

BREDGAR PARISH COUNCIL



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24th August 2022

For the Attention of Mr David Brazier
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
c/o Members Desk
County Hall
Sessions House
Maidstone, Kent
ME14 1XQ

Re: Withdrawal of Bus Service Numbers 343, 344 and 345

Dear Mr Brazier,

Our Councillor Stephen Parfitt formally responded, using your consultation questionnaire, to the KCC Bus Consultation earlier this year for Bredgar Parish Council. That response indicated the high value importance of the bus service to some residents of Bredgar and the Parish Council's support of its continued operation. Consequently we are extremely disappointed that these views were not accepted and the service is now due to stop in the autumn.

Bredgar Parish Council strongly request that this decision to stop the subsidies for these services is reversed.

The removal of the services will predominantly impact the most vulnerable in our community. The very young will be unable to travel independently and some lose their only route to school. The elderly and disabled will lose access to basic services in Sittingbourne and suffer increased social isolation. The complete loss of the service will inevitably increase car usage on our existing country lanes, that are already overused and that will no doubt require increased maintenance expenditure by KCC Highways as a result. At this time of great concern about climate change, driving up car usage and taking away the options for shared travel is extremely

short-sighted and against carbon reduction policies at all levels of government. Finally, we consider that the loss of the bus service will have long term consequences for our village community, as living in the village will be extremely difficult for anyone who does not have a car. Reducing the opportunities for families to live in the village, changing the social structure and potentially reducing the number of people using local shops and facilities.

We conclude that the cancellation of bus services to Bredgar is the wrong decision. We understand that KCC do not have a statutory responsibility to subsidise the rural bus services, but we feel that government of the country has a duty to provide a basic service to rural communities. If KCC cannot afford to fund the service subsidy the issue should be taken back for resolution by central government.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Brian Clarke
Chair

Mrs Teresa Hudson
Clerk