

Public Transport Briefing Note:

Ashford – Stagecoach Local Bus Network Review

13th August 2023



Stagecoach Ashford Commercial Bus Network Changes (13th August 2023)

I write to make you aware of changes to the Folkestone bus network, which are due to be implemented by Stagecoach from **13th August 2023**. Please note these are commercial changes being implemented by Stagecoach, without involvement from KCC, as such enquiries from the public should be directed to Stagecoach initially. An indicative summary of these changes can be found at the foot of this email.

Background:

The pandemic has had a profound impact on use of Public Transport across the UK. During the pandemic, a combination of home working, school closures and guidance to avoid the use of Public Transport resulted in a volatile period of few passenger journeys and operators and local authorities having to react to Public Health Guidance and changing passenger demands.

Bus use in Kent, as with rest of the UK has only partially recovered since the pandemic and currently it is estimated that use of buses stands at around 80% of pre-pandemic levels, with the use in the off-peak being closer to half of what it was prior to the pandemic. At the same time, bus operators are facing other financial and operational pressures most notably in respect of increased operating costs.

Commercial response by operators

Bus services operate in a de-regulated, privatised environment where operators match service levels and fares to demand and costs in order that services are sustainable. They are not obliged to provide any service or journey empowering them to react to changes to the commercial or operating environment. In this current climate operators are having to review their operations and put them on a more sustainable footing.

To change or cancel a bus service, operators must follow an administrative (registration) process which gives advance notice to the Department for Transport and to the Local Transport Authority. KCC are therefore starting to see the registrations relating to service changes for August 2023.

KCC position

KCC is in receipt of Government funding that will enable us to intervene to retain and replace some services, prioritising the protection of school services. The funding is time limited and therefore the use of funding to support or protect services can only be considered where there is the prospect of them being sustainable again in the longer term. Unfortunately, this does mean that it will not be possible to protect every service or area and some lesser used parts of the network will be withdrawn by operators.

At this stage and with reference to the table below, this mean the Council are looking to protect services 515, 516, 517, 518, 519 and school journeys on service 2

Indicative Summary of Changes:

Route	Description	Change
Route 1/1A/1X	Ashford to Canterbury	Service to Wye withdrawn. 1X increased too Hourly
2	Tenterden to Ashford	Withdrawn
Route 2A	Ashford to Tenterden	Sunday service withdrawn - Additional off-peak service added - No longer serving Park Farm
Route 10X	Ashford to Maidstone	Will interwork with the 10 from September - Sunday Service Withdrawn
Route A	Ashford to Singleton	Reduction to early morning, early evenings and Saturday Afternoons
Route B	Kennington to Bridgefield	Reduction to early morning, early evenings and Saturday Afternoons, Withdraw late evening service
Route C	Willaim Harvey Hospital to Ashford Town Centre	Reduction to early evenings and Saturday afternoons, Withdraw late evening service
Route D	Stanhope to Ashford	Reduction to early morning, Early evenings, and Saturday afternoons
Route AD	Stanhope to Ashford	Additional early journeys, reduce frequency early evening and withdraw late evening service
Route G	Godinton Park to South Willesborough	Reduce to off Peak only. Withdraw peak journeys.

Route 965	Park Farm to Lenham School	Currently too much running time on the PM journey. Running time reduced
10E	Edgerton To Ashford	PM Departure from Norton Knatchbull brought forward to match up with the new times on the 10/10X
Route 10	Folkestone to Ashford	This service will interwork with the 10X. Some late journeys removed and the 10 will no longer serve Lympne. Sunday service Withdrawn.
515	Singleton to Towers School	Withdrawn
516	Towers School to Willesborough	Withdrawn
517	Hythe Road – Knoll Lane	Withdrawn
518	Highworth School to Tenterden	Withdrawn
519	Stanhope to Towers School	Withdrawn

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