

# LYNSTED with KINGSDOWN PARISH COUNCIL

19 April 2022

Dear Sirs

## Response to KCC consultation on Bus Funding Reduction



The proposed cuts that would affect Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish include:

**Routes 343/344/345:** Newnham, Doddington, Lynsted, Teynham, Bapchild and Conyer to Sittingbourne

**Route 662:** Teynham to Faversham schools

**Route 664:** Conyer to Lynsted Primary School

**Route 8:** Sittingbourne to Kenilworth Court / Conyer

We consider that these proposed cuts to services would have a significant detrimental effect on our local community.

Many of our parishioners rely on public transport to visit hospitals, GP surgeries and retail outlets, as well as for social activities. There are no rail links in the Parish, making buses all the more important. The loss of these services threatens to confine the elderly and disabled to their homes, not to mention the increasing number of people who cannot afford to drive a car or who are having to restrict their car usage because of soaring fuel costs. The removal of these bus services would put additional pressure on already stretched household incomes.

This is particularly the case in rural areas, where disposable incomes are generally lower than urban communities. Urban residents tend to have the option of adopting 'active travel' as an alternative to bus services, because the distance to retail outlets and services is often short. However, such destinations in Lynsted with Kingsdown are well beyond what is identified by KCC as 'reasonable' parameters for active travel.

Rural areas already have a higher number of cars/vans per household because of the distances to be travelled and lack of alternative transport options. In Lynsted with Kingsdown we are currently threatened with an explosion of new housing developments. Ironically, one of the justifications for the location of these dwellings is stated as being the excellent local transport links. Removal of the existing bus services would decimate the public transport element, increasing demand for private cars on the road. This contradicts other policy objectives of KCC and local authorities including reduction in traffic congestion, air pollution and noise.

In a declared climate emergency, KCC should be actively supporting increased use of public transport – not getting rid of it. If these bus services are under-utilised, the focus should be on devising ways to encourage greater utilisation, not simply scrapping them.

There would also be a detrimental effect on social interaction, which has been identified as being essential for mental and emotional wellbeing – particularly after so many months of national lockdown due to the COVID pandemic. Access to entertainment, clubs, societies, groups, places of worship and visiting friends or relatives would all be restricted for those who do not own a car, as well as those who cannot afford to drive or pay expensive taxi fares.

The cuts threaten the withdrawal of important school day services. The 662 from Teynham to Faversham schools, and the 664 from Conyer to Lynsted primary school via Teynham. Parents will have no option but to drive children to their place of education – resulting in inconvenience, expense and more cars on the road in peak periods.

Also proposed is the withdrawal of the 343/344/345 services in their entirety. These services operate Monday to Saturday providing the only public transport for rural parts of Sittingbourne including Newnham, Doddington, Lynsted, Teynham, Bapchild and Conyer. School children would additionally be affected by these cuts.

These proposals affect ALL the buses that currently serve Lynsted with Kingsdown parish. If we lose them now, we will never get them back. Vulnerable groups will face greater isolation, further pressure will be exerted on stretched household budgets and the road network will become even more congested. We would urge KCC to re-consider these cuts.

Yours faithfully

**JULIEN SPEED**

**Chairman**

**Lynsted with Kingsdown Parish Council**