

Thank you for writing to me. I'm sorry this isn't a personal reply but there have been too many messages for me to be able to send an individual to everybody

Firstly, I want to make sure that you have correct information. Attached is a briefing note that explains the situation and lists:

1. Commercially operated services that are being changed or withdrawn by their operators
2. Services that hitherto have been supported by Kent County Council but for which support will now be withdrawn

As the briefing note explains, the bus industry has suffered greatly reduced patronage as a result of the pandemic. There has been some government support for the operators but this will shortly cease. A shortage of drivers and the enormous increase in the cost of fuel added to the reduced number of users has led to a "perfect storm" and services that are unprofitable are being withdrawn. I know of 78 services that will have been withdrawn by the end of the year and I expect there to be more.

Kent County Council, as a Local Transport Authority, will, when advised of forthcoming commercial withdrawals, will try to interest other operators in them. If this is unsuccessful, we have in the past supported financially those services which we consider to be significantly socially necessary. We currently subsidise 127 services, but are neither able to continue to support all of them nor sustain any of the "new" commercial withdrawals.

We know how much residents of Kent value and rely on their bus services. It is with the greatest reluctance that we have to withdraw our support for 39 of them. As I've said, funding bus services is a discretionary activity and the weight of the demands on the Council's statutory services means that savings have to be made this year and possibly into the future.

Please refer to the attached lists to see whether the bus service you're concerned about is one where the County Council is withdrawing support, or one where the operator is withdrawing it. If the former, I've noted your interest, if the latter, you might wish to write to the operator.

Finally, if you have a child attending his or her nearest appropriate school and travelling on a bus that is to be withdrawn, don't worry – your child may have statutory entitlement to home to school transport, and the County Council will see that it is provided.

Please let me know if you have any queries.

Best wishes

David Brazier