

## FULL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2015

### **Written question from Mrs Denise Heaysman to Councillor Shirley Smart, Executive Member for Economy and Tourism**

Proposed cuts to routes 12 and 35. How can we take any further cuts to these routes? Residents in the rural areas of the Isle of Wight already find it extremely difficult to attend appointments at the surgery, hospital and dentist. To say nothing of having a social life, getting to the theatre etc. or meeting up with friends especially if the evening and Sunday buses are axed - our whole social world collapses when we are trapped indoors.

Also how are the younger generation, who do not drive through age or their financial position, supposed to get jobs when they would be unable to get to and from any employment - thus more claimants for Job Seekers Allowance!

## ***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 and some journeys on the service 12 were included within these.

The Council are now in contact with a number of parish and town councils in respect of these cuts. The advice we are giving is to contact 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. This could be operated along the route of the service 35 on particular days of the week if there is proven support and demand for the service.