

**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Community Committee</b>		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>3 August 2023 7.00pm</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Town Hall, Bridestones</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>Jackie MacArthur, Communities and Marketing Manager &amp; DCO</b>		
<b>AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>11. CEC Bus Routes Criteria Consultation</b>		
<b>Background</b>	<p>Cheshire East Council (CEC) is currently carrying out a consultation on its criteria for assessing bus routes. The current criteria were agreed in August 2011. Cheshire East is looking to update the criteria taking account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the economy and environmental sustainability</li> <li>• Improving access and social inclusion</li> <li>• Bus performances</li> </ul> <p>The CEC 2011 criteria can be <a href="#">downloaded HERE</a>. The proposed CEC new criteria can be <a href="#">downloaded HERE</a> with the changes in red.</p> <p>This consultation is not about funding or bus routes. Just the criteria for how CEC will judge which of the routes require financial support in order to operate. Bus routes that are commercially viable are not judged by this criteria.</p> <p>The consultation ends on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August.</p> <p>Below is an officer-suggested response to the consultation based on points that the council has previously made about buses in its responses to either bus consultation or the Local Transport Plan Consultation or comments that would appear to be in line with our current business plan.</p> <p>All the paragraphs are numbered, and the committee may choose to remove points or request that other points are added. This will then form a response from the committee.</p> <p>This does not stop councillors responding individually. There is also the option that CTC decides not to respond</p>		
<b>Suggested CTC Response</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thank you for giving Congleton Town Council the opportunity to comment on the Cheshire East criteria for deciding which bus routes receive financial support in order to operate.</li> <li>2. Congleton Town Council appreciates that this is a difficult task with just £2.4m available for the whole borough and was disappointed that CEC</li> </ol>		

	<p>failed to receive any of the bus back better funding to improve services in the town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. In the first section about journey purpose we were surprised that health/medical and welfare has been dropped from a 4 to a 3 and would like to see it retained as a 4.</li> <li>4. We welcome the idea that the max score of 10 has been removed.</li> <li>5. We believe that education and training should be seen as just as important as employment in terms of routes of buses. Many young people in our community have no option but to take the bus to college – especially when the schools are restricted to academic A level course. This means that aged 16-17, when they are unlikely to have access to a vehicle, they will need access to public transport to travel out of town for vocational education.</li> <li>6. We welcome the encouragement of EV and Hydrogen buses on subsidised routes.</li> <li>7. We welcome the need to serve areas of deprivation, but also believe it is important to have buses that link centres of population which largely travel through rural areas that are unlikely to meet this criteria</li> <li>8. We are surprised that a bus that requires a subsidy of £10 or more per passenger is getting any points – and would have thought that there would be other more cost-effective ways of supporting travel.</li> <li>9. It is disappointing to see that across Cheshire East the fee-paying patronage is only around 80- 85% of what it was pre-covid and concessionary passenger levels only at 65-70% of the rates across that they were pre-covid and Congleton Town Council would like to see more proactive promotion of the bus services.</li> <li>10. That said, we are pleased to see that our own local bus services are bucking the trend and are in the top 3 performing services across the whole of Cheshire.</li> <li>11. No consideration appears to be given to the ‘Transport for New Homes’ to encourage bus routes to serve new housing estates.</li> <li>12. No consideration appears to be given to specific timings – such as getting people to railway stations at peak commuter times.</li> <li>13. Leisure and Social are at the bottom of the list of priorities, but losing Sunday services has left many older people isolated on a day when they used to enjoy travelling to meet family.</li> <li>14. Finally we would like to see Cheshire East take a much more proactive approach to applying for more funds to retain and expand bus and public transport options for Congleton.</li> </ol>
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There is not a financial implication to CTC for this response – although it is noted that the new criteria is that CEC gives higher weighting to bus routes that may attract other investment.
<b>Environmental Implications</b>	The town council believes that successful bus services can offer considerable environmental benefits by reducing car journeys.
<b>Inclusivity Implications</b>	The town council believes that successful bus services lead to a more inclusive society where less more people can engage in activities and enjoy greater independence.

<b>Recommendation</b>	That the Community Committee responds to the Bus service criteria consultation using points 1 -14 above.
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