



# No. 31 Bus

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 79/13

14 OCTOBER 2013

The purpose of this report is to record the work carried out to make possible the restoration of the No. 31 Bus service following its termination on 30 September.

## No. DETAIL

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### 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) The No. 31 Bus service introduced by the work of then Town Councillor Jim Morgan and his colleagues in Ventnor Community Bus CiC and Stuart George just over two years ago had become an established part of the town's transport arrangements.
  - b) Its monthly average passenger usage of 500, rising to 700 at its peak, made it one of the most used community bus services on the Island.
  - c) The need for its established operator to withdraw for a protracted period and his consequent termination of the service from 30 September together with the proposed closure of the CiC prompted those who had set it up and guided it throughout, together with the Town Council, to engage in an examination of possible alternative operational arrangements.
  - d) The Town Council set up a Working Group at its meeting of 9 September 2013 of Councillors Ken Knapman, Brian Lucas, Tony Marvin and Jason Mack and the Town Clerks to consider the matter in more detail. Meetings of the Working Group were joined by Stuart George, Jim Morgan and Evelyn Knowles in her capacity as a Director of the CiC.
  - e) Subsequent detailed discussions as options began to clarify involved Jim Morgan, Stuart George and the Clerks.
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### 2) OPTIONS EXPLORED

- a) Three broad solutions have been explored and their strengths and weakness discussed in detail with issues around service reliability, certification and qualifications.
  - b) These options were:
    - o the initial focus of the Working Group was on the possibility of continuing the service under existing arrangements with volunteer drivers being recruited to keep the bus running until the return of its usual operator;
    - o finding another Minibus operator able and willing to take on the existing service under existing conditions;
    - o an alternative service, temporary or permanent, by Southern Vectis using one of their smaller Solo vehicles.
  - c) In spite of the best efforts of those involved, including the potential volunteers, it proved impossible to arrive at arrangements using the existing Minibus that would provide a predictably reliable regular service.
  - d) Southern Vectis took the trouble to explore the possibility of operating the service by trailing the route but found that even its smaller buses were unable to negotiate Bonchurch Shute or Madeira Road, both well used elements of the route. They offered an alternative route omitting those sections.
  - e) Meanwhile the Assistant Town Clerk had identified the Lake-based Minibus Plus operator as a potential operator and opened discussions with them. Already employed for school runs by the Isle of Wight Council, the company has all the necessary resources, experience, qualifications and certifications necessary to take on the existing route and was interested in doing so.
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### 3) RESOLUTION

- a) After detailed discussions involving Jim Morgan and Stuart George and with the Town Clerks indicating their view that the arrangement would be one the Town Council would be content to
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take on, Minibus Plus agreed to apply to the Traffic Commissioner to register themselves as the operator of the existing route to start as soon as the necessary permissions were confirmed to them.

- b) The Traffic Commission has now formally registered them as the operator and the service restarted on Friday 11 October 2013.
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**4) RECOMMENDATION**

The Town Council is recommended to:

- i) confirm its commitment to support the new arrangements for the provision of the service;
  - ii) continue the banking function for it;
  - iii) authorise the Town Clerk to reimburse MiniBus Plus the £60 registration fee paid to the Traffic Commissioners; and
  - iv) record its appreciation of their work to the original operator, Ken Day and Jim Morgan and Stuart George.
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