

Planning Committee

Title:	Community Bus Working Group Update
Date:	12 November 2024
Contact Officer:	Becky Reid, Environmental Project Officer

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the committee about action taken by the Community Bus Working Group (CBWG) since the last meeting.

General Update

2. Since the last meeting of the Planning Committee the CBWG has continued to gather information for the Options Appraisal that they hoped to present at this meeting. As part of this process two key actions have taken place: 1) a review of the needs not met already by the new 121 service, 2) a conversation with Oxfordshire County Council Public Transport Team.
3. Needs identified through previous questionnaires and community consultation events were reviewed and showed that the two biggest needs raised, but not yet met were:
 1. connections with Towersey, and
 2. connecting East Thame with the Leisure Centre.
 Other needs expressed by a lower number of consultees included the desire for a bus service to go around the estates that are not currently served, including Chiltern Vale, Coombe Hill Crescent and others.
4. The OCC Public Transport Team was approached and asked for opinion about what they would do with a new route, and whether they would leave the 121 route as it currently runs, and develop the new route around this; or make changes to the current 121 route to maximise the benefit of 2 routes around the town. OCCs response was that they would not consider a 2nd route at all, unless they were clearly able to see the need. Instead they would extend the life of the 121 to give it the maximum chance of success. When the two primary needs outlined above were mentioned their response was:
 1. that the funding could not be used to meet Towersey needs unless it was a bi-product of another service, and that
 2. the 121 had some down time outside the town hall that could be used to extend the service to the leisure centre and that they were going to explore this to see if it could happen.
5. As a result of this feedback, the CBWG will take action to establish whether the remaining need is best met through an additional bus route, or whether effort should focus on supporting the 121 to succeed, whilst seeking to meet the remaining needs in another way – such as a dial-a-ride service. This work will now be undertaken and findings brought back to the Planning Committee once completed.

Action Required

- To note the report.***