

FULL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2015

Written question from Mrs Mary Gutteridge to Councillor Shirley Smart, Executive Member for Economy and Tourism

My husband and I live in Brighstone. He suffers from arthritic knees and the short distance to the 35 bus stop is just manageable, whereas he cannot walk to the No 12 bus stop. Can the Council tell me how he and others will get to their medical and other appointments in Newport once the No 35 is cut? Do you understand that you are cutting a vital lifeline?

Response

I am sure you are aware that the Isle of Wight Council faces a very significant financial challenge with a projected revenue budget gap of £14.5m in 2015/16 and a further £8.5m in 2016/17, a total of £23m on an ongoing basis. We are consequently reviewing all of our service areas to see if we can make any savings to achieve this budget. This resulted in a difficult decision being made by full council on 25 February 2015 to discontinue the financial support for non-commercial bus services from September 2015.

Subsequent to this decision the Council entered into discussions with the local bus operator Southern Vectis to identify the impacts of this reduction to funding, which they also reported on to the rail and bus users group, which I attended on 6 June 2015. However, on Monday, 8 June 2015 Southern Vectis published the overview of the intended cuts to services which they could not commercially support and unfortunately the bus service 35 was included within these.

The Council has met on 1 July 2015 with the Chair and Clerk of Brighstone Parish Council in respect of these cuts. The advice given was to speak directly with local public transport operators or voluntary organisations and consider contributing towards alternative provision where possible. As such the Community Action Isle of Wight is looking at supporting a replacement to the Dial A Bus Service, which could potentially be routed on at least 1 day a week to replace the service 35.