

Report Purpose:

Community Buses

Author:

Town Centre Manager/ Town Clerk

Update

The Town Council free to ride bus days, which coincide with the free to attend events, continue to generate more passenger journeys

Step Into Christmas on 29th Nov was up 34% on a typical Saturday

Lunar New Year (and Valentines Day) on 14th Feb was up 43% on a typical Saturday

Bus Costs for 2026 Event Days

- 2025 Rates for Reference: Any free bus day cost £1,162.12.
- 2026 Rates:
 - Saturdays: £1,278.33 per day
 - Wednesdays (busier days): £1,603 per day
 - Total to cover all event days: £24,957.96
- Costs are covered in the 2026 budget and will come from earmarked reserves.
- Sponsorship opportunities (e.g., Costa Coffee last year for *Step Into Christmas*) could still be explored to help offset costs.

Maintaining the 2025 programme ensures continuity, sustained passenger growth on event days, and continued support for town centre activity, while sponsorship exploration provides an opportunity to reduce financial pressure on Council reserves.

Proposals:

To consider the following as recommended by Services Committee 2nd March 2026

- The Council continues to deliver Free-to-Ride Bus Days for the same events as in 2025.
- Officers actively explore sponsorship opportunities
- A structured sponsorship approach be developed, offering local businesses visibility through event marketing and promotional materials.