

# Bus Service 404/5 Changes Consultation Report January 2019



Public Consultation:  
22 November - 19 December 2018



[kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation](http://kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation)

Consultation closes 19 December 2018

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# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Background	4
1.2. Purpose of the Consultation	5
1.3. Purpose of this Report	5
<b>2. Consultation Process</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. Promoting the Consultation	7
2.2. Pre-consultation Engagement Activities	7
2.3. During Consultation Activities	8
<b>3. Response Profile</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1. Respondent Groups	9
<b>4. Equality, Accessibility and Demographics</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1. Respondent Demographics	11
4.1.1 Age	11
4.1.2 Gender	12
4.1.3 Disability	12
4.1.4 Carer responsibilities	13
4.1.5 Other Equality Impacts	13
4.2. EQIA Conclusion	13

<b>5. Consultation Results .....</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1 Q4. Please tell us, if any, which service(s) you travel on? .....	14
5.2 Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach we have taken to making these savings? .....	15
5.3 Agreement / Disagreement toward the proposals. ....	16
5.3.1 Question 5 - Service Breakdown. ....	16
5.3.2 Question 5 – Age breakdown. ....	17
5.3.3 Question 5 - Disabled status breakdown. ....	18
5.3.4 Question 5 - Carer Status breakdown. ....	18
5.4 Q5a. Please add any comments on our approach to support your answer to question 5 and on any other Equalities implications in response to question 6. ....	18
<b>6. Next Steps .....</b>	<b>21</b>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Over the summer of 2018, we held a Big Conversation consultation with communities and transport providers to consider how we provide rural transport in the future. This has resulted in a series of pilot schemes that might help shape future provision. In the meantime, we need to make some savings.

Following engagement with bus operators, they have presented KCC with proposals that will enable us to reduce spend, whilst being able to protect school services and ensure those communities currently served still have access to transport.

Two proposals; from Stagecoach (services 42/42A, 56 and 39/39A) in Thanet and from Go-coach (services 404 and 405) in Sevenoaks have been consulted on. These would save KCC approximately £410k per year (£360k from Thanet proposals and £50k from Sevenoaks proposals).

From 22 November to 19 December 2018, Kent County Council (KCC) consulted on changes to bus services in the Sevenoaks area. **This document focuses on proposals and the consultation responses for the changes to service 404/5 in Sevenoaks.**

## 1.2. Purpose of the Consultation

The purpose of the public consultation was to inform the public and stakeholder organisations about the detail of the changes proposed and provide them with the opportunity to 'Have their say' and to help gain feedback on any impacts.

The consultation gave the opportunity to:

- Understand why changes to service 404/5 are proposed.
- Consider the possible impacts and benefits of the changes proposed.
- Ask us questions and provide views on the proposals.
- Advise the Council of any equality impacts that the changes could cause.

## 1.3. Purpose of this Report

This report presents the analysis and findings of the responses to the public consultation on the proposals. In addition, the report summarises the consultation process and the promotional activities that took place. The report also states how the feedback will be used to progress the proposal and identifies the next steps.

This report will be published and presented to KCC's Environment and Transport Committee which is made up of elected members from KCC, who will make a recommendation on the proposals to KCC's Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste. The Cabinet Member will then make a final decision on whether or not to proceed with the changes.

## 2. Consultation Process

This chapter outlines the process followed to deliver the consultation and details the activities developed to support the delivery of the consultation. The consultation was divided into the five stages shown in Figure 2.1.

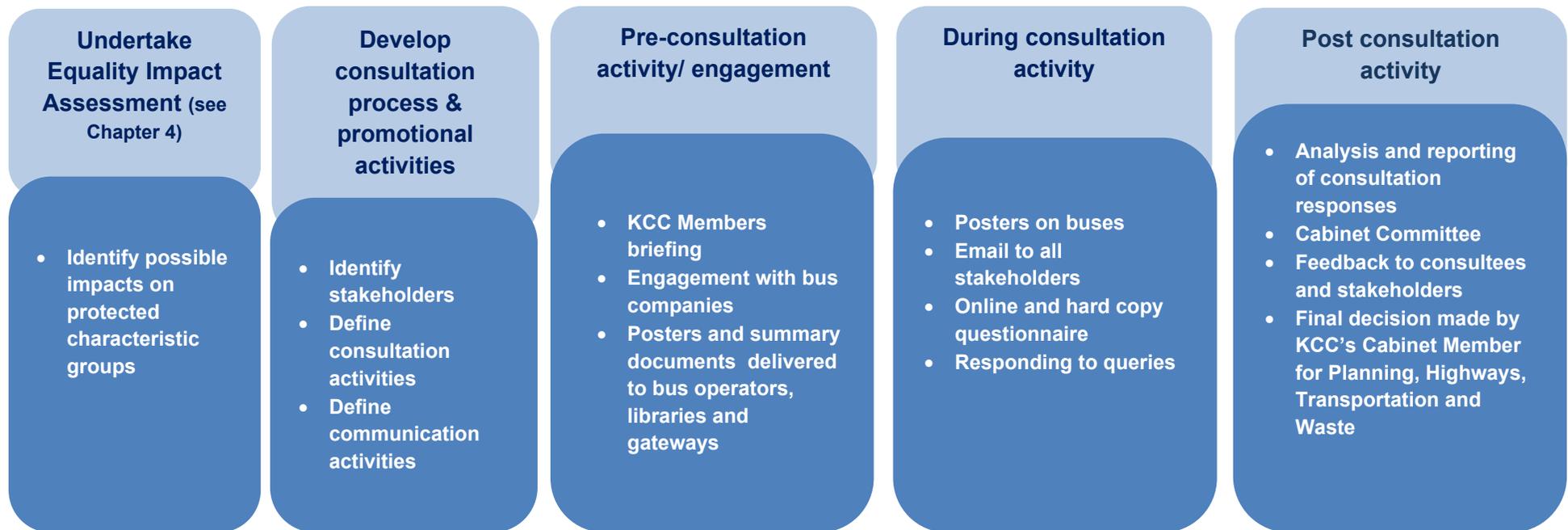


Figure 2.1: The consultation process

## 2.1. Promoting the Consultation

The consultation process was developed with the aim of enabling local bus users, residents, community groups and interested parties to understand the detail of the proposal, to feedback on the approach adopted and to tell us of any particular impacts (positive or negative) presented by the proposed changes to bus services.

The following promotional activities were undertaken to support the delivery of the public consultation:

- Email and summary document provided to all known stakeholders, including District and Parish Councils and an invite sent to all registered users on KCC's Consultation Directory who have asked to be kept informed of consultations regarding transport in Sevenoaks.
- Posters and summary documents placed on affected buses.
- Posters and summary documents displayed at local libraries and gateways.
- KCC Public Transport Inspectors travelled on affected services promoting the consultation and answering questions.
- Page on KCC's Consultation Directory on Kent.gov.uk.

*Please note: materials are available for reference at [www.kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation)*

## 2.2 Pre-consultation Engagement Activities

- KCC officers engaged with Go Coach to develop the proposal and understand potential impacts.
- An Equality Impact Assessment was developed.
- A report was taken to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee to present the proposals and plans for public consultation.



## 2.3 During Consultation Activities

A number of activities were undertaken during the consultation period.

### Consultation material

A full consultation booklet was created and available to read from the Consultation webpage [www.kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation). An executive summary of this outlining the detail of the proposals was created and distributed on buses, through KCC's local Public Transport Inspector and made available at local libraries and gateways. All documents could be provided in the post on request.

The below table shows the number of times each document was downloaded from the consultation webpage.

Document	Downloads
Full consultation document	175 (Word version 72 and PDF version 103 times)
Consultation Stage Equality Impact Assessment	16 (Word version 7 and PDF version 9 times)
EqIA Appendix A: Detailed assessment of service change impact	23 (Word version 5 and PDF version 18 times)
Word version of consultation questionnaire	23
Consultation poster	17

### Feedback mechanism

Consultees were asked to provide feedback via a consultation questionnaire, which was available online and in a paper version. The paper version was available through libraries and gateways, was distributed by KCC's Public Transport Inspector and was made available on request via telephone or email.

### Face to face engagement

During the consultation period, the local KCC Public Transport Inspector travelled on affected services, distributing summary documents and responding to any questions of detail about the nature of the changes and the reasons for them.

## 3. Response Profile

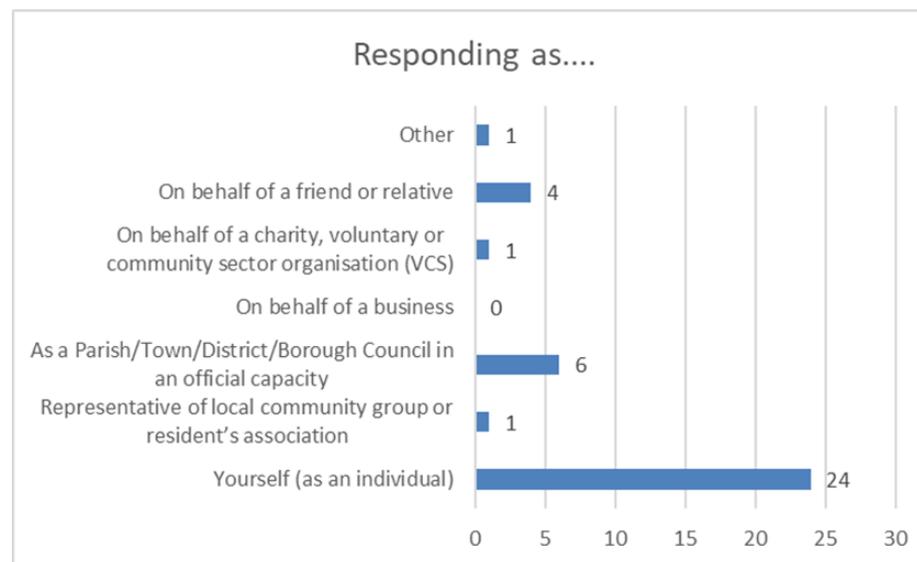
This chapter summarises the number of consultation responses received and who responded to the consultation.

There were a total of **37** respondents to the consultation:

- Of the 37 responses to the consultation questionnaire, all were received online.
- There were **3** emails or letters written to KCC. These have been added to the questionnaire responses and included in this report.
- These included representations from Seal, Plaxtol and Ightham & Shipbourne Parish Councils expressing particular concern on the impacts to their communities.

### 3.1. Respondent Groups

The 37 questionnaire responses were analysed together to give an overall picture of the attitude towards the proposals. No additional weighting has been given dependent on whether responses were on behalf of an organisation or an individual. All responses have been collated and shown as part of a summary of overall responses in section 5.



**Table 3.1: Respondent Groups: Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this questionnaire:**

## 4. Equality, Accessibility and Demographics

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) provides a process to help us understand how the proposals may affect people based on their protected characteristics (age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion / belief or none, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and carer's responsibilities).

We carried out an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on the proposals to identify how people may be impacted and made it available as part of the consultation. The EqIA is available to view at [kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation](http://kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation).

We will use the feedback gathered from the consultation to update the EqIA.

The following steps were taken to ensure the consultation was accessible:

- In addition to the consultation being available online, hard copies of the consultation summary and questionnaire were available in libraries and gateways, made available on affected bus services and on request.

- KCC's local Public Transport Inspector travelled on the services distributing material, explaining the changes proposed and answering questions.
- All publicity material included a phone number and email address for people to request hard copies and alternative formats of the consultation material.
- Word versions of the consultation booklet, EqIA and questionnaire were provided to ensure accessibility of documentation to consultees using audio transcription software.

Of the protected characteristics identified within Equalities legislation, our Equality Impact Assessments identified; Age, Disability and those with Carer responsibilities as being more adversely affected by changes to bus services than other (non-protected) groups.

As such, analysis of the demographics of the responses focus on these areas.

## 4.1 Respondent Demographics

The following section documents the demographics of the respondents. This data was collated using the 'About You' questions in the questionnaire.

Not all respondents choose to answer these questions.

### 4.1.1 Age

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of respondents' age. Approximately 65% were over 65 years old.

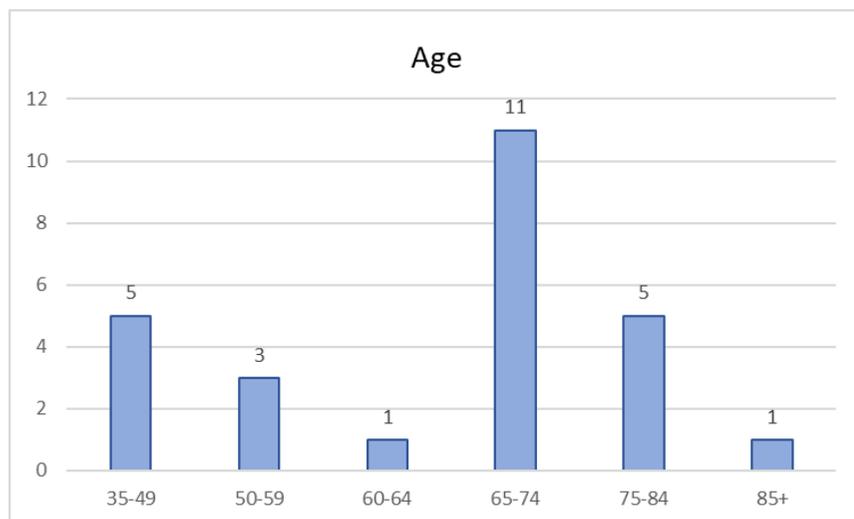


Figure 4.1: Respondents by age

### 4.1.2 Gender

- 58% of respondents were women
- 38% of respondents were men
- 12 respondents preferred not to state their gender

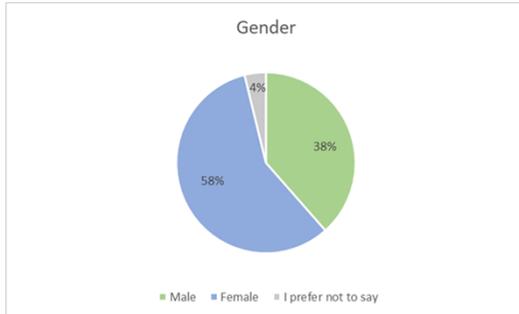


Figure 4.2: Respondents by gender

### 4.1.3 Disability

- 3 respondents considered themselves to be disabled.
- Of those that stated they considered themselves having a disability, the impairments that affected each respondent are shown in Figure 4.2.

Physical impairment	1
Longstanding illness or health condition, or epilepsy	2
I prefer not to say	1

Table 4.3: 'Disability impairments'

#### 4.1.4 Carer responsibilities

No responders identified themselves as having carer responsibilities.

#### 4.1.5 Other Equality Impacts

Respondents were invited to provide comments on our consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment completed and of any particular impacts from an equality and diversity perspective. The comments received are summarised below.

Theme	No. of comments
Greater impact for elderly	4
Greater impact for disabled	1
Other	5

Table 4.4: 'Other Equalities comments'

## 4.2 EQIA Conclusion

Analysis of responders by age identifies that over 65% were over the age of 65 confirming the held view that the majority user of the services were more elderly in nature and therefore more reliant on the bus service.

Section 5.3 (below) seeks to analyse the extent to which respondents view varied dependent on whether they formed part of one of the protected groups of age, disability or carer. However, the combination of the consistency of these responses with the general tone of response and in some instance limited representation means that no particular conclusions can be drawn.

Consideration of some of the open comments provided does not draw any specific issues created for these protected groups by the changes proposed and as such it is problematic to identify particular tweaks that could be made to limit impact if accepting that the savings have to be made and therefore that fundamentally the service has to reduce. Full copies of updated Equality Impact Assessments are attached as an appendix.

## 5. Consultation Results

### 5.1 Q4. Please tell us, if any, which service(s) you travel on?

There were 37 responses given to this question

A summary of the services is provided below and summarised in figure 5.1.

404: Edenbridge – Sevenoaks – Shipbourne - Plaxtol	26
405: West Kingsdown – Otford – Sevenoaks (Wednesday only)	3
None of these routes	8

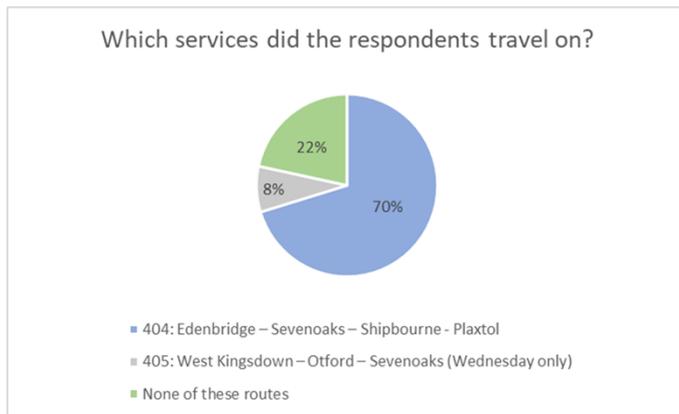


Figure 5.1: Respondents answers to Q4

## 5.2 Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach we have taken to making these savings?

There were 35 responses to this question

66% of respondents disagreed with the approach.

17% of respondents agreed

17% of respondents did not agree or disagree or did not know.

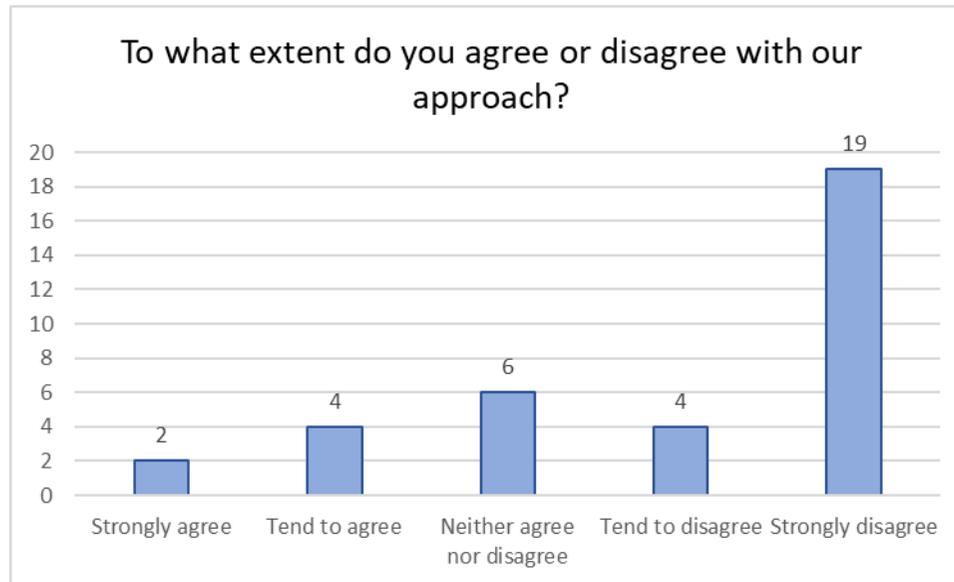


Figure 5.2: Respondents answers to Q5

### 5.3 Agreement / Disagreement toward the proposals.

To further our understanding of the reasoning behind why respondents agreed or disagreed with the approach adopted, we completed some analysis looking at whether the service used, or respondents age, disabled status or carer status affected their view of the proposal.

#### 5.3.1 Question 5 - Service Breakdown.

The figure below identifies the responses provided to question 5 broken down by service used. This suggests a consistent view, with the opinion of respondents not particularly affected by the service used if one of the services at all.

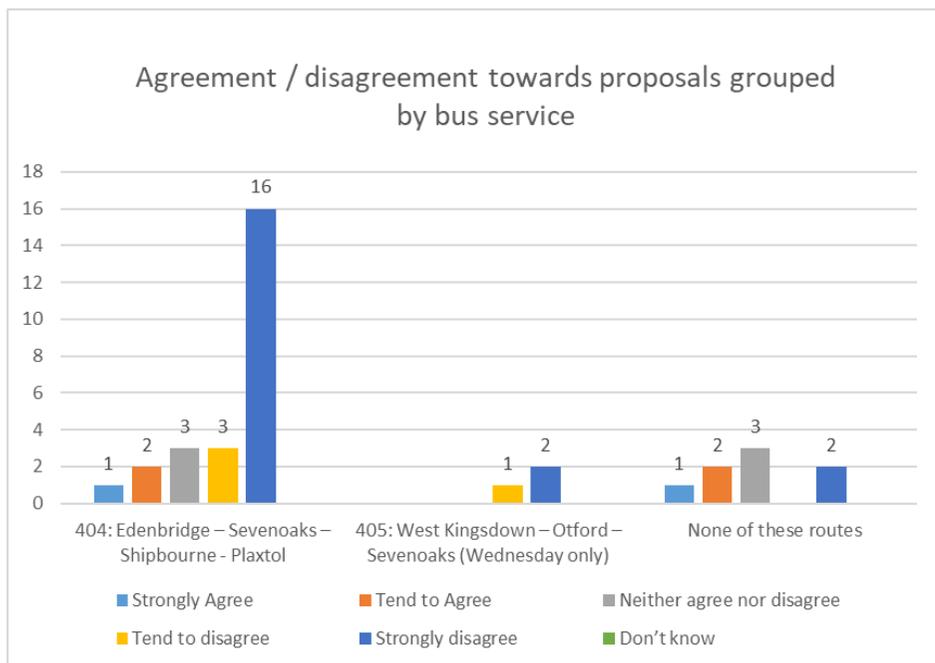


Figure 5.3: Respondents answers to Q5 by service

### 5.3.2 Question 5 – Age breakdown.

The vast majority of responders come from categories 65 and over, making representation from other (younger) groups very small by comparison. However, analysis of the table below identifies that the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed was not significantly affected by their age.

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
0-15	0	0	0	0	0	0
16-24	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-34	0	0	0	0	0	0
35-49	0	0	0	1	4	0
50-59	0	1	0	0	2	0
60-64	0	0	0	0	1	0
65-74	1	3	1	1	4	0
75-84	0	0	3	1	1	0
85+	0	0	0	0	1	0
I prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 5.4: Respondents answers to Q5 by age

### 5.3.3 Question 5 - Disabled status breakdown.

Only two of the respondents identified considered themselves to be disabled. One disagreed and one strongly disagreed with the approach adopted to making the savings. Whilst this is broadly consistent with the majority of responses, the limited representation from this group makes it hard to draw any real conclusions.

### 5.3.4 Question 5 - Carer Status breakdown.

No respondents identified themselves as a carer and as such it is not possible to complete any analysis of this group.

## 5.4 Q5a. Please add any comments on our approach to support your answer to question 5 and on any other Equalities implications in response to question 6.

Respondents were invited to provide comments as free text in response to question 5 (relating to the approach) and in response to question 6 (in relation to Equalities impacts). The responses were very similar and, in many instances, completely duplicated. Therefore, for the purposes of representing this information, the questions have been combined.

The table below identifies the themes of responses provided against questions 5a. and 6

Theme	No. of Comments	What they said...
Impact on Elderly	8	<i>“This will leave already isolated older people without the means to travel out of their villages into the local town”</i>  <i>“To reduce the number of buses for Bitchet Green/Stone Street at this time will impact on the elderly and those who are unable to drive”</i>

No Alternatives (either direct or from certain areas)	7	<p><i>“The 429 service is not available to residents at East Hill. Knatts Valley residents would only be able to access the service if they walked for miles or had lifts to West Kingsdown to reach a bus stop there.”</i></p> <p><i>“The 222 does not provide direct access to Sevenoaks so these residents will be cut off from Sevenoaks unless they make a very long journey via Tonbridge.”</i></p>
New Developments/Social Housing	7	<i>“We have a new development planned of 15 properties located opposite the bus stop in Stone Street of which 6 homes are for social housing and this transport link will be most important to these occupants.”</i>
Access to Healthcare	3	<i>“I rely on the 404 service to take me to my medical appointments in Sevenoaks”</i>
Social Isolation	6	<p><i>“We know that older people are often isolated and lonely which has been the focus of Government Reports, this will add to the problem in Kent”</i></p> <p><i>“With a reduction of buses and the withdrawal of a part route, this will leave already isolated older people without the mean to travel out of their villages into the towns”</i></p>
Access to Work	5	<p><i>“This is my only mode of transport to my job in Sevenoaks as I do not drive, and my low wages don’t allow me to travel by train”</i></p> <p><i>“People need to be able to get into and out of work, without a bus service it may deter them from moving to Bitchet Green/Stone Street”</i></p>
Journey Times/Frequency of Services	4	<i>“The proposed changes will reduce my journey options considerably and I’ll probably be forced to use the car hence reducing bus passenger numbers even further, no doubt resulting in further cuts, and so on....”</i>
Congestion and Pollution	4	<p><i>“It is essential that public transport continues to be available to minimise environmental damage and stop unnecessary car journeys”</i></p> <p><i>“Statutory bodies should be doing all they can to help reduce traffic congestion</i></p>

		<i>and pollution on the roads, reducing the bus service only compounds the issue”</i>
Accessing onward or connecting services	4	<p><i>“Private traffic clogs Sevenoaks and surrounding roads including the A25. The 404 is a great service into town for shopping, bank, PO and the railway station and bus station for onward journeys”</i></p> <p><i>I use the 404 service once or twice a month to get to the rail station and for onward journeys to London”</i></p>
Access to Shops	3	<p><i>“The 404 bus service provides a life line to numerous residents of our village, both elderly and young. To lose the bus service would severely impact the lives of people who have lived here for years and who rely on the service”</i></p> <p><i>“This will isolate rural communities in Shipbourne, Dunks Green and Ivy Hatch where there is no village shop or post office”</i></p>
Promoting/Improving services to increase usage	3	<p><i>“Improving services with more advertising might encourage more use. Reducing the service will make it less attractive and so usage will become worse and worse”</i></p> <p><i>“There should be more of a campaign to increase the usage like a use it or lose it campaign as local residents have indicated that they would use it if it was more regular”</i></p>
Opportunities for school children to undertake extra-curricular activities	2	<p><i>“Later service enables students to take part in after-school activities. Sustainability of the community is essential, and with pupils having to travel outside the town for their education, it's important for them to have the opportunity to participate in after-school activities”</i></p> <p><i>“The evening bus from Hever provides very little opportunity for school children to engage in extra curriculum activities”</i></p>

## 6. Next Steps

On 17 January, this report will be considered by the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee who will make a recommendation about whether to progress with the changes proposed. The report, EqlA and this recommendation will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Waste who will ultimately make the decision on whether or not to proceed.

This decision and this report will be communicated via our website; [www.kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/404busserviceconsultation) and we will send a notification to those who have provided contact details throughout the process, including stakeholder organisations.

If the decision is taken to proceed then changes to the services themselves would likely take effect from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April and in advance of this notices would be placed on all affected bus services notifying passengers of the change.