

DRAFT Minutes of the Bus 64 Meeting
held at Carterton Town Hall on 26 April 2018
at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr Mrs Lynn Little, Carterton Town Council
Mr David Miles, Parish Transport Representative for Witney
Cllr Alex Postan, District Councillor for Brize Norton & Shilton
Cllr Martin McBride, Carterton Town Council
Cllr Suzi Coul, Carterton Town Council
Cllr David Wesson, Carterton Town Council
Cllr Mrs Maxine Crossland, West Oxfordshire District Councillor

Bob Edwards
Jo Mungall
Pamela Edwards
Other members of the public

Cllr Lynn Little welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She said for many the last 14/15 months without the Swindon bus had been difficult. Swindon offers the opportunity for employment, a wider choice of hospitals, a good shopping experience, and some have family living there. The loss of the service has affected surrounding villages too. Cllr Mrs Little said she has looked at funding. The Town Council has offered the possibility of a grant towards the cost of a replacement service but this has not yet been approved. She has engaged with several bus companies, the last being Mark One Coaches based in Witney. She had three meetings with the two directors and they were very keen to purchase a coach and even produced a suggested timetable covering five days a week including Saturdays because of football. But things are now at a standstill because there will need to be a lot more funding.

Mrs Little said she has engaged with Robert Courts MP, and also with the district councillor for Filkins and Broadwell, to see whether he can help in any way.

At this point, Mrs Little handed over to David Miles.

David introduced himself as the Parish Transport Representative for Witney, also involved with West Oxfordshire Community Transport who provide the Witney town services and a service for the Wychwoods and Chipping Norton.

He said that the Transport Group had already been looking at the need for a service to Swindon and had produced a specimen timetable. They were looking at a six day a week service including Saturdays which is the busiest day. He said he was encouraged with the turnout today. He appreciated that the 64 service used to be very well used. He came along to the meeting today to see exactly what people want and how the Witney Group can help. He said they operate with funding for the Wychwoods and in Witney but certainly not with £40,000.

Mrs Little said that Cllr Peter Handley was at the Town Hall earlier and had pledged to represent OCC and come to the next meeting. But a coach firm is now needed to take this forward. The service was originally funded by OCC contributing £34,000 and Gloucester funded the rest, making £64K in total. OCC withdrew funding and then Gloucester also withdrew and put their money into Cirencester. She recalled that service users were happy to pay about £6 return fare without using concessions. She had put this figure to Mark One

Coaches and they thought it was a good figure, and that maybe they could even do concessions. But now it is back to square one. Hopefully, with the support of Peter Handley and of David, things can move forward again.

Bob Edwards said the situation had been discussed at the 27 September 2017 meeting concerning the Vision for Carterton. He was disappointed nothing had been done. It is important that the town is seen to be viable. Need to look at ways of developing Carterton and linking with Gloucestershire. They could look at our schools too. Need to look at whole package.

Mrs Little said that following the meeting last year, Swindon and Gloucester Councils had been invited to a meeting but they hadn't responded. But it would still be worth pursuing.

A Resident said that the 74 Lechlade to Swindon bus is run by Stagecoach; if they came this way, there would be more people on the service. It goes to Highworth only, and also includes Cirencester (which is where the Gloucester funding went to). Need to form a group everyone is part of to make sure that this continues. Mrs Little pointed out that David had started his group with funding from WODC. He said the parish transport system has been going for many years but with the community transport group they were fortunate in Witney that people with business experience didn't want to see the town service disappear and they found a stop gap, Go Line, which bought some time and no services had to stop. So far they've had 33,000 passenger journeys in Witney in 14 months.

Maxine Crossland asked if the service in Witney was subsidised by the businesses of the town. David responded no, not from businesses; they had received a subsidy from Witney Town Council. There had not been any funding from WODC. He said in the case of the Wychwoods, the funding was from the parish councils. Mrs Little recalled that the Carterton Clerk wrote to all the parishes last year to ask if they would consider helping with this service but had received no reply.

Jo Mungall, a resident of 34 years, said she had never used the service but her mother lives in Lechlade, in a mobile home park for over 50s, and she had relied on it. Some of her neighbours drive but her mother does not. She uses her mobility scooter to get into the town, partly on roads, but otherwise she is dependent on others to get anywhere. Jo said that buses from Highworth to Swindon are vibrant and regular, so if a new service could connect with the Highworth timetable, it would cut costs. She also said that men from RAF Brize Norton didn't even know there used to be a bus that could take them direct to Swindon train station to go home. So perhaps that was a good reason to seek funding from the RAF? Mrs Little responded that Peter Handley could help with this aspect, as he sits on a committee at RAF Brize Norton and could put forward any ideas. She said that previous suggestions included linking up in Faringdon, or Lechlade, via minibus, but Stagecoach had said this would not be viable. She agreed that RAF Brize Norton should contribute, and that the train station is a good point.

A lady stood up to speak. She said she came from Bristol and when she needs to get there now, she has to travel via Oxford, then Didcot, and then to Bristol. A journey that used to take two hours from Carterton now takes five and a half hours and is double the cost.

Alex Postan, District Councillor for Shilton and Brize Norton, said if we look at Brize Norton and Bradwell alone, there are 1300 people. If somewhere near this number used the service, then he would make every effort he could to assist. In addition there is a villager community bus service, and if we could link into their service, there would be more customers and a busier service. He said he hadn't heard about previous meetings and he asked to be kept informed.

Pamela Edwards, of Filkins said that people of Carterton miss the 64 service, but the people in Filkins and surrounding villages had five buses a day to and from, bringing students, workers school children, etc and yet, with one fell swoop, were left with nothing. Pupils cannot get to college in Swindon if their parents don't drive. In the future, more families in these villages, who are older, or have a sick partner, or who can't drive, will be robbed of their independence. Too many people have to rely on someone else.

Mrs Little said that the minutes of this meeting will go to Mr Courts. She felt that Mrs Edwards had made a good point, in that the service was used by villagers coming into Carterton for shopping as well as taking them elsewhere, so we've been robbed of that too.

Mrs Edwards raised one more point, concerning the possibility of combining concessions with very low fares, but the response was that this could not happen because concessionary card holders are not permitted to pay reduced fares by law.

Another resident said if the problem is funding as well as finding a company to run the service, then OCC councillors have personal budgets and they could be asked to put money towards this scheme. Mrs Little agreed that they should be asked. David said that with the Wychwoods, that is exactly what they are doing.

Somebody questioned the 19 bus. Mrs Little said that Henry Howard had an update but wasn't able to attend the meeting. She said it wasn't a positive update. The resident said there is a bus which goes through Filkins and is sometimes empty, but it doesn't stop.

Alex Postan said there needed to be a shortlist of wants.

Mrs Little said that our OCC representatives, Peter Handley and Nicholas Field-Johnson, will fight for us. We need a coach company to take this on if funding were found. Also need to define a route to include all customers. Mark One Coaches suggested a wider route would be financially viable. Mrs Little will share details with Alex Postan. A possible journey could serve Carterton from Witney and then include Filkins, Kencot etc and go into Swindon past the crematorium.

A resident said that when the Swindon bus was lost, Stagecoach put on a bus to Woodstock instead. But why not Swindon three days a week and Woodstock three days a week? She felt it didn't make sense. David responded that they got developer funding.

Mrs Little said a name was needed to make the group identifiable. The suggestion was the *West Oxford Wanderer*. She suggested that meetings be held monthly. She nominated Bob Edwards as chairman. As town council officers cannot transcribe the minutes, a secretary was needed. No volunteers came forward so Mrs Little said she would take on that role for the moment. Susan Nix volunteered to sit on the committee. A meeting in the first week of June was suggested, maybe at the town hall at 2.30 on the first Thursday in June. Mrs Little hoped there would be no charge.

Posters and a budget needed to be organised. Details of the meetings are currently on Facebook but not everyone uses Facebook. Otherwise the group would need to rely on posters, and an A-board could be used a week before the next meeting. Carterton Community College and the U3A were suggested as other platforms to spread information.

Mrs Little thanked everyone who had attended.