



2016 / 17 Budget Consultation

(c) Weekend bus services

The County Council provides subsidies for rural bus services to meet what used to be a commitment of the Local Transport Plan that larger villages would have at least an hourly service to one of the towns in the area. With the cuts in the OCC budget, these subsidies will be severely reduced. The Parish Council has recently replied to a consultation which was proposing cuts that would probably result in the loss of our services to Wallingford and Reading, as well as afternoon services to and from Oxford and possibly some of the Thames services.

In this context we need to review the subsidy we the Parish Council already makes to the Saturday evening and Sunday bus services to Oxford as part of the Five Parishes group that lie on the route from Watlington to Oxford (Watlington, Cuxham, Chalgrove, Stadhampton and Garsington). This bus is operated by Go-Ride, and provides the only Sunday and Saturday evening bus services for Watlington. Earlier this year we agreed to subsidise that service until the end of the year, at which stage it would be reviewed. This review will be carried out by the Five Parishes Group in the next month. Usage of the Go-Ride has been variable, but it has at times been well used and arriving in Oxford with no more space available. The users in general have been older people on Sundays, with Saturday evening usage including mainly younger, non car owning people.

Support for the weekend services is affordable at £1,000 a year and could be continued, but we need to look at whether this is the best use of our funds. Would it better to try to preserve some of the other services instead? A sum of £1000 would do very little to save the Wallingford, Reading and Oxford afternoon services; sufficient of a subsidy to protect any one of these could be as much as ten times that figure.

There is still a lot of research that needs to be done on the passenger numbers for the services under threat and for the Go-Ride weekend services for Oxford, and the Parish Council will do that research. As saving the other services is probably beyond our means, and in any event might not be agreed by the County, the simple decision to be made now is whether we include a sum of about £1,000 in our budget for the Sunday and Saturday evening service to Oxford.