

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Provision of bus services - Local Link cessation of service.

On the 3rd February, Chelston Leisure Services trading as 'Local Link' informed the Traffic Commissioners Office that they would be withdrawing their bus services within the Torbay area and submitted their de-registration forms.

On the 8th February the authority received written confirmation that Chelston Leisure Services Ltd were withdrawing from the Fare Stage element of their business.

The services affected are 25 (which is jointly funded with Devon), 64, 65, 108/109, 62, 61/60, 67/67A, 67B and 67B summer uplift, along with the SB1 – 6 services to the Sainsbury stores in both Paignton and Torquay (see **appendix 1** for route maps).

Many of these routes were formally subsidised by the authority, before being developed commercially by the operator over a number of years.

The last day of operation of these services will be Saturday 1st April 2017.

The average percentage across the route network of concessionary pass usage is 83%. The council budget for concessionary fares for 2016/17 is £4,367,800 and Local Link had been offered a fixed price deal which produced a slight increase in payment over that paid in 2016/17.

The next part of the process is for the authority to write to other existing bus operators within the bay and ask them for any expressions of interest in either taking on a whole or partial part of any of the bus routes under notice on a commercial basis.

This was done on Monday 13th February 2017. Whilst one company has already replied that they have no wish to expand and would continue to concentrate on their core business, we are in early discussions with another and officers will meet with any interested parties to discuss the implications to the Torbay bus network and any proposals they may have.

Should no local interest be forthcoming, we will look to operators further afield.

We are also in contact with the Torbay Community Development Trust, as regards any proposals they may have.

Once commercial operators have made their decisions, it will be necessary for the Council to consider any areas which are left without a service, undertaking a needs assessment, so as to inform future actions/decisions.