

The withdrawal of the post bus service was discussed on 17th September at a meeting convened specifically for this purpose at Frinsted Village Hall. The meeting was attended by senior KCC officers, affected Parish Councils (including Milstead), existing passengers and was also open to any member of the public wishing to attend. I do not believe that anything further can be added to these discussions but can provide the following statement which might be useful in establishing the situation for anyone who has not been involved to date.

**STATEMENT READS:**

The decision to withdraw the service was taken by the Post Office and not the County Council. The Post Office have been progressively withdrawing post buses from across the county over the past few years, despite the County Council effectively doubling the level of subsidy per service. The 300, which links Wormshill with Sittingbourne, is the last post bus in the county. It's withdrawal is very unfortunate as it is recognised that this represents the only regular public transport for a number of areas including Milstead.

On understanding that Royal Mail were intending to withdraw the service, KCC, Transport Integration sought to understand the impact on existing passengers and current usage which informs decisions regarding the ability to provide sustainable, alternative transport. Surveys completed, confirmed that patronage was limited, averaging 2 - 3 passengers per day. Unfortunately when considered against the cost of providing a comparable bus service a subsidy per passenger journey (cost divided by use) figure approaching £20 is generated which is completely prohibitive given that KCC's criteria sets a maximum of £3.

The County Council operates Kent Karriers across most of the rural areas in Kent. Kent Karriers provide relatively bespoke dial-a-ride services for people with a disability or those living over 500m from an existing bus route. The SUN Kent Karrier scheme covering Swale District has been modified to enable the residents of Wormshill and other communities along the route of the post bus to travel into Sittingbourne on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. This is considered to be the appropriate solution given the volume of Post bus users. Application forms and information leaflets are available by calling 01622 605349 (an electronic version is also attached).

I believe also that consideration is being given locally to the possibility of the community introducing a volunteer, minibuss scheme or alternatively utilising similar schemes operating in the Stockbury and Lenham areas.

**END**

Local Bus and Information Team Manager