

**Title of meeting:** Traffic & Transportation Cabinet Member Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**Subject:** Review of Portsmouth Supported Bus Services

**Report by:** Tristan Samuels - Director of Regeneration

**Wards affected:** All wards - except Paulsgrove and Hilsea

**Key decision:** No

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to outline Portsmouth City Council's current position on supported bus services and to seek agreement to extend the 5 existing contracts to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

**2. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation:**

- 2.1 Approves the extension of all 5 existing supported bus service contracts from 27 March 2021 to 31 December 2021.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Portsmouth City Council has a statutory duty under the Transport Act 1985 Act, to consider the provision of bus routes where there are no commercial services, but there is demand from residents and visitors who otherwise would be unserved by public transport.
- 3.2 The City Council subsidises three complete weekday bus routes including services: 12, 22 and 25, plus Sunday and Bank Holiday services on the 13 and 14. Please see table 1 and appendix A for details of each of the routes.

**Table 1: summary of supported bus service operation information**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Operational Information</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Days of Operation:</b> Monday - Saturday <b>Frequency:</b> hourly off peak <b>Route Description:</b> Tipner - North End - Chichester Road - Fratton Way
<b>13/14</b>	<b>Days of Operation:</b> Sunday/ Bank Holidays <b>Frequency:</b> 2 hourly <b>Route Description:</b> City Centre - Fratton - Milton - Baffins
<b>22</b>	<b>Days of Operation:</b> All days of the week <b>Frequency:</b> Every 1 hour and 10 minutes <b>Route Description:</b> Highbury - Cosham - Drayton - Farlington
<b>25</b>	<b>Days of Operation:</b> All days of the week <b>Frequency:</b> Every 45/90 minutes <b>Route Description:</b> The Hard - Old Portsmouth - Southsea Shops - Devonshire Avenue - Eastney - Hayling Ferry.

3.3 All current contracts are due to expire on 31 March 2021. Services 12, 13/14, and 22, were awarded in January 2019, and were extended from 30 December 2020 to 31 March 2021 at the Traffic & Transport decision meeting on 18 September 2020. This brought each of the contracts in line with new service 25 contract, which commenced operation on 30 August 2020 and is due to expire on 31 March 2021.

3.4 The contract costs are shown in the table below:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Full year cost (£)</b>	<b>Cost in 20/21 (£)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
12	43,601	43,601	
13/14	9,480	9,480	
22	42,650	42,650	
25	112,000	65,333	Service started 30 <sup>th</sup> August

3.5 The tables in appendix B provide a comparison route by route of the number of passenger journeys made on supported bus services in Portsmouth. These tables show that due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, and three lockdowns there has been a large decline in passenger numbers. For example in January 2021 bus operators reported that they were operating at between 20% and 25% of pre-COVID-19 passenger numbers in Portsmouth.

3.6 Due to bus passenger numbers and revenue being impacted, it is possible that if a retendering process was undertaken now, that this could result in higher tendered prices being returned due to lower passenger revenues.

3.7 There is provision within the existing supported bus service contracts to extend these services for a further year. Portsmouth City Council Procurement Team, would support any extension in the current climate.

3.8 All of the existing supported bus service contract routes cover large residential and commercial areas of the city, otherwise not benefitting from a bus service.

These include:

3.8.1 Service 12 serves Tipner, North End, Chichester Road, St Mary's Hospital and Tesco (Fratton), operating hourly Monday to Saturday day times.

3.8.2 Service 22 serves the Highbury, Cosham High Street, Lower Wymering, residential areas in Drayton and Farlington, Drayton Shops and Sainsbury's (Farlington), operating every 70 minutes daily.

3.8.3 Service 25 is a new route which started operation on a trial basis from 30<sup>th</sup> August 2020 replacing previous services 6, 15 and 16 which had been withdrawn for most of the summer due to the impact of COVID. The route serves both commercial and residential areas as well visitor attractions and provides a connecting service for both the Hayling and Gosport Ferries. The route serves The Hard Interchange, Old Portsmouth, Southsea shops, Albert Road, Devonshire Avenue, and Eastney to the Hayling Ferry through residential areas which had no bus services. The service operates every 90 minutes (45 minutes off peak Monday to Saturday) daily, including Sundays and Bank Holidays.

3.8.4 Services 13/14 serve the City Centre, Fratton, Milton, Portsmouth College and Baffins. The subsidised services operates Sundays and Bank Holidays every 2 hours and complements the Monday to Saturday commercial service.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

4.1 The Coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on public transport ridership and the number of passengers travelling by bus, but these services are still essential to allow key workers to access employment and residents to access health and make essential journeys.

4.2 Current ridership levels on supported bus services do not reflect likely ridership once we are out of the pandemic. Therefore planning bus services based on this level of ridership is not recommended for the reasons outlined below.

4.3 When bus companies submit prices for tendered bus service contracts, they estimate what the passenger revenue will be; this includes concessionary fares. Tender prices are likely to be higher than the current contract prices, as ridership (and revenue) is lower than pre COVID-19 levels. Although ridership may not return in full to pre pandemic levels immediately, it is reasonable to assume it could reach 80% of pre pandemic levels by the summer 2021 once it has been possible to vaccinate a large percentage of the adult population allowing users to have the confidence to travel. Portsmouth City Council will continue to monitor the situation and work closely with bus operators during this time.

- 4.4 Currently bus operators are in receipt of COVID Bus Support Services Grant (CBSSG) funding from the government which makes up the shortfall in revenue on commercial bus services and council supported services 12, 13 and 14. In addition the City Council has been allocated CBSSG funding which is being used to make up the revenue shortfall on service 22. It is also being used to support service 25, which replaced service 15 that was withdrawn by First Bus due to the pandemic.
- 4.5 The future of CBSSG funding is unclear, as the government is reviewing its continuation. Its withdrawal would have a major impact on both commercial and supported bus services. Portsmouth City Council will continue to liaise with government to understand the position of grant funding.
- 4.6 In addition to this funding the Council is in receipt of Bus Service Operating Grant (BSOG) and the allocation for 2020/21 can be transferred to 2021/22. The Council was also successful in being awarded some Better Deal for Bus Users funding which can be transferred to 2021/22. This funding can be used for the tendered service extensions proposed in this report.

## **5. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as appendix C to this report.
- 5.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for an extension to the existing contract as there are no proposed changes to the level of service provided.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 The Council's relevant statutory powers and duties in relation to the provision of public passenger transport services and related service subsidies are contained in section 63(4), (5) and (8) of the Transport Act 1985.
- 6.2 Section 63(8) of the Transport Act 1985 imposes a specific statutory duty upon the Council in exercising the functions concerned to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.
- 6.3 On the basis that the existing contracts contain express provision enabling the contracts to be extended for the durations proposed and that the Council is satisfied that the extensions will provide the best value for money obtainable in the circumstances, there are no discernible legal/procurement risks entailed in awarding the extensions.

**7. Director of Finance's comments**

- 7.1 The Council will support the extension of the bus contracts at a cost of £155,800 until the 31st December 2021.
- 7.2 This will be met in full by utilising the following external grants. The Bus Support Operators Grant (BSOG) £102,800 (includes the permitted carry forward from 2020/21 grant allocation) and £53,000 permitted carry forward to the Better Funds Bus Grant allocation 2020/21.
- 7.3 Any extension beyond the 9 months will be subject to a future report being presented to the Traffic and Transportation Committee.

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Signed by:  
Tristan Samuels  
Director of Regeneration

**Appendices:**

- Appendix A - Supported bus service route maps
- Appendix B - Supported bus service passenger numbers
- Appendix C - Integrated Impact Assessment

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

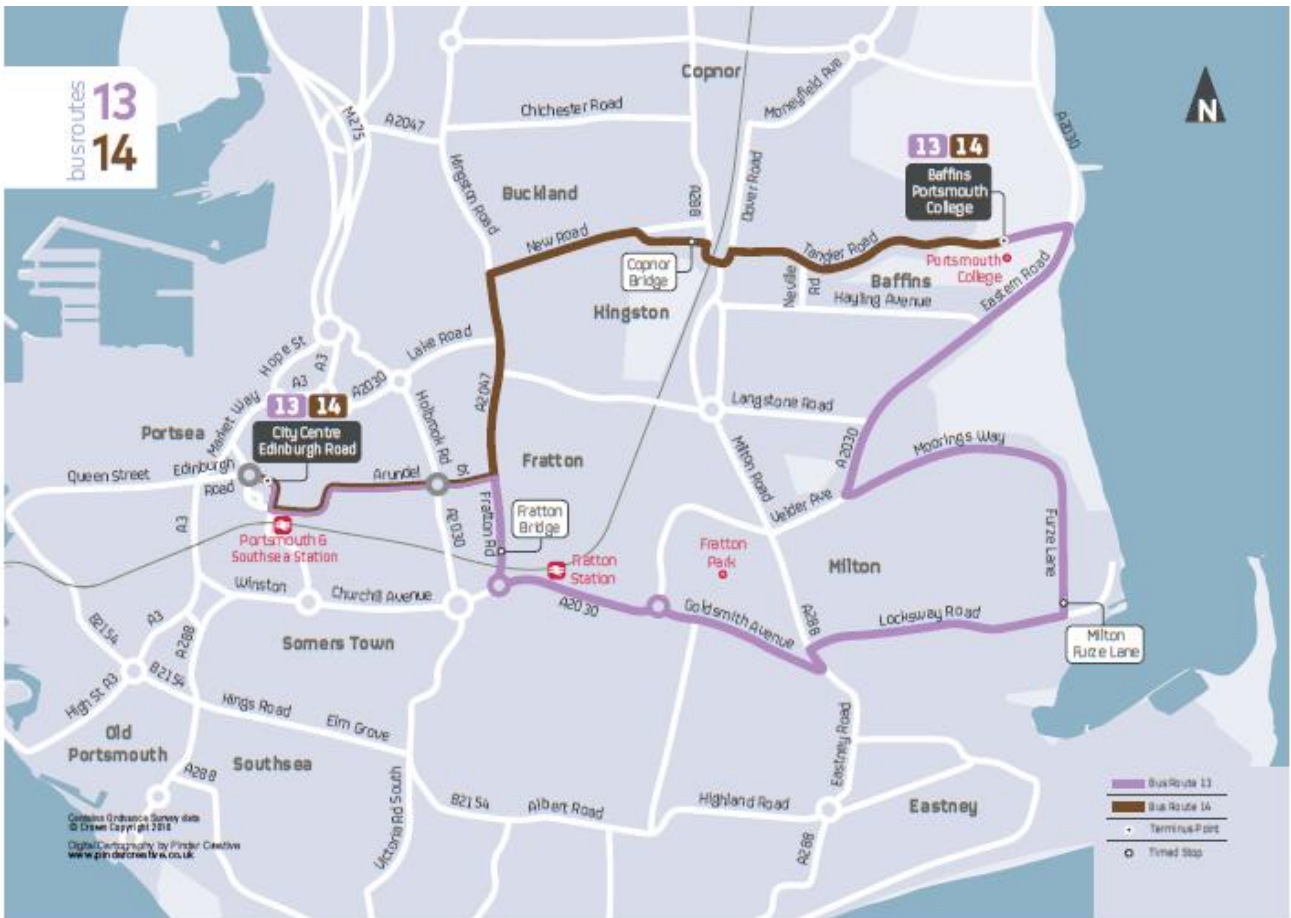
Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

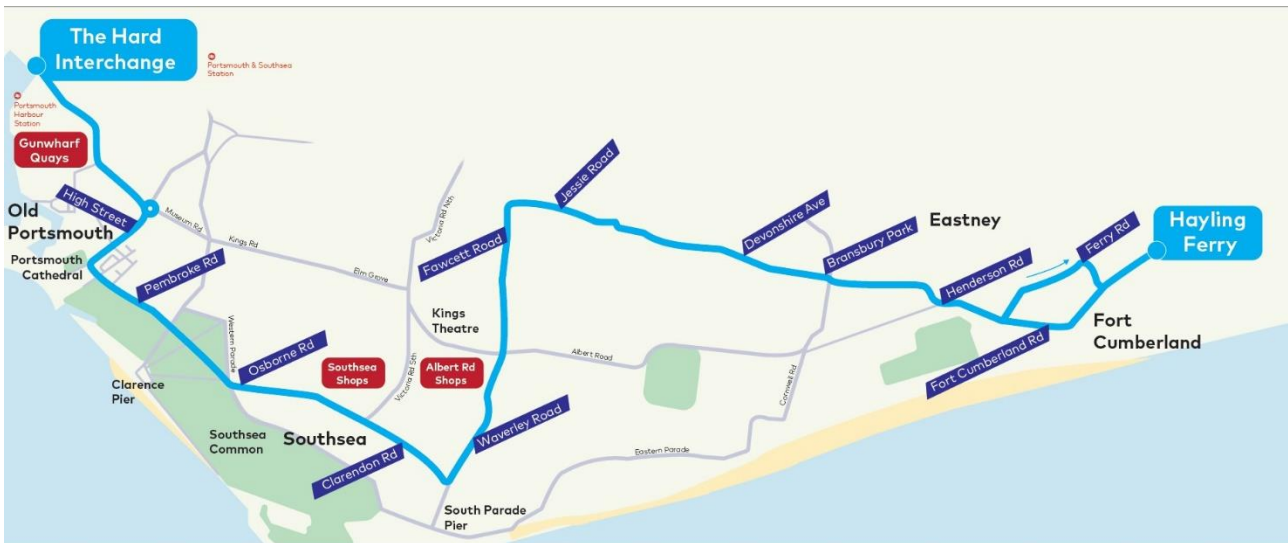
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Signed by:  
Councillor Lynne Stagg  
Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation

## Appendix A - Supported Bus Service Route Maps









## Appendix B - Supported Bus Service Passenger Numbers

### Service 12

Month	Passengers	Month	Passengers	Percentage change
Jan 19	1613	Jan 20	2745	+7%
Feb 19	1909	Feb 20	2515	+32%
Mar 19	2215	Mar 20	1782	-20%
April 19	2153	April 20	64 *	-97%
May 19	2344	May 20	343	-85%
June 19	2346	June 20	712	-70%
July 19	2711	July 20	1067	-61%
Aug 19	2560	Aug 20	1220	-51%
Sept 19	2506	Sept 20	1463	-42%
Oct 19	2681	Oct 20	1562	-42%
Nov 19	2688	Nov 20	1140 #	-58%
Dec 19	2369	Dec 20	1313	-45%

\* first lockdown

# second lockdown

### Service 13/14



Month	Passengers	Month	Passengers	Percentage change
Jan 19	288	Jan 20	325	+13%
Feb 19	317	Feb 20	326	+2%
Mar 19	365	Mar 20	287	-27%
April 19	337	April 20	44*	-89%
May 19	421	May 20	83	-80%
June 19	525	June 20	79	-85%
July 19	399	July 20	111	-72%
Aug 19	456	Aug 20	210	-54%
Sept 19	512	Sept 20	219	-58%
Oct 19	398	Oct 20	166	-58%
Nov 19	366	Nov 20	187 #	-49%
Dec 19	550	Dec 20	162	-71%

\* first lockdown

# second lockdown

### Service 22

Month	Passengers	Month	Passengers	Percentage change
Jan 19	5148	Jan 20	4894	-5%
Feb 19	4946	Feb 20	4514	-9%
Mar 19	5376	Mar 20	3392	-37%
April 19	5253	April 20	877 *	-83%
May 19	5799	May 20	1056	-82%
June 19	5026	June 20	1334	-73%
July 19	5410	July 20	1706	-68%
Aug 19	5136	Aug 20	1961	-62%
Sept 19	4902	Sept 20	2238	-54%
Oct 19	4675	Oct 20	2754	-41%
Nov 19	5070	Nov 20	2399 #	-53%
Dec 19	4635	Dec 20	2433	-48%

\* first lockdown

# second lockdown

### Service 25 (service started 30<sup>th</sup> August 2020)

Month	Passengers
Aug 20	216
Sept 20	4184
Oct 20	3630
Nov 20	2115 #
Dec 20	2048

# second lockdown