road Car Company Limited (t/a Stagecoach South East) to deliver a new bus service linking Aylesham with Whitfield and the surrounding rural area.

Recommendation:

- 1) That a contract be entered into with Stagecoach South East to deliver a new bus service linking Aylesham with Whitfield and the surrounding rural area.
- 2) In the opinion of the decision-maker, this decision is an urgent one and should not therefore be subject to call-in.

1. Summary

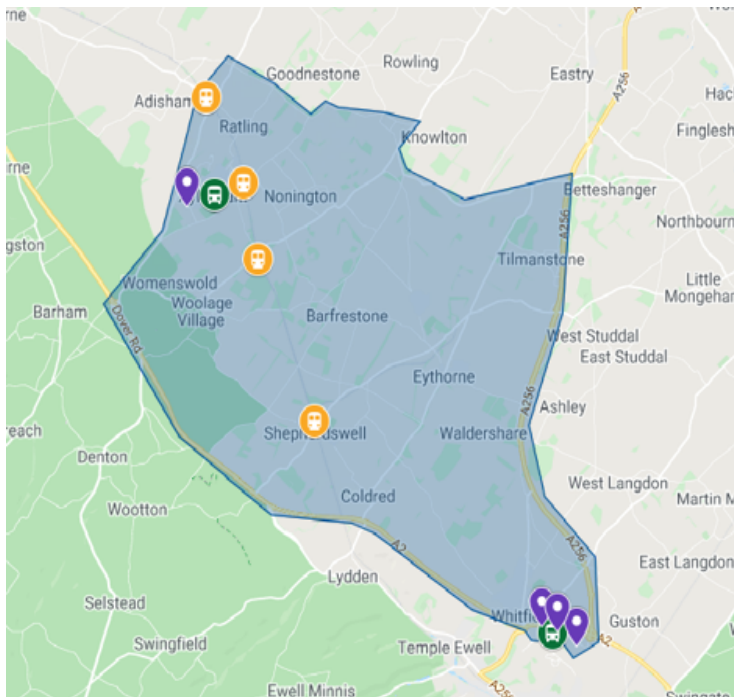
1.1 The S106 Agreement associated with the Aylesham Village Expansion includes a Sustainable Transport Improvement Contribution for subsidies towards the provision of additional bus services to link the development to the surrounding area. Following consultation with local stakeholders a new demand responsive transport (DRT) shuttle bus service has been designed which will provide services between Aylesham, Whitfield and the surrounding rural area. The service will be delivered by East Kent Road Car Company Limited (t/a Stagecoach South East) and a contract needs to be entered into to deliver the service. This report seeks approval to enter into the contract.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Planning permission was originally granted for the Aylesham Village Expansion in 2012 (application number 07/01081), with subsequent amendments thereafter. The S106 agreements associated with the development include the provision of a Sustainable Transport Improvement Contribution, which is to be spent on subsidies towards the provision of additional bus services to link the development to the surrounding area.

2.2 The Council is currently holding £705,790 and will receive a further £87,992 (plus indexation) for this contribution.

- 2.3 Consultation took place with local stakeholders between 2018-2020, including with the District Ward Councillors, Aylesham Parish Council, Kent County Council Public Transport and a local residents survey was carried out. This resulted in a demand responsive transport (DRT) service being designed and proposed, rather than a traditional single route, set timetable service. The principle of the service was supported by the local Aylesham community group and the Quality Bus Partnership at that time. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, social distancing and subsequent national shortage of bus drivers it has not been possible for Stagecoach to commence the new service. Those issues have now been resolved and it is proposed that the new service will commence on 20 February 2023.
- 2.4 The DRT service is proposed to cover the area as shown on the below map. The service will link Aylesham with Whitfield and the surrounding rural area including the villages of Eythorne, Elvington, Shepherdsweil and Nonington.



- 2.5 The area is covered by two 16-seater minibuses, and users request trips using an app or via phone. At present the service is proposed to run Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm, and Saturday 9am to 5pm. The minibuses are fully accessible, and existing travel concessions will be accepted on the service. When the service first commences passengers will be able to access the service to and from any existing bus stop within the service area. As the service becomes more established, the technology can identify additional 'virtual' bus stops (additional pick up and drop off locations) from passenger's travel patterns. The service will link with other bus services at Whitfield, for access to Dover Town, and in Aylesham for access to Canterbury City. It is envisaged that the service will evolve over time, and it is proposed that a working group be set up to inform this.
- 2.6 The Year one service charge is £268,734 which includes initial set up costs associated with the technology and app which supports the service. Advice has been sought from the KCC Public Transport Team who have confirmed the reasonableness of this service change. The service charge for future years will be reviewed and agreed prior to the commencement of the second year.
- 2.7 Based upon the year one service charge, there is sufficient S106 funding to subsidise the service for nearly three years. The service will run until the subsidy ends. The length of time the subsidy will last is dependent upon the level of paying patronage to

the service. All fares received are deducted from the service costs to reduce the subsidy to be taken from the S106 contributions. The more the service is used the longer the subsidy will last and the service will operate.

- 2.8 The emerging Dover District Local Plan also includes requirements for future developments in the area to make similar contributions which would keep the service running for longer. It is hoped that the service would eventually become self-sustaining/require little subsidy, and may be expanded in terms of capacity, service times and to cover wider areas of the District.
- 2.9 The Planning Committee reports which recommended that a S106 agreement be entered into and which should inter alia secure the Sustainable Transport Improvement Contribution were approved by Members when they made the decision to grant planning permission for the development.
- 2.10 The decision relates to entering into the contract with Stagecoach to deliver the service.
- 2.11 This decision needs to be made urgently so that the contract can be entered into with sufficient time for Stagecoach to make arrangements for the commencement of the service on 20 February.

3. **Identification of Options**

- 3.1 a) Enter into contract with Stagecoach.
- 3.2 b) Do not enter into contract with Stagecoach.

4. **Evaluation of Options**

- 4.1 a) Entering into the contract will enable the delivery of a new bus service which will link Aylesham and the surrounding villages with Whitfield. At present some of these areas are not served by a regular bus service. This will provide significant benefits to the local communities in being able to access services, facilities and employment at Whitfield and linking to Dover Town. It will also hopefully influence sustainable transport habits for the new development and the existing community. This delivers the provision that was intended for the S106 contribution required to support the development.
- 4.2 b) Not entering into the contract would mean that the new bus service would not be able to commence, and the S106 contributions would not be spent. There is a risk that the S106 contribution would need to be returned to the developer if not spent within a certain period.

5. **Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The service is to be funded by S106 contributions that have been secured from development to be used for this purpose. There are no capital or revenue budget implications.

6. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 The provision of a new rural bus service will provide the local community with an alternative form of transport to the private car, therefore contributing to a reduction in private car usage and resulting carbon emissions.

7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment.

- 7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has seen this report and has no further comment to make.
- 7.3 Comment from Equalities Officer: This report highlights a positive impact for those in the area in being able to access services, facilities and employment at Whitfield and linking to Dover Town with a full accessible shuttle bus. In discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
8. **Appendices**
None.
9. **Background Papers**
Planning application documents for applications DOV/07/1081, DOV/08/1095 and DOV/19/00821

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