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| **Bus Service Consultation**  Consultation on  Essex County Council supported journeys only Witham Town Service 39 – Monday to Saturday, operated by Stephenson’s.  23rd September 2019 and 4th November 2019. |
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**Introduction:** Although Service 39 is operated by Stephenson’s on a commercial basis, Essex County Council (ECC) provides financial support for the journeys listed below: -

* Mon-Fri 06:32 until 07:47
* Mon-Fri 18:19 until 19:38
* Sat 07:34 until 08:50
* Sat 12:34 until 12:55
* Sat 16:49 until 18:46

**Background:** The contract is due to expire on 25th July 2020. These journeys significantly exceed the ECC cost per passenger journey support, therefore ECC is considering withdrawing these journeys with effect from **25th** **July 2020**.

**Proposal:**  A consultation was carried out between 23 September and 4 November 2019 regarding the proposal to withdraw the above-mentioned journeys only.

**Impact:** Most respondents use the service for shopping, which can be accessed at any time of the day, and only a small percentage use the service for commuting.

Braintree Community Transport offer transport services to the community if they are not able to access the conventional bus, ECC provide a grant to Braintree Community Transport.

**The consultation:**

The consultation put forward the following question:

* Do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes?

This was composed of a consultation letter available on bus and an online survey via the ECC website.

**Key Conclusions**

A total of 98 people responded to the survey of which 89% said they use the service and 10% said they did not or did not answer the question.

* 52% used the service Monday to Friday in the AM peak
* 54% used the service Monday to Friday in the PM peak
* 44% used the service Saturday in the AM
* 63% used the service Saturday lunchtime
* 43% used the service Saturday in the PM
* 50% used the service daily, 32% used the service weekly, 8% used the service monthly.
* The majority of passengers (72%) use the service to access shopping facilities – whilst others used the service to access employment - 31%, access leisure - 41% and access healthcare - 56%
* 14% could make the journey by other means, whilst 70% were not able to make alternative journeys. 11% were unsure.
* 80% did not agree with the proposed changes, with 4% agreeing, 12% were unsure.

**Who gave views?**

* 23% were male, with 59% being female.
* 3% responders have hearing impairment, 12% had physical impairment, 4% had visual impairment, 2% had mental health needs and 14% advised they had other long-term health conditions.
* The age group using the service varied with the highest being 36% of whom fall into the 65-74 age group. Followed by 15% aged 75 and above.
* 30% responders are working full or part time, with 44% being retired, 3% studying full or part time

**Summary**

A total of 28 comments were made expressing the following concerns

* Deceivingly uphill terrain and difficulties in walking
* Feeling unsafe
* Too much jargon
* Use the bus to connect with service 71 to access Chelmsford and Broomfield hospital
* Service changes suggestions.

**Final Decision**

Although a large number of people were concerned about the loss of these journeys, a number of journeys Monday to Friday and on Saturdays will continue to be provided by the commercial operator.

Responses received show most passengers are over 65, retired and wishing access to shopping and health care. These journeys can still be made on the remaining commercial service.

The decision was therefore made to withdraw the journeys that were consulted on from 25 July 2020.