

Bus Service 404 and 405 Changes

Public Consultation

22 November to 19 December 2018



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1. Introduction

Bus services in Kent fall into two categories:

- Commercially (profit-making) operated services.
- Subsidised (KCC funded) services.

Since bus privatisation in 1985, operators in Kent run routes on a commercial basis, where there are enough passengers to fund the service. Around 97% of journeys in Kent run in this way – with around 40 operators covering 600 services – without any funding from Kent County Council (KCC). That means that we have no say over routes, timetables or fares.

But not all of Kent's bus services are run on a purely commercial basis. For the last 30 years, KCC has funded some routes which, while not commercially viable, have been considered important to the needs of the communities and passengers they serve.

We have worked hard to protect this funding, but as central government funding has continued to reduce, we have had to make savings, changing the way we work and spending less.

Over the summer of 2018, we held a Big Conversation¹ consultation with communities and transport providers to consider how we provide rural transport in the future. This has resulted in a series of pilot schemes that might help shape

future provision. In the meantime, we need to make some savings.

We have engaged with bus operators asking them to consider any opportunities where they can continue to provide KCC funded bus services without council subsidy.

Operators have presented KCC with proposals that will enable us to reduce spend, whilst being able to protect school services and ensure those communities currently served still have access to transport.

Two proposals; from Stagecoach (services 42/42A, 56 and 39/39A) in Thanet and from Go-coach (services 404 and 405) in Sevenoaks are being considered. These would save KCC approximately £410k per year (£360k from Thanet proposals and £50k from Sevenoaks proposals). **This document focuses on proposals for Sevenoaks from Go-coach.**

We understand that any changes to bus services could have an impact on users. The pages that follow explain the proposals.

No decisions have been made. The results of this consultation and our Equality Impact Assessment will be used to help us decide whether to progress with these changes.

The document contains some terms that you may be unfamiliar with, therefore a glossary has been provided to give further explanation.

¹ More information is available from www.kent.gov.uk/bigconversation

2. Background

Supporting non-commercial routes

As a Local Transport Authority, KCC has a duty to **consider** funding bus services that are not provided commercially. These are services which:

- Are considered important to the communities and passengers they serve.
- Provide transport links to key services that could not otherwise be accessed.

Authorities are **not required** to provide these services and can choose which services to support.

KCC uses set criteria to guide our decision making and ranks services based on cost, usage, journey purpose and the availability of other forms of transport (such as the rail network).

Kent County Council's support for public transport

KCC has a long tradition of supporting public transport in Kent and invests around £34m of public money into the County's bus network each year. The table on page 4 summarises how KCC does this.

We also work closely with bus operators through our Quality Bus Partnerships, helping them to improve services.

These activities have helped sustain a comprehensive network of buses in Kent on which over 50 million journeys are made each year. Of these, around 4 million journeys are made on services paid for by KCC.

In other parts of the UK, many authorities have stopped their funding for bus services altogether but despite significant financial pressures, our commitment to bus travel has remained.

At a glance

2017/18

Number of bus journeys in Kent: over 50 million

Number of bus journeys made on KCC funded routes: 3.7m

% of bus journeys funded by KCC: approximately 2.3%

Number of KCC funded contracts: 116

KCC funding: £5.7m

How do we subsidise Kent's bus network?

Directly

Route subsidies - £6.4m

Buying season tickets for school children - £1.8m

Indirectly

English National Concessionary Travel Scheme - £16.5m

Young Person's Travel Pass - £8m

Kent 16+ Travel Card - £1m

Bus Passes for entitled (to free transport to school) children - £1.7m

Capital Investment (vehicles, bus stops etc.) - £0.7m

3. Our proposals

We have engaged with all bus operators of KCC subsidised services to ask them for suggestions of savings where:

- Similar replacement services might carry on unchanged or at slightly reduced levels of service.
- Where other services already run or could be provided as alternatives to funded services.
- There is no impact on the ability of children to get to and from school.

This approach differs from a review of services against KCC's set criteria, which would have resulted in cancelling the most expensive contracts based on cost, regardless of the impact.

These proposals seek to minimise impact by making changes where there is alternative bus provision available through commercial services.

A number of suggestions were made by bus operators for ways to deliver public transport in the future. These were taken forward as part of the Big Conversation consultation.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) considers the potential impacts for passengers and is available to view online at kent.gov.uk/404buserviceconsultation or upon request.

Summary of services changes in Sevenoaks

Go-coach have proposed revisions to service 404 from Edenbridge to Sevenoaks/Plaxtol to Borough Green. The proposal refocuses the current service 404 on Edenbridge to Sevenoaks, dropping Plaxtol to Borough Green, which is already covered by another service and withdrawing the 'Wednesdays only' 405, which also has other service provision and will benefit from a Big Conversation pilot scheme that will serve East Hill and West Kingsdown².

Timetables showing current and proposed changes are available in appendix A from page 9.

Service No.	Operator	Route	Summary of proposed changes	Estimated saving
404/405	Go-coach	404 Edenbridge – Ide hill – Sevenoaks – Shipbourne – Plaxtol Monday to Friday (full week day and peak service between Edenbridge and Sevenoaks) 405 Sevenoaks – Otford – West Kingsdown Wednesday	Reduction in the overall number of journeys, removal of the Plaxtol to Borough Green section and the withdrawal of the Wednesday only 405 service. The introduction of a new commercial bus service for the school day only journeys together with off peak Edenbridge to Igtham Mote service via Sevenoaks. Service 222 will continue to offer a link to Borough Green and Tonbridge whilst service 429 provides West Kingsdown with a link to Dartford and Swanley. In addition, a new Taxi Bus service is being introduced as a Big Conversation pilot scheme and this will provide new journeys linking West Kingsdown, Fairseat, Otford, Stansted and East Hill with Sevenoaks.	£50,237

² See kent.gov.uk/bigconversation for more information on the pilot.

Summary of impacts if proposed changes went ahead

Service 404	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Villagers in Shipbourne, Dunk's Green and Plaxtol will lose their off-peak service to and from Sevenoaks. Residents will continue to have the option of using the 222 service which provides a good link to Borough Green, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.• Reduction in the number of off-peak journeys (from five to three) to and from Sevenoaks for all villages served by the 404 service.• Loss of all journeys operating after the afternoon school peak (the service will finish from 16:30).
Service 405	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Route 405 (Wednesday only) would be withdrawn completely resulting in the loss of a Sevenoaks link for residents of West Kingsdown and Otford but from June, KCC is introducing a new 'Taxi Bus' service as a pilot scheme resulting from the 'Big Conversation' consultation. This will provide more regular off-peak journeys from these areas to Sevenoaks.

4. How to get involved and have your say

Before any decisions are made, we want to hear your views on:

- How the proposed revisions could impact you.
- The assumptions we have made in the draft EqIA.
- Any additional information that you think we need to consider about the proposed changes to the routes identified in this document.

Please let us know your views by visiting kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation and completing the online questionnaire.

Alternatively, complete a paper copy of the questionnaire and return to FREEPOST: KCC Bus Changes

This consultation will run for six weeks from 22 November until 19 December 2018 (inclusive).

If you require this or any of the consultation documents in hard copy or an alternative format please request these via email to alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or by telephone on

03000 421553 (text relay service 18001 03000 421553). This number goes to an answer machine, which is monitored during office hours.

If you require any further information about the proposed changes before responding to the consultation, please contact us at public.transport@kent.gov.uk.

What happens next?

The responses to the consultation will be analysed and presented in a consultation report. This report will be published.

Your responses, along with the final EqIA, will be presented to KCC Members in January following which we will publish the decision.

Any changes to bus routes resulting from decisions made by Council Members would most likely take effect in April 2019.

5. Glossary of terms

Council Members: *KCC's elected politicians, in this instance represented through those members forming part of relevant Cabinet Committees.*

Criteria for bus service support: *the KCC Member approved way of ranking existing and new bus services to identify if they will or won't be paid for by KCC. The criteria take account of value for money and journey purpose.*

Deregulated: *privatised and outside of the control of KCC. In this context, bus operators run the majority of routes without needing any permission from the Council who have no contractual relationship or control over them. Bus operators and the services that they run are managed by the Department for Transport who grant licenses to operators themselves and the routes that they chose to run.*

English National Concessionary Travel Scheme: *the older person's bus pass. KCC has to pay operators for each journey made by the pass holder.*

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): *the assessments carried out by Council officers to understand the impact of proposed changes on existing bus users based on their protected characteristics. These are: age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and carers' responsibilities.*

Local Transport Authority: *the local government organisation with responsibility for local transport (roads, drainage, public transport etc.) matters. In this instance, this means Kent County Council.*

Public Bus Service: *a conventional public bus service which is available to any passenger wishing to pay a fare or carrying a valid pass. This does not include 'Hired' services used specifically to carry particular groups, such as, school coaches and minibuses.*

Quality Bus Partnership: *a voluntary arrangement between KCC, the local District Council and bus operators. The partners work in collaboration with each other to improve bus services in the area.*

Statutory Obligation: *something that the Council has to do or provide because the Government regulations say that all Councils must do.*

Subsidy: *payments made by the Council to bus operators to help them operate services that are not commercially viable because of low passenger usage but that the Council wants to see operated because they are important for bus passengers.*

Young Person's Travel Pass: *KCC's scheme that provides reduced cost bus travel for secondary aged school children. KCC has to pay operators for each journey made by pass holders.*

Appendix A – Timetables

Current Timetables for 404

Edenbridge - Ide Hill - Sevenoaks - Ightham Mote - Shipbourne - Plaxtol										404	
Mondays to Fridays	NSD	SDO					SDO	NSD	NW	W	
Edenbridge Post Office	0725	0725							1640	1640	
Edenbridge, Farmstead Drive	0728	0728							1643	1643	
Marlpit Hill, Ridgeway Estate	0730	0730							1645		
Four Elms	0734	0734							1650		
Crockham Hill, Royal Oak										1649	
Westerham, Chartwell										1654	
Four Elms	0735	0735								1700	
Ide Hill, The Cock	0745	0745	1045		1355				1700	1710	
Bayleys Hill Crossroads	0751	0751	1051		1401				1706	1716	
Sevenoaks, Julians Close	0756	0756	1056		1406				1711	1721	
Sevenoaks Bus Station (arrive)	0801	0801	1101		1411				1716	1726	
Sevenoaks Bus Station (depart)	0801	0801	0919		1225	1415	1526	1549	1735	1735	
Sevenoaks Railway Station	0805	0805	0923		1229	1419	1530	1553	1739	1739	
Sevenoaks, Blair Drive		0807	0925		1231	1421		1555	1741	1741	
Sevenoaks, Bayham Road		0810	0927		1233	1423		1557	1743	1743	
Trinity School		0814									
Knole Academy		0833					1538				
Trinity School							1548				
Godden Green			0931		1237	1427	1555	1601	1747	1747	
Fawke Common			0933		1239	1429	1557	1603	1749	1749	
Bitchet Green			0935		1241	1431	1559	1605	1751	1751	
Stone Street			0937		1243	1433	1601	1607	1753	1753	
Ivy Hatch			0941		1247	1437	1605	1611	1757	1757	
Ightham Mote			0944		1250						
Shipbourne Church (arrive)			0952		1258	1442	1616	1616	1802	1802	
Shipbourne Church (depart)			0953		1300	1443	1617	1617	1802	1802	
Dunk's Green			0956		1303	1446	1620	1620	1805	1805	
Plaxtol			1000		1307	1450	1624	1624	1809	1809	

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NSD – Non-school days

SDO – School days only

NW – Not Wednesdays

W – Wednesdays only

Plaxtol - Shipbourne - Ightham Mote - Sevenoaks - Ide Hill - Edenbridge									
	NSD	SDO				NSD	SDO		
Shipbourne Church	0740	0740	0953	1300	1443			1617	
Dunk's Green	0743	0743	0956	1303	1446			1620	
Plaxtol	0747	0747	1000	1307	1450			1624	
Ightham Mote					1458			1632	
Ivy Hatch	0752	0752	1005	1312	1501			1635	
Stone Street	0756	0756	1009	1316	1505			1639	
Bitchet Green	0758	0758	1011	1318	1507			1641	
Fawke Common	0801	0801	1013	1320	1509			1643	
Godden Green	0804	0804	1015	1322	1511			1645	
Knole Academy							1535		
Trinity School		0812					1545		
Knole Academy		0822							
Sevenoaks, Bayham Road	0808		1019	1326	1515	1547	1547	1649	
Sevenoaks Railway Station	0812	0830	1023	1330	1519	1551	1551	1653	1800
Sevenoaks Bus Station	0816	0834	1027	1334	1523	1555	1555	1657	1804
Sevenoaks, Julians Close			1032	1339		1600	1600		1809
Bayleys Hill Crossroads			1037	1344		1605	1605		1814
Ide Hill, The Cock			1043	1350		1611	1611		1820
Four Elms						1621	1621		1830
Marlpit Hill, Ridgeway Estate						1626	1626		1835
Edenbridge, Farmstead Drive						1628	1628		1837
Edenbridge Post Office						1631	1631		1840

NSD – Non-school days

SDO – School days only

Current Timetables for 405

Sevenoaks - Otford - West Kingsdown		405
Wednesdays only		
Sevenoaks Bus Station	0905	1230
Sevenoaks, Bayham Road		1235
Sevenoaks, Hillingdon Rise		1238
Bat & Ball, opp St Johns Hill Hospital	0910	1240
Otford Pond	0913	1243
Otford Railway Station	0914	1244
West Kingsdown, East Hill Farm Park		1254
West Kingsdown, Woodlands Village Golf Club	0924	1259
West Kingsdown, Portobello Inn	0932	1307
West Kingsdown, Hever Road Shops	0934	1309
West Kingsdown Otford - Sevenoaks		405
Wednesdays only		
West Kingsdown, Hever Road Shops	0935	1315
West Kingsdown, Portobello Inn	0938	1318
West Kingsdown, Woodlands Village Golf Club	0946	1326
West Kingsdown, East Hill Farm Park	0951	
Otford Railway Station	1001	1334
Otford Pond	1002	1340
Bat & Ball, The Castle	1007	1343
Sevenoaks, Hillingdon Rise (NE-bound)	1009	
Sevenoaks, Bayham Road	1012	
Sevenoaks Bus Station	1017	1345

Proposed Timetables

The proposed 404 timetable offers a more simplified schedule.

Edenbridge - Ide Hill - Sevenoaks - Ightam Mote - Shipbourne - Plaxtol								Plaxtol - Shipbourne - Ightam Mote - Sevenoaks - Ide Hill - Edenbridge							
Mondays to Fridays	SDO	NSD					SDO	Mondays to Fridays	SDO					SDO	NSD
Edenbridge Post Office	0725	0725	935	1200		1455		Shipbourne Church	0740						
Edenbridge, Fircroft Way	0728	0728	938	1203		1458		Dunk's Green	0743						
Marlpit Hill, Ridgeway Estate	0730	0730	942	1207		1502		Plaxtol Church	747						
Four Elms	0735	0735	947	1212		1507		Ightham Mote	0747		1045	1340			
Ide Hill, The Cock	0745	0745	957	1222		1517		Ivy Hatch	0752		1049	1344			
Bayleys Hill Crossroads	0751	0751	1003	1228		1523		Stone Street	0756		1053	1348			
Sevenoaks Julians Close	0756	0756	1009	1234		1529		Bitchet Green	0758		1055	1350			
Sevenoaks Bus Station	0801	0801	1015	1240	1310	1535	1540	Fawke Common	0801		1058	1353			
Sevenoaks Railway Station	0805	0805	1019		1314		1544	Godden Green	0804		1101	1356			
Sevenoaks, Blair Drive	0807		1021		1316		Via	Trinity School	0812						
Sevenoaks, Bayham Road	0810		1024		1319		River	Knole Academy	0822					1535	
Trinity School	0814						head	Trinity School						1545	
Knole Academy	0834						1552	Sevenoaks, Bayham Road			1105	1400	1547		
Trinity School							1602	Sevenoaks Railway Station	0830		1110	1405	1551	1551	
Godden Green			1028		1323		1609	Sevenoaks Bus Station	0834	0845	1114	1409	1555	1555	
Fawke Common			1030		1325		1611	Sevenoaks, Julians Close	~	0850	1189	1413	1600	1600	
Bitchet Green			1033		1328		1613	Bayleys Hill Crossroads	~	0900	1129	1423	1605	1605	
Stone Street			1035		1330		1615	Ide Hill, The Cock	~	0904	1133	1427	1611	1611	
Ivy Hatch			1039		1334		1619	Four Elms	~	0914	1143	1437	1621	1621	
Ightham Mote			1043		1338			Marlpit Hill, Ridgeway Estate	~	0919	1148	1442	1626	1626	
Shipbourne Church							1630	Edenbridge, Fircroft Way	~	0923	1152	1446	1628	1628	
Dunk's Green							1633	Edenbridge Tesco	~	0927	1156	1450	1631	1631	

SDO – School Day only

NSD – Non-School days