

Please contact: Leigh Ann Thurgood
Your ref:
Our ref: RC/Lat/ME79/RC
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Councillor Vaughan Hewett
Member for Rainham North Ward
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Dear Councillor Hewett

Petition for Improvements to Bus Services in Lower Rainham

Thank you for the recent petition that you forwarded to us on behalf of residents of Rainham. The petition requested improvements to the bus services in Rainham North.

As you may be aware, Medway Council, in common with the vast majority of local authorities, has a relatively limited role in public transport provision. It generally only relates to the support of some socially necessary services at times when the commercial operators, for example Arriva, have not deemed it commercially viable. Within the limited supported bus budget, Medway Council has to make a judgement decision on giving value for money on individual service routes and areas of Medway.

As you say, the 327 bus provides a service roughly every two hours, plus an hourly 121 service during the day, and the two 131 journeys along Childscroft Road. This means that the service provision is relatively good as far down as William Street. Therefore, it would be hard to justify further increases in service provision at this time. There is also the option of rail in the proximity, although I do appreciate that older persons do have to pay for rail tickets. Overall, Rainham does have a relatively good provision compared to some other areas.

Medway Council has just completed the procurement process for the supported contracts going forward from September 1 2014 for a period of 5 years and these supported services will be maintained.

I would also like to respond to the summary questions in the petition:-

1) A new circular route to include Will Adams Treatment Centre along Station Road, Lower Rainham Road, Ito Way, and the A2 - This route would be a hard one to justify and likely to be very costly to provide the required frequency involved to make it worthwhile. The route proposed including Lower Rainham Road and Ito Way would also not pass significant numbers of houses for the likelihood of any demand to grow.



To get to Will Adams Treatment Centre, the 182 service does pass this location every ten minutes Monday to Saturday, so passengers could change in Chatham to board the 182. Gillingham Business Park is passed by numerous services on the south side along the A2, so it would be hard to justify another service along that route. The Medway Mobility service is also available for the frail or elderly, and those with a disability. This may be better suited as a dial-a-ride service to take members of the public to specific places such as the Will Adams Centre.

2) The Arriva 132 service is operated commercially by Arriva from Monday to Saturday daytime without support from Medway Council, so it would be Arriva's decision to re-route one bus an hour off the main route. Most operators like to stay on the main route and avoid variances, as it detracts from the benefits of the overall core service. A spur off from the main Hempstead to Chatham core service would lead to an increased journey time, and thus changing the 12 minute frequency on the route which would then require costly extra bus resources.

3) It would be very hard and costly to provide improvements in the links to Maidstone Hospital from either Rainham or Chatham. The high frequency service 101 already operates every 15 minutes to Maidstone from Gillingham. There are the following services to Maidstone Hospital- 6X, 8, 82, 85, 86, 89 and 58 from Maidstone town centre. Any new cross boundary journey would need to be agreed and funded jointly by Medway Council and Kent County Council. It would be extremely unlikely that Kent would fund a new service against the backdrop of the existing services which run to Maidstone Hospital and cuts they are making to their supported bus budget within the current year.

4) The 121 currently does not run in the mornings and afternoons as Arriva interworks its vehicles to provide school bus services in those periods in other parts of Medway. This also means the cost of the 121 to Medway Council is relatively low. To provide morning and afternoon additional services is likely to cost significantly more to Medway Council, as extra bus resources would be required.

Your offer of paying for any additional costs incurred by Arriva under Option 2 is noted but it is likely that, as explained above, the cost of an additional spur off once an hour is likely to be significant.

However, I have instructed my colleagues in the Integrated Transport team to contact the local bus companies of Arriva, Chalkwell, and Nu-venture which currently run services in Rainham with the suggestions above and request their feedback. Often the companies can suggest innovative responses if they feel there is a potential market that they may wish to utilise. I have asked my colleagues to contact you again when I receive responses from the bus operators.

If you do not consider that the issues raised in your petition have been addressed, please refer to the procedure sent with the acknowledgment letter for a possible further course of action. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Robin Cooper
Director of Regeneration, Community & Culture

cc Mr Rehman Chishti MP

