

Briefing Note – Local Councillors and Stakeholders

First Aberdeen Service Changes for 14th February 2010

Over the past three years a series of changes in First Aberdeen's bus network in have been implemented, initially with a major reshuffle of cross city routes and in recent years reductions in frequency. First attribute this to an increase in traffic and journey times. First Aberdeen have indicated that their punctuality has suffered in recent years, backed up with complaints from users accompanied with a general acceptance that their bus service will not operate to timetable.

To address these concerns, First Aberdeen are planning to implement a series of changes to the network to

- a) revise the journey times in order to improve reliability with the published times.
- b) remove a number of timing points, to allow for more operational flexibility.
- c) re-allocate vehicles from routes that will either no longer operate, or will operate at a reduced timetable, to routes that they feel require augmentation.
- d) Review the operation of the P&R service, the Bridge of Don portion of the 5 Route to ARI, the Airport Service 27 and the Mid Stocknet service 25.

First have not given any indication of a fares review; however one should be expected around the implementation of these changes.

The changes are summarised below, further detail can be given if necessary.

Service 1&2 Bridge of Don to Garthdee

These popular services (covering both universities and two large residential areas across the City) are known to operate with significant reliability problems, double running of buses and capacity problems at peak times along the route.

Monday to Friday

Additional running time has been allowed of up to 5 minutes. Officers are in detailed discussions with physical measures that can be put in place to improve journey time, in addition to management measures for First to put in place to control double running of vehicles. No changes to route or frequency.

Saturday

Journeys that currently terminate at Union Terrace will now run to Holburn Junction.

Minor changes to running times on King St and Holburn Street – Additional time added on King St and taken off Holburn Street. No changes to route or frequency.

Sunday

No major changes, slight renumbering of journeys and variations to journeys terminating at Holburn Junction (towards Garthdee) instead of Union Terrace. No changes to route or frequency.

Bank Holidays

No changes.

Service 3 – Cove – Mastrick

Monday – Friday

Timetable changes due to running time adjustments, existing operating period and frequency are maintained however.

There is an additional journey at 0640 from Mastrick to Cove and at 0735 from Guild Street to Mastrick.

Saturday/Sunday

No change.

Bank Holidays

There are three new morning journeys in the bank holiday timetables as shown below:

0640 - Cove to Mastrick

0619 - Bridge Street to Cove

0635 - Mastrick – Cove

Other than these, there are minor adjustments to departure times, but the current service level is maintained.

Service 5 Torry via Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (currently to Bridge of Don)

This service was operated at a 30 minute frequency up until 2004 when the Council secured £1,000,000 from the Scottish Government's Bus Route Development Grant to fund an additional 4 vehicles on the route and an increase in frequency to 15 minutes. Within the first year of operation, there had been over 50% growth on service 5. Disappointingly, during the last year of operation of the Bus Route Development Grant, First reduced the peak time frequency of the service.

The Council still has a ring fenced sum from the grant to use to improve the waiting facilities and priority measures on the route, which will be subject to a future Committee report. It appears that First Aberdeen had relied upon receiving the additional funds as a payment for their operation of the service, against the initial bid agreement – they have cited this as an explanation for a reduction in route.

First are reporting an apparent decline in patronage. There have been a series of high level discussions with First Aberdeen with regards to concerns over their operation of the service and officers will continue to liaise with respect to the causes of the apparent decline in patronage.

First intend to no longer operate the route from the Bridge of Don to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI).

Surveys of passengers from Bridge of Don to ARI will be undertaken and discussion with First will work to finding a suitable resolution to continue to provide a bus link to ARI from the Bridge of Don. Initial feedback from ARI has been very critical of this proposal as it will affect hundreds of employees and visitors/patients. If discussions with First do not result in a suitable replacement, officers will liaise with other stakeholders and operators with a view to finding a suitable service.

Monday to Saturday

Route will only operate from Torry to ARI via City Centre. Frequency will be reduced to 20 minutes throughout the day.

After 1635 the headway from Torry to ARI fluctuates between 13 and 26 minutes, then to 30 minutes after 1944. Additional journey time of around 3 minutes has been added throughout the day.

Sunday

Minor changes to timetable in early morning, late evening.

Bank Holidays

The Bank Holiday service will now start half an hour earlier but will continue to operate on the current half hourly basis throughout the day in both directions.

Service 12 – Torry to Heathryfold

Monday to Friday

This service is being improved to operate on a 10 minute basis between the hours of 0700 and 1740. This service currently operates on a 12 minute frequency after 1000, and 10 minute frequency between 0731 and 1001.

Saturday to Sunday and Bank Holidays

No change to route or timetables.

Service 13 Dubford/Footdee to Scatterburn

Minor timetable changes to allow for additional journey time towards Footdee and/or Dubford.

Service 14 Woodend to Seaton / Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (currently including Kingswells)

This service has changed regularly to interlink with the P&R service at Kingswells. First Aberdeen has found patronage lower than anticipated within the Kingswells village.

First have made the decision to change the route – no longer running all the way to Kingswells, instead stopping at Woodend Hospital. There are changes being made to service 40 to ensure that Kingswells has a daytime service, and service 23 which will take the place of service 14 in Kingswells in the evenings and on Sundays.

In the interests of improving the reliability of this service off-peak, an additional two minutes of running time have been allocated between ARI and the City Centre.

Monday to Friday

The first journey to ARI is now 15 minutes later, and there are a number of alterations to the timetable throughout the day. However the existing 15 minute service between Woodend and Seaton has been maintained – with every second bus continuing to ARI on a 30 minute basis.

The service in the early evening between 1800 and 1900 has been improved from a 20 to a 30 minute service.

Saturday

There have been minor timetable changes only, the existing service level and operating period are maintained.

Sunday

There have been minor timetable changes only, the existing service level and operating period are maintained.

Bank Holidays

The existing service level is maintained, albeit on the shorter route. The only notable change is that the last bus from Woodend to ARI is now 40 minutes later, with an identical change to the return journey.

Service 17 Bucksburn to Kincorth

This service used to provide a direct link between Bucksburn and Dyce during the day up until 1st February 2009. There was a significant level of concern from the local communities as Bucksburn lost the direct bus link and Dyce saw a reduced level of bus services overall.

Monday to Friday

This service currently operates on a 12 minute frequency throughout the day, except for during the afternoon peak between approximately 1530 and 1800 when the service increases to a 10 minute frequency.

The revised timetables show this service changing to operate on a 12 minute frequency throughout the day, a loss of one bus per hour along the route.

Saturday

No Route or timetable changes.

Sunday

Some minor timetable alterations, no change to route or service frequency.

Bank Holidays

No revised bank holiday timetables provided.

Service 19 Tillydrone to Peterculter

This service is known to suffer from significant reliability issues, particularly between the City Centre and Tillydrone. The changes proposed by First should demonstrate an improvement.

Monday to Friday

No change to route or frequency of service. Additional running time has been allocated throughout the route.

Saturday

No notable changes to timetable or route.

Sunday

Slight changes to the timetable only and start point of the first three journeys has been changed to Broad Street from Bon Accord Centre. This is not expected to have any significant effect on passengers.

Bank Holidays

Last three evening journeys from Culter now terminate at Holburn Junction rather than Union Terrace.

Service 21 Charleston/Altens to Dyce

Minor timetable changes to allow for additional journey time across the route.

Service 23 – Heathryfold – Sheddocksley – Kingswells (village & Park and Ride)

The evening and Sunday route is being extended to Kingswells and the P&R site. This will replace the evening and Sunday service that will no longer operate from the former 14 route. This service is known to have substantial reliability problems.

Monday to Friday

The 1805, 1837, 1857, then 1937 to 2245 departures from Heathryfold extend into Kingswells (and the P&R site) at the Sheddocksley end of the route, with their matching departures from the Sheddocksley end of the route now originating from Kingswells between 1905 and 2305.

First had added in up to 18 minutes additional journey time to a number of journeys.

Journeys from 1900 serve Kingswells and the Park and Ride site.

Saturday

Journey times have been increased by up to 12 minutes.

All journeys from 1850 onwards to the last bus at 2235 now depart from Kingswells.

Sunday

Additional running time has been incorporated into the timetable to allow the extension into Kingswells all day.

Bank Holiday

The first journeys in both directions are now nearly a full hour later.

The bank holiday service on this route currently operates on a 20 minute basis between 1100 and 1800. This will be dropping under the new proposals to a 30 minute frequency throughout the day in both directions.

Service 25 Mastrick via Mid Stocket to Broad Street

This service was introduced as a replacement to service 22. There has been a substantial amount of contention with the local communities at the loss of service 22 and the hourly frequency of service 25.

First are proposing to increase the frequency of service 25 to every 30 minutes and will extend the service into Sheddocksley.

However the route will no longer serve Morrisons on West North Street, but will instead terminate at Union Square / Broad Street.

The timetable is largely unchanged.

Service 29 - Hillhead/Woolmanhill – Littlejohn Street/RGU Garthdee

First Aberdeen are to merge the two University based bus services the 20 and the 9. This will create a singular route for most services throughout the day Monday – Friday, with the retention of the current service 20 route and timetable in the evenings and weekends.

There is a reduction in frequency from a 15 minute service to a 20 minute service and a lack of a direct link between RGU Garthdee and RGU Schoolhill as result of this change.

The University of Aberdeen subsidise the non-term time service 20.

It is unclear at this time what their intentions are for future with respect to a non-term time service and we will continue to liaise with all parties.

The University of Aberdeen are disappointed First Aberdeen have not taken on board feedback from the University for the need for a link from Hillhead and Kings College Campus to Foresterhill site (where they are expanding).

Monday to Friday

0800 to 1440 now operates a 20 minute frequency instead of the current 15 to Old Aberdeen or Garthdee. There will be one bus less per hour serving the two universities.

Majority of services now linked in with service 20 so will run from Hillhead to Broad Street then take route of 9 and on return will take route of 9 to Union

Street and then travel to Broad Street missing out Schoolhill, resulting in the loss of a direct connection between the 2 RGU campuses.

Removal of 0750, 0810 and 0830 departures from Woolmanhill, the 0805 and 0820 will continue to operate.

Evening services from 1815 – 2245 will run as currently from Hillhead to Littlejohn Street.

Saturday

Run as currently all day except removal of 1945 – 2359 services from Littlejohn St to Mounthooly Roundabout.

Will not operate to Garthdee, alternatives available.

Sunday

Run as currently except the 2315 operating to Littlejohn St instead of terminating at Jute Street.

Additional am journey at 0930 from Littlejohn Street to Hillhead.

Will not operate to Garthdee, alternatives available.

Bank Holidays

No change

Service 27 City Centre (Guild Street) to Aberdeen Airport via Anderson Drive

This service is known to have a high level of peak patronage with marginal off peak usage. Passengers are observed to be workers within the Kirkhill estate. The Dyce Transport Management Organisation (a group that represents the transport concerns and aspirations of employers in the Kirkhill / Dyce area) has reported reliability problems for many years.

Monday to Friday

The route will change to mirror service 80 and include the newly constructed Halliburton offices on Howe Moss Crescent.

Two off peak journeys will no longer operate, the 10050 and 12020 from Guild Street, and their matching 11040 and 13010 return journeys. This will have a negative impact as many workers and airport passengers use these journeys on a daily basis. Further information is being sought from First on patronage for these journeys to confirm observations.

The frequency will be reduced in the evening, with an additional 5 minutes journey time in the Kirkhill area.

Bank holidays

There will be an improvement with two extra two journeys a day (notwithstanding the above changes). A new 0550 service from the City Centre (return at 0635) and an off-peak journey at 1400 (return at 1455) will operate.

Service 40 Kingswells P&R

The Park & Ride service will continue to operate throughout the day on a 15 minute basis.

Due to the change to service 14 – its removal from Kingswells Village – service 40 will take over as the village service for Kingswells.

This is a concern as the additional running time and length of the route may affect the Kingswells Park and Ride service, this will be closely monitored.

During the morning peak, buses coming from Bridge of Don or the City Centre will loop around Kingswells Village prior to entering the Park & Ride site – and will then depart the site and travel into the city centre as per the existing route.

While this will not cause any inconvenience the existing Park & Ride users, it will add additional running time for passengers from Kingswells Village wanting to travel into the City Centre.

The link between Kingswells village and Hazlehead Academy will also be removed. Whilst the zoned school is Bucksburn, there are a number of children who elect to attend Hazlehead. Discussions on alternatives are underway.

In the afternoon peak, this arrangement is reversed, with services from the city centre travelling directly to the Park & Ride site, before looping around the village and returning to the city centre – this results in the journey time from Kingswells P&R to the City Centre being increased by up to 19 minutes.

The Park and Ride service has, in the past five years, substantially decreased in terms of journey time and frequency to the planned 15 minute service for February 2010.

Monday to Friday Kingswells P&R to Bridge of Don P&R

Additional Journeys from Kingswells P&R at 0700, 0900 and 1755. Will continue to operate at 15 minute frequency but with revised timetable.

No significant changes to running time off-peak or in the morning peak, which again is a concern for officers given concerns over punctuality.

Pm peak journey times have been adjusted, 5 minutes added between Kingswells and ARI, 6 minutes to Holburn Junction and 1 minute removed between Holburn Junction and Bridge of Don P&R.

Evening peak journeys from Kingswells P&R to City Centre will now take 43 minutes instead of 25 due to travelling around Kingswells.

Monday to Friday Bridge of Don P&R to Kingswells P&R

Morning peak and Daytime service now operate from City Centre to Kingswells Village and then into Kingswells P&R before returning to the City Centre.

Evening peak journeys will travel from City Centre into Kingswells P&R then will circle the village prior to travelling back to City Centre.

Four additional bus journeys from City Centre towards Kingswells P&R each day at 0558, 0617, 0637, 0707 and one additional from Bridge of Don P&R at 0708.

Journey times from City Centre to Kingswells P&R are being revised:

AM peak – now takes 39 minutes instead of 23 due to bus travelling around Kingswells village.

Daytime – now takes 34 minutes instead of 18 which is an increase of 16 minutes due to bus travelling around Village prior to arrival at the P&R site.

Evening peak – still takes 26 minutes, as the bus travels to the P&R site prior to circling around the village.

Saturday Kingswells P&R to Bridge of Don P&R

Timetable changes have been made however frequencies will remain primarily at 15 minute intervals throughout the day.

Added journeys at 0657 & 0730 from Kingswells to Bridge of Don.

Running times off peak between Kingswells and City Centre are not changed. Running time from City Centre to Bridge of Don extended by 2 minutes.

From 1352 to 1846 journeys to City Centre from Kingswells P&R now take 38 minutes an increase of 19 minutes as service now loops around village prior to returning to City Centre.

Saturday Bridge of Don P&R to Kingswells P&R

Am peak and Daytime service now operate from City Centre to Kingswells Village and then into Kingswells P&R

Pm peak will travel from City Centre into Kingswells P&R then will circle the village prior to travelling back to City Centre.

Timetable changes have been made however frequencies will remain primarily at 15 minute intervals throughout the day. 7 minutes additional running time has been added between Bridge of Don and Holburn Junction.

Added AM journeys from City Centre to Kingswells P&R at 0631, 0648, 0717, 0747

Added AM journey from Bridge of Don P&R to Kingswells P&R at 0735

Journey times from City Centre to Kingswells P&R greatly affected:-

AM peak – now takes 33 mins instead of 19 which is an increase of 14 minutes due to bus travelling around Village prior to arrival at P&R

Daytime – now takes 34 mins instead of 19 which is an increase of 15 minutes due to bus travelling around Village prior to arrival at P&R

Evening peak – still takes 19 mins – no change – bus travels to P&R prior to circling village.

Bank Holidays

No Revised bank holiday timetable provided at this time.