

Executive Board 9th September 2010

Agenda item 6 (b)

Consultation Paper – Provision of Courts services in Cheshire and Merseyside

Subject: Court Closure

The Borough of Halton is characterised by a population with extremely low car ownership (% compared with national). Consequently, the use of public transport is extremely important for ensuring accessibility for all. In this respect, Halton is fortunate that a legacy from the New town is the very effective busway. This was designed so that it would minimise the need for car use for local journeys siting bus stops in residential areas to maximise convenience compared to using cars and parking. It was designed so that it was at least as easy to reach Halton Lee, where the Court Complex is located, by bus as by car from almost anywhere in the town.

This system has ensured that the Court Complex in Runcorn is highly accessible to the population in Halton. If the Court is relocated, it will seriously inconvenience local residents. Alternative locations would demand journeys as set out below:

Warrington County Court:

Address: Legh Street, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 1UR

Public transport:

Services 62 and 110 operate from Runcorn and Widnes to Warrington and X30 operates from Runcorn to Warrington 62, X30 and 110. The most direct services from Runcorn are the 62 and X30, these are both hourly operating during the daytime arriving in Warrington at 35 mins past (62) and 56 mins past (X30) the hour until 1835 and 1756 respectively, returning from Warrington at 05 mins past (X30) and 40 mins past (62) the hour until 1805 and 1740 respectively. The most direct service from Widnes is the 110, which is also the most frequent with a 20 minute frequency through the daytime, this operates from early morning until 1820 into Warrington and 1835 out of Warrington. The closest bus stop to alight at for the Court would be on at Warrington Bus Station, this is no more than 200 yards to the court or less than a five minute walk.

The cost of a single bus ticket on the Arriva services is £2.90 or £4.00 return (day ticket). Halton Transport's day ticket for their service is £3.00.

By train, passengers would need to use one of the frequent bus services to Runcorn East where the train services operate hourly to Warrington Bank Quay. The train journey time is 7-8 minutes and operates from early morning throughout the day and to late evening, this is the same for each direction. On arriving at Warrington Bank Quay the distance to the court is approx 800 yards or an approximate ten minute walk. The cost of a return train ticket is £2.70.

Chester County Court

Address: Trident House, Little St John Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1SN

Public Transport:

Bus services from Runcorn to Chester Bus Exchange are 21 and X30. The bus journey time is between 48 and 52 minutes.

21 service operates hourly arriving in Chester at 53 mins past the hour throughout the daytime up to 1753 and returning from Chester at 05 mins past the hour, last bus being at 1705.

X30 service operates hourly arriving in Chester at 27 mins past the hour throughout the daytime up to 1927 and returning from Chester at 27 mins past the hour, last bus being at 1935.

From Chester bus exchange to the court on it is approximately 800 yards or an approximate ten minute walk.

By train, passengers would need to use one of the frequent bus services to Runcorn East where the train services operate hourly to Chester. The train journey time is 20 minutes and operates from early morning throughout the day and to late evening, this is the same for each direction. The cost of a return train ticket is £6.00. The train station is some distance from the court, however bus services are available from opposite the train station at the bus stops outside of the Town Cryer public house. Bus service 1 (signed for Wrexham) or services 3, 4, X44 or X55 (signed for Mold) operate a five minute frequency of services between them to bus stops within a 100 yard walk to the court. Similarly, return bus services operate back to the train station.

Northwich County Court

Address: The Court House, Chester Way, Northwich, Cheshire, CW9 5ES

Public Transport:

There are no longer any bus services available between Widnes or Runcorn to Northwich. Therefore passengers would need to use the train services operating from Runcorn Station to Hartford, this is an hourly service operating throughout the daytime, journey time of which is 11 minutes. This is the same for the reverse direction journeys. The cost of a return train ticket is £4.80.

To get to Runcorn Station, passengers would need to use a bus service. The most convenient bus stops used by most services are those on Queensway, located immediately before or after the Silver Jubilee Bridge. From these stops it is a very short walk to Runcorn Station.

On arriving at Hartford Station, passengers would need to use no. 82 bus service into Northwich, Watling Street bus terminus. The 82 operates half hourly throughout the daytime at convenient times to connect with the train journeys. For return journeys from Northwich, the bus service to Hartford Station is again half hourly but passengers would need to wait for 21 minutes before the train arrives for Runcorn.

On arrival in Watling Street bus terminus, the walk to the court is less than 200 yards or less than a five minute walk.

Recommendation

Should the MoJ determine to close Runcorn Court the MoJ should negotiate and fund enhanced and subsidised/free bus services for court users and staff , to tie in with Court sittings,thereby maintaining access to justice for those experiencing the significant inconvenience and additional cost of attending at a less accessible Court venue.