

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 11th June, 2026

11.00 am

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone**





AGENDA

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 11th June, 2026, at 11.00 am
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone

Ask for: **Anna Taylor**
Telephone: **03000 416478**

Membership

Reform UK (7) Mr W Chapman, Mr J Defriend, Mr J Eustace, Mr T Mole,
Mr T L Shonk, Dr G Sturley and Mr D Truder

Liberal Democrat (2): Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE (Chair) and Mr A J Hook

Restore Britain (1): Mr P Thomas

Conservative (1): Mrs S Hudson

Green (1): Mr M A J Hood

Labour (1): Mr A Brady (Vice-Chair)

Church
Representatives (3): Mr J Constanti, Mr M Reidy and Mr Q Roper

Parent Governor (2): Ms R Ainslie-Malik and Ms H Carter

County Councillors who are not Members of the Committee but who wish to ask questions at the meeting are asked to notify the Chairman of their questions in advance.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

A - Committee Business

- A1 Apologies and Substitutes
- A2 Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

B - Any items called-in

- B1 Call-in of Decision 26/00020- Kent Travel Saver - Price Increase (Pages 1 - 22)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive
03000 416814

Thursday, 4 June 2026

By: Anna Taylor – Assistant Democratic Services Manager - Scrutiny
To: Scrutiny Committee – 11 June 2026
Subject: **Call-in of Decision 26/00020- Kent Travel Saver - Price Increase**

Summary: This decision, taken on 27 May 2026, has been called-in to the Scrutiny Committee by Mr Yates, Mr Hook, Mr Thomas and Mr Hood.

Background

1. Decision 26/00020 – Kent Travel Saver – Price Increase was considered by the [Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Tuesday, 5th May, 2026, 10.00 am](#) prior to the decision being taken by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on 27 May 2026.
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Non-Executive Members from more than one political group.
3. Call-in powers are held by the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. These are intended, under the legislation, to provide an opportunity for non-Executive Members to further scrutinise significant decisions, where the call-in criteria are met, before they are implemented and to recommend reconsideration if deemed appropriate by the Committee.
4. The call-in was duly assessed by Democratic Services, including a review of the reasons given by those Members calling in the decision and an investigation into whether all issues raised in the call-in were adequately addressed by the decision documentation, committee reports, responses to written questions or committee debate. The results of this review were considered by the Democratic Services Manager and the call-in was determined to be valid under the call-in arrangements set out in the Constitution. Call-in reasons must be clear, correct and align to one or more of the following criteria under s17.66 of the Constitution:

Members can call-in a decision for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework,
 - (b) The decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget,
 - (c) The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in 8.5, and/or
 - (d) The decision was not taken in accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 12.
5. The full call-in request is set out in Appendix A. The key issue highlighted by the call-in which supports further Scrutiny consideration is summarised below:

Valid call-in reasons:

6. Reasons 1-5, taken together, articulate a reasonable concern that limited information and explanation has been provided as part of the decision-making to evidence full consideration of the varied level of impact on different service users given the application of a flat rate increase.
7. In particular, the call-in highlights that no substantive justification is presented for progressing a flat rate approach rather than a tiered or proportionate increase model and this is not further explored within the list of options considered by rejected or within the EqlA which does not identify the potential for disproportionate impact to certain groups in relation to low income.

Process

8. In determining the validity of any call-in, no judgement is made by Democratic Services as to whether the decision itself is flawed, inappropriate or improper. The review found that there is scope to explore some elements further to secure appropriate assurance that the decision took account of required information and that the reasoning is clear. In accordance with the call-in arrangements, it is for the Scrutiny Committee to determine whether any recommendations should be made to the Executive and any reconsideration of the decision is necessary or appropriate.
9. The Cabinet Member, or nominated representative, and relevant Officers will attend the Scrutiny Committee to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
10. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation available and the response from the Executive given at the meeting, giving due regard to the information made available during questioning and discussion on this item. For clarity, the decision under consideration has been taken – call-in prevents implementation but does not reset or cancel the taking of the original decision.
11. The Scrutiny Committee has a range of options in terms of responding to the call-in. The specific options are set out in the Recommendation section of this report. It will be for members of the Committee, having debated and reviewed the decision, to propose and second an appropriate resolution from that list of options. The Chair of the Committee will set out how this will be approach during the meeting to ensure appropriate debate and due consideration of the issues before any resolutions are sought.
12. It is important to confirm that the Scrutiny Committee has no power to override or prevent the decision being progressed – it may formally resolve comments about the decision or the manner in which it was taken. These provide a public record of suggestions for improvement or criticisms of an approach so as to support learning and avoiding of prior mistakes in the future. If significant concerns about the decision-making remain after consideration by the Committee, it may refer the decision for reconsideration by the Decision-maker. Implementation of the decision will remain paused until after the decision-maker has reconsidered – the decision-

maker may choose to confirm their decision and move to implementation if they so wish at that point.

13. The Committee also has the option to refer the decision to Full Council; however, this is designed for responding to only the most extreme cases where there is a significant risk of improper decision-making, financial non-compliance or departure from the Strategic Statement without reasonable justification. It should also be highlighted that Full Council does not have authority to override or take Executive decisions – the County Council, in the event of a referral will have only the same power as the Scrutiny Committee; to refer the decision back to the decision-maker for reconsideration.
14. The decision papers remain [available online](#) but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Recommendation – Options for the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee may:

- a) make no comments
- b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision
- c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in light of the Committee's comments; or
- d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

Appendices

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Mr Yates, Mr Hook, Mr Thomas and Mr Hood.
- b) [26/00020 Record of Decision](#)
- c) [26/00020 Decision Report](#)
- d) [26/00020 Appendix A EqIA](#)

Background documents

- a) Recent Cabinet Committee reports
[Agenda for Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Tuesday, 5th May, 2026, 10.00 am](#)

Contact Details

Anna Taylor, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny)
anna.taylor@kent.gov.uk 03000 416478

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Call in Request for Executive Decision 26/00020

Kent Travel Saver (KTS) - Price Increase

Call-in request submitted by: Mr Rob Yates, Mr Antony Hook, Mr Paul Thomas & Mr Mark Hood

Reasons for calling in the decision:

The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision-making set out in the following:

Reason One: 8.5 (a) action proportionate to the desired outcome

The decision raises the question as to whether the proposed increases are proportionate to the intended outcome. The Kent Travel Saver scheme is intended to support affordable access to transport to enable pupils to attend school, aiming to ease the financial pressure of transport costs, which is particularly important for families who rely on the scheme.

As a concessionary scheme designed to support affordability, the application of a higher percentage increase to lower income households raises questions as to whether the decision aligns with this purpose.

The increase applied to lower income households is approximately 26%, compared to an increase of around 6% for other users, representing a significantly different level of impact across user groups. When considered over a two year period, the cumulative increase for lower income households is estimated to be in the region of 41%. As a result, households with limited financial flexibility are subject to the largest relative increase.

This differential impact raises concerns as to whether the decision is proportionate, particularly given the reduced ability of lower income households to absorb additional costs. This indicates a disparity in how the financial burden of the decision is distributed across families.

Reason Two: 8.5 (b) Due Consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers.

The report and background documentation does not clearly demonstrate this process has been carried out to support the decision taken.

Reason Three: 8.5 (d) A presumption in favour of openness.

The decision and supporting reports do not afford clarity for comparison to demonstrate transparency of the decision. Furthermore, the options considered and discarded does not satisfactorily include options detailing different impacts on levels of income.

The report does not compare current costs and revenues with proposed or estimated future users. This in itself does not therefore provide transparency and openness.

Reason Four: 8.5 (e) clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

The reason for the decision is oversimplified so provides no clarity in order to consider and then demonstrate transparent determination of the outcomes.

The decision identifies that there is a need to balance the affordability of the Kent Travel Saver scheme with its financial sustainability; however, it is not clearly set out how this balance has been determined in practice. The report refers to maintaining the scheme at a “broadly affordable level for the majority of families”, but does not explain what is meant by this, how that assessment has been reached or the financial implications to KCC of it being unaffordable for the minority of families.

In addition, there is no clear explanation of the extent to which affordability has been prioritised alongside financial sustainability in arriving at the decision. As a result, it is unclear how the stated aims of the scheme have been applied in reaching the outcome, and how the approach taken is intended to achieve those aims in practice.

Reason Five: 8.5 (f) explanation of the options considered and giving reasons for decisions.

The report sets out a number of alternative options which were considered and rejected. However, the explanation provided focuses primarily on variations of increasing charges and does not demonstrate that a wider range of potential approaches has been explored

In particular, there is limited explanation of whether alternative pricing structures were considered, beyond the application of a flat increase. This could include, for example, proportionate or percentage-based increases, or other ways in which the cost of the scheme is applied across users. The reasoning for rejecting the options that are listed is also set out only briefly, without clearly explaining how those options were assessed against the stated objectives.

As a result, it is not clear that all reasonable alternatives have been fully considered, or that the decision has been reached following a sufficiently detailed evaluation of available options.

Reason six: The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework – (Reforming Kent 2025-2028) - Supporting residents that need help

Kent County Council's Strategic Statement's third aim is "Supporting residents that need help".

Objective 1 of this, is to embed a greater focus on prevention and early intervention and empowering people to take personal responsibility. A priority for Objective 1 is to "put in place practical measures that improve people's lives, intervening early to support people to help themselves and make sensible life choices without a nanny state attitude."

The decision taken disproportionately disadvantages residents with low incomes, who are by definition, residents who need help above residents with much higher incomes. On objective 1, a flat £35 increase, rather than a percentage increase is not meeting this objective because:

- The proposal is not a measure that improves people's lives
- Does not intervene early to support low-income families to help themselves make sensible life choices.

The decision taken does not take account of families with multiple users and demonstrate how to overcome the cumulative impact.

Reason seven: The decision is not in line with the Council's policy framework (Strategic Statement 2025-2028) - Tackle inequality blighting many of our coastal communities

The Strategic statement makes it clear that the increasing inequality and social deprivation between some of Kent's coastal communities and the rest of the country, has grown to unacceptable levels. The report furthermore says, "in too many coastal communities' employment, health and housing outcomes are considerably poorer."

As part of dealing with health inequality in Kent, KCC has kickstarted the major public health programme on Kent's east coast – UK's first Marmot region. This region consists of Swale, Folkestone & Hythe, and includes Canterbury, Thanet, Dover, and Ashford.

The data provided by KCC shows that over 59% of the low-income bus users come from the Marmot region, which is an area KCC are directly trying to address with the Marmot project.

A breakdown of the data shows that Canterbury (13.1%) and Thanet (11%) account for the largest proportions of low-income bus users within the Marmot region. The remaining proportion is distributed across Swale (10%), Folkestone and Hythe (9.6%), Ashford (8.3%), and Dover (7.5%), demonstrating that use of the scheme is spread across Marmot priority areas.

Therefore, there is a real risk that rather than reduce coastal inequality in Kent in districts such as Thanet, Canterbury and Dover, this scheme could exacerbate coastal inequality that this administration admits "blights" our coastal communities.

Reason eight: The decision is not in line with the Council’s Policy Framework – Reforming Kent.

The Council’s Strategic Statement identifies the delivery of best value for residents as a core priority, including securing sustainable outcomes and minimising long-term risk to the public purse.

The report acknowledges “The proposal keeps the passes at a broadly affordable level for the majority of families”, thereby acknowledging that the increase in cost may be unaffordable for a number of families.

Forcing low-income families to find a further 26% increase in one year, 41% increase in two years, does not justify the resulting impact of such a disproportionate increase to this income group. Nor does it demonstrate this has been adequately considered.

There has been no acknowledgement in this report, into the disproportionate or justified differing levels of increase or impact on varying income groups. The Strategic Statement’s commitment to securing best value for residents does not appear to have been considered as to the likely impact of this decision.

Reason nine: 17.66 (c) The decision is not in accordance with the Council’s budget.

The report does not satisfactorily provide sound evidence to demonstrate a clear MTFP for this and future costs and receipts. Therefore, the justification that the decision does in fact collect sufficient receipts to cover projected costs whilst any surplus or deficit is accounted for.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL –RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

DECISION NUMBER:

26/00020

Executive Decision – Key**26/00020 - Kent Travel Saver- Price increase**

Decision: As Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, I agree to

APPROVE the increase in the price of KTS and

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director to take all relevant actions and decisions necessary for its implementation.

Reasons for decision:

To ensure the Kent Travel Saver scheme remains sustainable and deliverable within the Council's medium-term financial planning assumptions, by addressing inflationary cost increases and supporting value for money aligned to the Strategic Statement

Financial implications:

The Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 identifies inflationary pressures of £479k on the Kent Travel Saver scheme arising from higher operator reimbursement costs, alongside additional net costs associated with increased pass numbers.

A £35 increase in pass fees is estimated to generate £575k of additional income and, together with continued use of Department for Transport Bus Grant funding, will ensure the scheme remains financially deliverable while supporting the school bus network.

The net cost to KCC of delivering the scheme in 2026/27 is estimated at £4.79m, representing a total subsidy to passholders of £6.89m.

Legal implications:

The Kent Travel Saver is not a statutory scheme, therefore there are no perceived legal implications by increasing the application fee for the selected cohorts

Equalities implications:

Positive: The price increase helps ensure the Kent Travel Saver scheme remains financially sustainable, so discounted travel can continue to be offered to all users, including those with protected characteristics.

Negative: Increasing the cost by £35 may reduce affordability for some families, which could lower take-up and access to bus travel for some children and young people, including those within protected groups.

Data Protection implications:

There are no data protection implications by increasing the application fee scheme

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

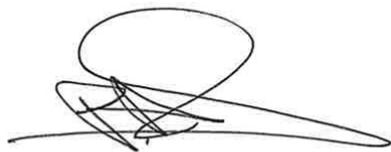
The proposed decision was considered by the Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 5 May 2026 and endorsed by majority vote.

Mark Hood formally requested his disagreement with the decision is noted as at the budget setting meeting, the Green Group made it clear, the preference was to freeze the Kent Travel Saver and therefore any increase should be a percentage increase as the least damaging offer.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

1. Greater cost increase to the full payers and low-income cohorts but rejected due to the financial impact on families.
2. Introduction of charges for young carers and care leavers cohort but such measures require public consultation and carry potential implications for other KCC Directorates.
3. Increase to the administration fee relating to Direct Debit applications but rejected as this would unfairly target increases on those able to pay in full, up front.
4. Greater contribution from DFT Bus Grant allocation but rejected due to the disparity of usage of grant and the requirement to protect local bus services designated for all residents across the county.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:



27 May 2026

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Signed

Date

From: Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

Subject: Kent Travel Saver- Price increase

Decision no: 26/00020

Key Decision:

- Affects more than two divisions

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee
– 5 May 2026

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All electoral divisions

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

This reports sets out, for consideration by the Cabinet Committee, the key elements of the Cabinet Member proposal to increase the price of the Kent Travel Saver bus pass scheme by £35 per annum for all fee-paying customers that will ensure the Kent Travel Saver scheme remains sustainable and deliverable within the Council's medium-term financial planning assumptions, by addressing inflationary cost increases and supporting value for money aligned to the Strategic Statement.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport is asked to agree the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's medium term financial plan identifies that the cost of delivering the Kent Travel Saver Scheme in 26/27 continues to increase. This is as a result of inflationary pressures linked to higher rates of operator reimbursement, and due to an increase in the number of clients accessing the scheme in the low-income and free category cohorts.
- 1.2 This report sets out the proposed decision in relation to increasing the cost of the Kent Travel Saver Scheme by £35 per annum for all fee paying customers. The uplift in costs for fee paying customers will ensure that the scheme is

sustainable for next academic year 26/27 that in turn can continue to support all families financially by enabling their child to travel at subsidised rates.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 The scheme supports circa 23,000 clients and there is continued appetite for its continuation to support students access school or other provisions across the county.
- 2.2 There is no statutory obligation for the Council to provide the scheme, but it is recognised the subsidy made available through this scheme supports families financially. In addition, it is important to recognise that Kent has both a large geographic scope and a complex education landscape which combine to make effective transport options for families a key factor in how the Council supports people in accessing education.
- 2.3 The cost of delivering the scheme has risen in recent years and continues to do so. However, some scheme delivery costs have been suppressed by the use of BSIP funding that in turn protects pass holders higher cost increases. Even greater funds from BSIP/ Bus Grant will be used for 26/27 that will continue to reduce the cost of the pass for the service user.
- 2.4 The cost increase for 26/27 for paying customers ensures the scheme is viable and enables the Council to meet its medium financial plan commitments. It is recognised that any cost increase for important services will be challenging for a range of families, particularly during the ongoing cost of living pressures affecting Kent residents. However, the Council has a duty to secure Best Value and balance customer affordability with its own financial sustainability. The proposal keeps the passes at a broadly affordable level for the majority of families while managing the costs to KCC in such a way that allow the Council to balance its budget.

3. Background

- 3.1 The KTS scheme has been in operation since 2007 and offers subsidised travel on bus services across the county for students aged between 11-16 to support their access to education or work based learning.
- 3.2 There are currently circa 23,000 passes issued to eligible scheme users with users paying varying amounts subject to their status. The breakdown of different cohorts accessing the scheme, the approximate number of passholders within each cohort and the amount they currently pay for their pass are:

Cohort	No of passholders	Current cost to passholder
Full payers	13200	£580
Those on low-income	3100	£135
Those in care	800	Free
Young carers	4200	Free
Carer leavers	600	Free
Sibling offer (families with 3 or more children)	400	Free

- 3.3 The scheme supports many of KCC's key functions in enabling school aged children to access education and to support corporate parenting pledges by reducing the cost of bus travel against operator fares and offers an enhanced subsidy for Low Income Households and those in care or those identified as young carers and care leavers.
- 3.4 The number of pupils accessing the scheme has increased by 16% in the last three years, largely in the Low -Income and Free cost pass cohorts. In turn, the number of Travel Saver journeys made has increased and coupled with an increase to the costs of reimbursement, this has increased the cost to KCC of providing the scheme.
- 3.5 The scheme operates as a concessionary travel scheme, working to the same principles as the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (the older and disabled persons pass). The framework which all schemes have to operate in demands that Travel Saver reimburses bus operators – this means KCC is expected to provide the cash fare that bus operators would otherwise have received from the passenger. This is based on the principle that bus operators should be left “no better and no worse off” financially as a result of the scheme. Essentially, every journey made using a Travel Saver pass attracts a cost to KCC.
- 3.6 Application fees paid by families represent a contribution to scheme costs. The cost of providing the scheme exceeds income received through the application fees and costs have to be reviewed annually to ensure that the scheme remains sustainable within KCC's budget when also having to account for expected inflationary increases to scheme costs, largely linked to the increased costs of reimbursement. Despite continuing to use Government Bus Funding to keep pass costs as low as possible, this does mean that typically pass costs have to increase to keep pace with industry inflation. KCC has taken Executive Decisions in the past to build in inflationary or near inflationary cost increases on an annual basis as part of normal scheme management to maintain the cost of the scheme at a sustainable level for the Council.
- 3.7 Subject to the proposed increase being progressed, a full cost pass will equate to £3.15 per school day / £1.57 per journey and a reduced cost pass will cost £0.87 per school day / £0.43 per journey. While it is acknowledged that any increase may present challenges to some families, the update price is considered to be reasonable. Given that the cost of operator provided season tickets would, in many instances, cost over £1,000 per annum, the KTS offer

represents excellent value for money and continues to be a positive, appropriate and effect subsidy that supports Kent residents.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 Greater cost increase to the full payers and low-income cohorts but rejected due to the financial impact on families.
- 4.2 To seek an increase in base budget allocation to accommodate the rising costs of the scheme but dismissed due to balancing The Council's affordability.
- 4.3 Increase to the administration fee relating to Direct Debit applications but dismissed as the fee should only cover the cost of administering the direct debit function.
- 4.4 Greater contribution from DFT Bus Grant allocation but rejected due to the disparity of usage of grant and the requirement to protect local bus services designated for all residents across the county.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 KCC's Medium Term Financial Plan estimates inflationary increases to scheme costs of £479k linked to higher rates of operator reimbursement. Additionally, an allowance needs to be made for any increase in pass numbers where each pass carries an overall NET cost to KCC.
- 5.2 The MTFP also identified an increased income target of £290k linked to a review of charging. In part, this supports an increase to KCC's Supported Bus Services Budget. It is this budget which is used to provide financial support for non-commercially viable bus services, many of which are required by Travel Saver students. Protecting the school bus network is critical to the value of the scheme for users and the adjustments between these budgets mean that KCC will increase its total expenditure on school buses in Kent in 2026/27.
- 5.3 The £35 increase to pass costs is estimated to represent an additional £575k additional scheme income in 2026/27. Through this and the continued use of DFT Bus Grant funding and increasing the application fee, the KTS scheme budget will be deliverable for 26/27.
- 5.4. The estimated cost of delivering the scheme for 26/27 is broken down as follows:
 - Gross Scheme Costs (payments to operators) : £15,441,553
 - Application fee income £8,549,586
 - Government Bus Fund contribution £2,106,737
 - NET cost to KCC- £4,785,500

6 Legal implications

- 6.1 The Kent Travel Saver is not a statutory scheme, therefore there are no perceived legal implications by increasing the application fee for the selected

cohorts

7 Equalities implications

- 7.1 An EQIA has been undertaken. It is likely that some pass holders or their associated families experiencing the cost increase will be part of a protected characteristic within EqIA legislation. It is recognised and reflected in the EQIA that all groups that have a protected characteristic may access the Kent Travel Saver scheme may be affected by the change in cost. There is no mitigation for this implication.

8 Data Protection Implications

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications by increasing the application fee scheme

9 Other corporate implications

- 9.1 It is not considered that this decision will have corporate implications for other directorates within the organisation.

10 Governance

- 10.1 Not applicable

11 Conclusions

- 11.1 The Travel Saver scheme supports many pupils and families across the county by providing access to subsidised travel enabling access to schools and other provisions.
- 11.2 The cost of operating the scheme is increasing due to inflationary pressures, and as a result of more pupils within some categories travelling for free or at further reduced rates.
- 11.3 The Council has set out its financial commitments as per the medium-term financial plan, and the proposal to deliver against the required savings and financial management plans is to apply a modest cost increase to the application fee for the Kent Travel Saver. This proposal will deliver the service within the approved budget, assisted by effective use of Bus Grant allocations and support the scheme and KCC remaining financially sustainable.

12 Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport is asked to agree the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

13 Background Documents

- *Equality Impact Assessment*
- *Record of Decision*

14 Contact details

Report Author: Shane Bushell Job title: Head of Public Transport Telephone number: 03000 413552 Email address: Shane.Bushell@kent.gov.uk	Director: Andrew Loosemore Job title: Director of Highways & Transport Telephone number: 03000 411652 Email-address: Andrew.Loosemore@kent.gov.uk
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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Kent Travel Saver Price Increase

Responsible Officer

Shane Bushell - GT TRA

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Shane Bushell - GT TRA

Type of Activity

Service Change

Service Change

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Public Transport, H&T

Responsible Head of Service

Shane Bushell - GT TRA

Responsible Director

Andrew Loosemore - GT TRA

Aims and Objectives

The KCC Travel Saver is a student bus pass scheme for children in academic years 7 - 11 plus others in older age groups qualifying for additional support through the scheme. The scheme is subsidised by Kent County Council and offers reduced cost bus travel for 25,000 passholders.

Although the scheme provides free at the point of use bus travel, in order to access it, unless for applicants qualify for a free pass, an application fee applies. This application fee represents a contribution to the cost of the pass and the scheme as a whole but in a context where the cost of the scheme to the Council is greater than the income received through application fees - the difference being the subsidised element.

The cost of the pass to applicants is reviewed annually to ensure that the scheme remains sustainable accounting for increases to operating costs and accounting for KCC's Budget. For the 2026/27 academic year, it is necessary to increase the cost of paid for passes by £35.

The purpose of the EqIA is to ensure that all impacts for groups with a protected characteristic have been identified and understood supporting any decision to increase the pass cost which is being governed by the Council's Key Decision process.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?
Yes
It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?
Yes
Is there national evidence/data that you can use?
No
Have you consulted with stakeholders?
Not Applicable
Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
Whilst needing to be governed by KCC's Key Decision process because of the Countywide nature of the scheme, this is an operational decision around cost without an ability to offer alternatives models to be consulted on.
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff No
Residents/Communities/Citizens No
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
The changes proposed are required and designed to ensure that the scheme remains sustainable within KCC's funding capacity enabling it to continue. The scheme will continue to offer a benefit to all users, providing discounted but travel which will include pass holders and families from groups with protected characteristics.
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Age
The scheme is focussed on users from younger age groups (notably those aged 11-16), some of whom will be impacted by the increase to pass cost.
Mitigating Actions for Age
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regards to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Steve Pay
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Disability
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for Disability
Steve Pay
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Sex
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for Sex
Steve Pay
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Yes
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Steve Pay
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
Yes
Negative impacts for Race
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Race
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Steve Pay
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
Yes
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Steve Pay
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Yes
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Steve Pay
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Yes
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Whilst they cannot be individually identified, it is possible that users or the families of users impacted by the cost increases applicable include those from this protected characteristic.
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
The cost increase is designed to ensure the sustainability of the scheme ensuring continued benefit for all users including those with a protected characteristic. There continues to be additional support provided in regard to Low Income Households who qualify for a reduced cost pass and children in identified 'Care' categories who qualify for a free pass such that more acute impacts for users qualifying for these are avoided.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Steve Pay
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

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