

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 18th August, 2022

10.00 am

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





AGENDA

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 18th August, 2022, at 10.00 am
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone

Ask for: **Joel Cook**
Telephone: **03000 416892**

Membership

Conservative (10): Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr N J Collor, Mr G Cooke, Mrs S Hudson, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr H Rayner and Mr O Richardson

Labour (1): Dr L Sullivan

Liberal Democrat (1): Mr A J Hook

Green and
Independent (1): Mr P Stepto

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

Parent Governor (2): Mrs K Moses

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

A - Committee Business

- A1 Introduction/Webcast Announcement
- A2 Apologies and Substitutes
- A3 Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

B - Any items called-in

- B1 Decision 22/00052 - KCC Supported Bus Funding Review (Pages 1 - 46)

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
General Counsel
03000 416814

Wednesday, 10 August 2022

By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: Scrutiny Committee – 18 August 2022

Subject: Call-in of Decision 22/00052 – KCC Supported Bus Funding Review

Background

1. The proposed decision was discussed at the [Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on 6th July, 2022](#) prior to the key decision being taken in July 2022. The proposed decision was also discussed at the [Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on 19th May](#) and [18th February, 2022](#).
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Mr Lehmann and Mr Sole, thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political Groups.
3. The reasons of the call-in were duly assessed by the Scrutiny Research Officer team, including a review of the reasons given by those Members calling in the decision and an investigation into whether any issues raised in the call-in were adequately addressed by the decision paperwork, 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 s17.73 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.
4. The reasons submitted for this call-in are set out in appendix 1.

Process

5. As per the call-in procedure, Democratic Services must consider all call-in requests against the criteria detailed in the constitution, which are themselves based on the legal requirements under the Local Government Act 2000 to have an appropriate mechanism to allow Executive decisions to be scrutinised. 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 invalid. Similarly, where some individual reasons submitted for an overall valid call-in are not assessed as valid, this does not mean they merit no consideration as part of any subsequent call-in meeting.

6. The Cabinet Member and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
7. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation already available (including the Strategic Statement and Community Strategy which are referenced in the call-in submission) 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.
8. The decision papers remain available online but are republished in the agenda pack for ease of reference as appendices 2 - 6. Links to the referenced Policy Framework documents are provided under 'Key Strategy Documents'.

Options for the Scrutiny Committee

9. 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

- [App 1: Call-in submission](#)
- [App 2: 22-00052 - Record of Decision](#)
- [App 3: 22-00052 - Decision Report](#)
- [App 4: 22-00052 - Appendix B - Consultation Report](#)
- [App 5: 22-00052 - Appendix C - Service Summary](#)
- [App 6: 22-00052 - Appendix D - EqIA](#)

Key Strategy Documents

[Framing Kent's Future \(Strategic Statement\)](#)

[Vision for Kent \(Community Strategy\)](#)

Background Documents

[Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Wednesday, 6th July, 2022](#)

[Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Thursday, 19th May, 2022](#)

[Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Friday, 18th February, 2022](#)

Report Author

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Decision – 22/00052 – Bus Subsidy Withdrawal

Call-in requested by Mr Rich Lehmann (Green & Independent Group) and Mr Mike Sole (Liberal Democrats)

Reasons supplied by the calling-in Members detailed below and a summary of the Call-in validity assessment by Democratic Services is appended.

Reasons submitted for call-in:

REASON 1

17.73c – The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in 8.5.

8.5(a) Action proportionate to the desired outcome.

The impact these subsidy cuts will have to communities across Kent - particularly the rural communities affected, and the elderly, disabled and low-income members of those communities – is too great a cost for the savings these measures will bring. This is not necessarily apparent looking at the published decision, but becomes so when taking into account the additional costs which will be borne by the council to provide bespoke replacement services to mitigate the damage of the decision.

Replacement services includes new routes designed to fill the network gaps arising from the decision or other network changes made as a result of the decision including the BSIP mitigation funding. Maintained services, post consultation, (Kent Karrier and 208 Service) do not have clear funding arrangements and it is not made clear whether this funding could have been used for other routes, whether the funding is sustainable and what criteria have been applied to determine these routes should have been retained.

£150k cost shunt to CYPE is based on current eligibility but does not take into account potential wider impact of increased demand because of other network reductions / route loss through this decision.

REASON 2

8.5(d) A presumption in favour of openness.

When opposition councillors requested to call the decision to cut £2.2m from supported bus services from the council's budget earlier in the year, they were told that this was not possible as no decision had been made. Yet at the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee meeting in July, Mr Brazier stated that "the £2.2m saving is immutable" and "that money is no longer in my budget and I cannot spend money that I do not have". Both statements suggest that the key decision was taken back in February, rather than in July, prior to the consultation and prior to the creation of a meaningful EqIA.

REASON 3

17.73a – The decision is not in line with the council's policy framework.

Community Strategy – Vision for Kent 2012-2022

Ambition 2 – Tackle disadvantage. And specifically, 2.3 – “Ensure there is a choice of high quality and accessible services that will tackle disadvantage”

Although the buses are a privately run service which KCC provides subsidy for, rather than a function of KCC, this decision will disproportionately impact elderly and disabled residents and those without access to private transport. This impact will be felt both directly, in the removal of people's access to transport; and indirectly, as the removal of mobility will reduce or remove resident's opportunities to access health services, and services for which KCC is directly responsible, such as schools and libraries.

REASON 4

*Ambition 3 – To put citizens in control. And specifically, 3.2 – “To encourage a more resilient society, where communities have more **influence and involvement in the shape and delivery of services** which overcomes the need for remote and one size fits all solutions from public agencies”*

Referring back to the earlier point about the saving being 'immutable' by July as that decision was made at the budget setting meeting in February. It feels, and certainly looks to residents, as though the public consultation had little chance of preventing the proposed cuts. Over 2,500 responses to the consultation and a variety of petitions with many thousands of signatories were calling for these services to be saved, but it seems that none were saveable as the budget had to be met. In addition to this, the method of 'pounds per journey' used to determine which services were considered for removal is a fairly 'one size fits all' solution. Would it not have been possible to include all of the supported bus contracts in the consultation to gauge the potential impacts of cuts to all of them? Or at least chosen a selection based on a wider set of parameters, such as the fact that cuts to bus services in rural areas with no access to other public transport options will have greater costs in terms of the disruption of communities, and greater carbon footprints for replacement journeys made by car or taxi?

REASON 5

Framing Kent's Future – page 37, point 6 – Incentivise people to choose alternative travel options to the car by prioritising the maintenance and creation of safe and accessible walking routes and cycle lanes, and providing bus priority where appropriate.

This decision will increase reliance on cars rather than reduce it.

REASON 6

Framing Kent's Future – page 37, point 8 – Work with our partners through the Kent Enhanced Bus Partnership and with Government to explore sustainable and commercially viable options for providing bus transport to meet people's needs, making the best use of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding.

As has been noted a number of times across many meetings. Although all members are aware that the BSIP funding cannot be used as a subsidy for the services we currently support, the aims of the Bus Service Improvement Plans and the Bus Back Better strategy are to provide a wide-ranging series of improvements and incentives to encourage residents to use public transport. Cutting services across the county before those incentives have been actioned means we will not be making the best use of BSIP funding.

The decision also does not make clear what consideration has been given to the impact of this decision on the wider network. It is not clear whether the decision puts other bus services at risk by removing the funding from bus operators and whether this can definitely be addressed by BSIP funding.

REASON 7

Framing Kent's Future – page 39, point 7 – Create the right conditions to ensure there is a community-based offer of activities for young people that is led by the community and meets the needs of a diverse population

The removal of bus services from rural areas will lead to many young people not being able to access any youth provision.

REASON 8

Framing Kent's Future – page 45, point 8 – Turn the curve on transport emissions and road pollution by developing approaches to road space, parking, public transport and electric vehicle infrastructure with a presumption towards more sustainable and low carbon travel modes.

This decision will increase emissions and road pollution by putting additional cars on Kent's roads. If bus services are reintroduced to any of the areas which are about to lose them entirely, it will be harder for those services to be commercially sustainable as some of the residents that currently use the services will have made alternative arrangements and created new habits which don't make use of public transport.

The full emissions and carbon impact of the decision is not explained in the paperwork, no specific mitigations are suggested and no explanation as to how this squares with the low carbon ambitions is set out.

Reason 9

In addition to the above, I am unaware as to whether one of the questions asked by Mr Baldock at the July Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee meeting has been answered. He noted that the EqlA said that the decision would not have an impact on Race and questioned whether any attempts had been made during the consultation to contact and hear from members of the Gypsy and Roma traveller community.

Democratic Services Review

Summary of Call-in assessment:

Call-in deemed valid under Reasons 1, 6 and 8 – Proportionality of decision, working with partners to explore commercially viable and sustainable options for bus transport and reducing emissions.

CALL-IN to be progressed to Scrutiny Committee consideration – all implementation postponed pending Scrutiny Committee review.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

DECISION NO:

22/00052

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: KCC Supported Bus Funding Review

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, I agree to withdraw funding support from 38 supported bus services.

Reason(s) for decision:

Local Transport Authorities have an obligation to provide such public transport services as they consider appropriate to meet public needs which would not otherwise be met. It is for Authorities to consider what services are “appropriate” to meet those needs. From April 2022, the net budget for supported bus services has reduced from £6m to £3.8m to support the Council achieve a balanced budget in 2022/23.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The issue has been discussed by Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee (ETCC) Members on:

- 18 February 2022
- 19 May 2022

A public consultation ran for eight weeks from 24 February to 20 April 2022 and was supported by a comprehensive communications campaign. 2,562 responses were received along with 55 letters and emails sent to the Public Transport team. In addition, the Council has also received three petitions, focussed surveys conducted by Kent Karrier operators and a Parish Council, four MPs letters and a focussed report by Compaid the operator of west Kent Karrier schemes regarding the impacts of the withdrawal of these services.

The proposed decision was discussed on 6 July 2022 by ETCC Members.

Issues raised during the discussion included:

- Cost increases to other services as a consequence of making the savings
- Impact on air quality and commitment to net zero targets
- Support for the retention of the Kent Karrier and commitment to work with Local Transport Groups
- Impact on rural communities’ access to services and social isolation
- Legality of process
- Whether race equality impacts had been fully considered

Members agreed to endorse the proposed decision, subject to the correction of information relating to the S4 bus service, by majority vote.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

To use funding from the Bus Service Improvement Funding however the funding conditions preclude

KCC from using the revenue funding element to support existing commercial / supported services; its focus is on future developments.

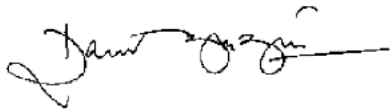
Frequency reductions and sharing resource however the opportunities for these types of savings have largely been previously deployed with limited scope for further adjustments and maintain a service; also, the cost of the driver/vehicle, cannot be reduced and the saving required was too great as a proportion of the overall budget to allow for this approach.

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

None

Signed

Date: 19 July 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'James Morgan', written over a horizontal line.

From: Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport
Phil Lightowler, Interim Director of Highways and Transportation

To: David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Subject: **KCC Supported Bus Funding Review**

Key decision 22/00052

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: 18 February 2022 and 19 May 2022

Future Pathway of Paper: for Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary: The budget for supported bus services in 2021/22 was £6m net. For the financial year 2022/23 and to support the Council achieve a balanced budget, the net budget for supported bus services is proposed to decrease by £2.2m.

In order to retain spend within the reduced budget available, 48 bus subsidy contracts, with a value of £3M, have been identified for potential withdrawal from end of October 2022.

To inform the final decisions, an eight-week public consultation was conducted from 24th February until 20th April attracting over 2,562 responses.

This report summarises the outcomes of the consultation, the themes and the user impacts and outlines a revised service proposal.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree to withdraw funding support from 38 supported bus services as shown at Appendix C.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local Transport Authorities have an obligation to provide such public transport services as they consider appropriate to meet public needs which would not otherwise be met. It is for Authorities to consider what services are “appropriate” to meet those needs. In response to austerity and reduced funding from the Government, a number of Authorities have reduced or completely ceased to fund public bus services.
- 1.2 The pandemic has had a profound impact on the use of buses in Kent and across the UK. Government advice to avoid the use of Public Transport during the pandemic plus changes to lifestyle and working patterns have contributed to a sharp decline in the use of services, particularly at off-peak times. In 2019/20 over 3.7m journeys were completed on KCC subsidised bus services. In

2021/22, this figure was 2.3m, so increasing the £ per passenger journey subsidy provided to all services supported by KCC.

- 1.3 From April 2022, the net budget for supported bus services has reduced from £6m to £3.8m to support the Council in achieving a balanced budget in 2022/23. In order to retain spend within the reduced budget available, 48 bus subsidy contracts with a NET cost of £3m were identified for potential withdrawal from end of October 2022.
- 1.4 This paper summarises the outcomes from the associated public consultation, highlighting impacts and considerations to inform final decisions.

2. Background and approach to identifying services for consultation

- 2.1 Since 2014/15 Public Transport have been working to reduce the cost of supported services, with the least impact on service users. Costs have been reduced through a range of measures including; commercialisation of previously tendered services, the re-planning and rationalisation of tendered services and a flexible approach to the use of Bus Service Operator Grant Funding received from the Government.
- 2.2 The reduced use of buses during and since the pandemic coupled with the rising costs of fuel and driver salaries has seen a partial reversal of this trend and additional cost commitments were absorbed by KCC during 2021/22 relating to commercial bus withdrawals and the increased costs of some existing contracts. Hence the additional £800k, required on top of the £2.2m to bring the supported bus budget in line with the set budget.
- 2.3 There are currently 129 contracts supported by the Council, including those for the Kent Karrier Dial-a-Ride services. These contracts cover a range of service types including support for specific journeys, journeys on specific days i.e., Sundays, funding for whole services and journeys to and from school.
- 2.4 In response to previous needs to reduce the spend on public bus services but where the saving required has been smaller, the approach adopted has been to focus resulting changes on frequency reductions, sharing resource and other solutions designed to limit the impacts on passengers.
- 2.5 The saving required in this instance is too great as a proportion of the overall budget to allow for this approach and the opportunities for savings have largely been deployed and are now extremely limited.
- 2.6 For this reason, the approach to identifying the potential saving required has been to apply KCC's Criteria for the Support of Public Bus Services to identify contracts for potential withdrawal. The Criteria prioritises services taking account of the days and times of use and the performance of the contract in value for money terms, calculated as a £ per passenger journey figure. **

** Calculated as the annual cost of the contract divided by the number of journeys made on it. 2019/20 journey numbers have been used in order to consider pre-pandemic / steady state usage.

- 2.7 The criteria for prioritising services is shown below and a full list of the services identified for consultation is attached as Appendix C of this report.

Priority	DAYS OF OPERATION	£ Per Passenger Journey
1	Any day of the week	Less than £3
2	Monday to Friday	£3 to £5
3	Monday to Friday	Over £5
4	Saturday	£3 to £5
5	Sunday and evening	£3 to £5
6	Saturday, Sunday & evening	£5 to £7
7	Any day	Over £7
8	Poorly performing contracts with very limited implications	Regardless of cost

- 2.8 By applying the Criteria, 49 contracts up to the total value of £3m were identified for potential withdrawal. It should be noted that these include all contracts in categories 8 through to 2 and some of the more poorly performing contracts in Category 1.
- 2.9 As a consequence, the contracts identified include services and journeys of all types including those used by school children, services which represent the only public transport for some rural communities and all of KCC's Kent Karrier Dial-a-Ride services.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 In order to fully understand equality and other impacts and to inform final decisions a public consultation ran for eight weeks from 24 February to 20 April 2022. The consultation asked for a range of feedback to understand user characteristics, journey purposes, user impacts and equalities implications.
- 3.2 To support the consultation a comprehensive communications campaign was undertaken, including; a mailshot to Kent Karrier Members, emails to Kent Travel Saver card holders and stakeholder organisations, organic social media, paid Facebook and Kent Messenger adverts, media release with coverage on BBC Politics Southeast and BBC Radio Kent, Kent Online, Kent Live and Kent Messenger newspapers, Member briefing, posters displayed on buses and material in Kent Libraries and Gateways and through Community Wardens. Over 5,700 invitations were sent to Let's talk Kent registered users who had expressed an interest in transport and roads and general interest
- 3.3 2,562 responses were received along with 55 letters and emails sent to the Public Transport team. In addition, the Council has also received three petitions, focussed surveys conducted by Kent Karrier operators and a Parish Council, four MPs letters and a focussed report by Compaid the operator of west Kent Karrier schemes regarding the impacts of the withdrawal of these services.
- 3.4 A copy of the full consultation report is provided as Appendix B to this report. Specific comment regarding the equalities' impacts are made in section 7 of this report. The key findings are summarised below:

- 3.5 The majority of those responding to the consultation are Kent residents (93%). Whilst the consultation was open to all Kent residents to participate, the majority of residents responding indicated they are current users of the proposed services for withdrawal (78%).
- 3.6 Services are currently used for a variety of purposes with leisure (58% of service users), essential food shopping (57%), healthcare (54%) and education (52%) the most common. There are significant differences in use by age with a higher proportion of residents aged 65 & over using them for essential food shopping and healthcare.
- 3.7 When asked openly, the main areas of impact are children accessing school / college (30% of consultees) and groups of the population not being able to access transport alternatives (21%) for reasons such as shopping (16%), healthcare (15%) and social contact (14%).
- 3.8 Equality Impact Assessment feedback focuses on how proposals adversely affect specific demographic groups - the elderly, those with disabilities, children and young people, those who do not drive and low-income households.
- 3.9 Saving suggestions put forward vary. However, the most common are prioritising scale backs instead of full withdrawal of specific services and, using smaller buses as alternatives. These were reviewed, as set out below.
- 3.10 **Use of smaller vehicles.** For supported bus services, operating between school times, it is not cost realistic to provide a large conventional bus, for school times and then a smaller one for non-school times; it is in fact doubling cost. For supported bus services, not linked with school journeys, smaller vehicles have a lower cost, but this is not a substantially lower cost, as many would still be required to be low floor fully DDA compliant and the driver would need to be PCV licensed.
- 3.11 **Reduce frequency of some supported services.** As a significant number of supported services are already on reduced frequency there is limited opportunity for further reductions and maintain a service; also, the cost of the driver/vehicle, cannot be reduced.
- 3.12. Consultees also suggested making savings from elsewhere in the budget, however these savings have not solely or disproportionately focused on the Local Bus Budget or the Public Transport Department but have also included other areas for example reducing spend on the Kent Travel Saver Bus Pass and more widely savings are also being sought from other areas and budgets across the Council as part of this year's financial settlement.
- 3.13 A high proportion of responders indicated that they do not have an alternative option for at least one of the services they use (41%). The proportion of respondents unable to identify an alternative travel is notable and this increases amongst the elderly and disabled. 27% state they have no alternative across any services they use.

- 3.14 20% of consultees consider the service a lifeline but the proportion of responses to this effect increases significantly in the most elderly age group, for those with a disability and for Kent Karrier users 40% of which state to relying entirely on the service and being unable to survive without it. Consideration of services as a lifeline and a route to independence is higher than average for service users aged 75 & over (36%) and residents with a disability (37%).
- 3.15 Fears of isolation and impact on mental wellbeing are key concerns.
- 3.16 Whilst in many instances, the number of residents using these services are quite limited and have fallen during and since the pandemic, it is clear that the KCC supported bus network fulfils a genuine need for users and the impacts of withdrawal are therefore significant.
- 3.17 Significant response from district / borough / parish council representatives, councillors, and MPs; emphasising service users concerns for specific population groups and requests for engagement at a local level to discuss possible solutions / alternatives to the proposed service withdrawals. As part of the on-going commitment to Community Transport, KCC will work with community stakeholders to identify potential for alternative solutions.

4. Other Considerations

- 4.1 It is important to consider these savings in the context of the wider (commercially provided) bus network which faces its own challenges. Use of buses across the County is struggling to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and when coupled with rising costs, this is already leading to the withdrawal of services by bus operators. This will make the likelihood of providing alternative solutions more limited and there is a concern that the withdrawal of significant funding from the network could prompt further commercial service cancellations and may jeopardise the viability of some smaller transport businesses.
- 4.2 17 contracts included for consideration are identified as meeting a school transport need. 50 children using these services have a legal entitlement to free transport to school and will need to be provided with an alternative solution. This alternative transport will be funded from the CYPE budget, as are season tickets now on supported bus services, therefore the additional cost to the CYPE budget is anticipated in the £150k range. However, for those children, not entitled to free home to school transport, there will be no alternative public transport.
- 4.3 It is important to note that children currently travelling will have predicated their choice of school on the presence of a bus service and whilst no service is “guaranteed” it is clear from the consultation responses that users and their parents will have organised domestic arrangements around the current network and alternative travel options are identified as limited amongst this group.
- 4.4 Related to the above, the impacts on traffic congestion at peak times and air quality should also be considered. Contracts with a school journey element are not concentrated in one area of the county but do include services in Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sittingbourne all of which have existing issues with

congestion on certain corridors. Although it is not possible to reliably quantify the air quality implications, assessment of the carbon impact relating to one of the school-day only services has estimated that 21 tonnes of carbon per annum would be generated should all bus journeys be made by car compared to 2.7 tonnes on the current bus service.

- 4.5 Although many of the bus services operating at off peak times will cater for the same group of users and carry many of the same impacts, because of it being more focussed on elderly and disabled members and those living in the most rural areas, the impacts on Kent Karrier members should be given particular consideration.
- 4.6 Kent Karrier is a demand responsive transport scheme with eligibility for membership orientated towards those who cannot use or do not have access to conventional public transport. It is therefore important to consider the presence of Kent Karrier as a form of “safety net” offering limited access to essential services for anyone meeting the criteria. Therefore, whilst the nature of these services means that these contracts perform poorly in value for money terms, they offer a different value to the user as is identified in the consultation outputs.
- 4.7 Through the conducting of their own survey and the submission of a more focussed report, the operators of the Kent Karrier service have highlighted their concern about the impacts on services users whilst also raising the risk of knock-on impacts on other Council services in respect of SEN Transport costs and on Adult Social Care.

5. Revised service proposal – post consultation

- 5.1 The results of the consultation have been carefully considered and the EqlA (as shown in Appendix D) has been updated.
- 5.2 It is clear from the consultation that in proposing to withdraw 48 supported bus services, including the Kent Karriers, that the impact on the most vulnerable users is significant and, in some areas, there would be no provision of any form of public transport.
- 5.3 Taking account of need to achieve the Council's budget for supported buses, but at the same time having regard to the consultation responses and the identified equalities impacts and therefore ensuring that there is still some form of public transport provision in selected areas, it is proposed that the 8 Kent Karrier services will be retained. They will continue to provide a bookable bus service for those most in need and particularly in areas where conventional bus services are not available. In retaining the Kent Karriers, they will be removed from the supported bus budget and sit as a defined line within the Public Transport budget. These will be funded, in future years, from a number of external sources including BSOG surplus, DfT funding already held, DfT LTF, and increased passenger revenue.
- 5.4 In the consultation document we identified that the 208 service would be withdrawn but it would be replaced by a parallel commercial service. Since the consultation was undertaken, it has become clear that the parallel commercial service would not replace the 208, in fact it is to be withdrawn. Had the

information been known at the time, the consultation response in respect to service 208 may have been different and as such it would not be appropriate to move forward with this withdrawal. Funding for service 208 will be provided through other public transport efficiencies, so that there is no impact to the saving.

- 5.5 The revised proposal identifies 38 supported bus services, as shown in Appendix C where funding will be withdrawn as of the end of October 2022. The Kent Karriers and service 208 will be retained. The reduction in the supported bus budget would remain as is-£2.2m, with funding for the Kent Karriers and the service 208, found from elsewhere as identified in paragraph 5.3.
- 5.6 Students entitled to free home to school transport, will be provided with alternative transport.
- 5.7 Any person / family who has purchased a Kent Travel Saver, for any service that is withdrawn, will be provided with a pro-rata refund, based on the date of withdrawal.
- 5.8 KCC Public Transport will continue to provide grants for Community Transport groups, focusing on those areas where conventional bus services have been withdrawn. Grants will be for the establishment of new schemes or expansion to current schemes. This could potentially be funded from the BSIP or Local Transport Fund.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 From April 2022, the budget for socially necessary bus services has been reduced from £6m to £3.8m. Not withdrawing service/and funding from other sources, to the value of £3m, would see the budget overspent.
- 6.2 As noted, in retaining the Kent Karriers, these will be funded from external sources.
- 6.3 KCC has been provisionally awarded £35m funding from the Government to support delivery of Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP funding conditions preclude us from using the revenue funding element to support existing commercial / supported services, its focus is on future developments. However, we will review the potential to use BSIP funding to provide areas, which have seen service withdrawals, with new services, tailored to the changed travel market and which would be sustainable.
- 6.4 A condition of the BSIP funding is to "lock in" spend on bus services at 2022/23 levels for three years and so the decision in this instance will inform funding levels over this period.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The proposal, consultation process and EqIA have been reviewed by an external legal firm.

- 7.2 KCC's Public Transport and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport have paid close consideration to consultation feedback and the equalities implications of the proposals, including how the adverse impacts might be mitigated. As a result, the proposals have been revised to lessen the impact.
- 7.3 In considering the consultation, updating the EqIA and revising the proposal, the advice of the legal representative has been followed.
- 7.4 In particular, section of 63 of the Transport Act 1985 that requires that Local Transport Authorities are required "*to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council considers it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within the county which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose*". To ensure KCC complies with this requirement, the proposals have been revised to retain the Kent Karrier services and service 208, where it was shown a commercial alternative was not appropriate.
- 7.5 As set out in 5.8, KCC Public Transport will continue to work with the Community Transport sector in Kent, to provide additional / alternative services supporting conventional bus services.
- 7.6 Services carrying children with a statutory entitlement to free transport to school under the Education Act are unaffected by these proposals, as where required alternative provision will be provided through dedicated contracted provision not open to the public.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed prior to the consultation which identified more significant and adverse impacts for users with the protected characteristics of; Age (the elderly), Sex (females), Disability and those with carer responsibilities.
- 8.2 The outcomes of the consultation re-enforced this understanding in identifying that these groups are more likely to be reliant on these services for their journey purpose and less likely to have access to alternative transport solutions. In addition, Age in respect of Younger Persons has also been identified as being more adversely impacted for the same reason and notably that these users are unable to legally drive as an alternative.
- 8.3 The retention of the Kent Karrier dial-a-ride services seek to mitigate the most acute impacts of service withdrawals and ensure some level of provision for all residents including those from protected groups.
- 8.4 As set out in 5.8, KCC Public Transport will continue to work with the Community Transport sector in Kent, to provide additional/alternative services supporting conventional bus service.

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 None.

10. Timetable

10.1 The proposed timetable for this proposal is;

- End July 2022 Contractual notice to be given to bus operators
- End Oct 2022 Services stop

11. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree to withdraw funding support from 38 supported bus services as shown at Appendix C.

12. Background documents

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B - Bus Funding Consultation Report:
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s112583/AppendixBBusFundingConsultationReport.pdf>
- Appendix C – Full list of services consulted on for withdrawal
- Appendix D – Updated Equality Impact Assessment

13. Contact details

Report Author: Phil Lightowler Interim Director of Highways and Transportation Telephone number: 03000 414073 Email: philip.ligtowler@kent.gov.uk	Relevant Director: Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport Telephone number: 03000 413479 Email: simon.jones@kent.gov.uk
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Summary of services proposed to be withdrawn

Timetables for the journeys that are affected, and a full list of all subsidised services are available from the consultation webpage or on request.

Service No.	Operator	Route	Summary of contract / service and impact of withdrawing subsidy	Estimated saving
5	Arriva	Maidstone to Sandhurst	Withdrawal of Monday to Saturday evening service between Maidstone and Sandhurst. The 18:44 from Sandhurst and all later journeys would be cancelled. Day time services are not covered by this contract.	£59,601
6	Arriva	East Peckham to Tunbridge Wells	This contract provides for the diversion of the Sunday 6 service through Pembury, the remainder of the service operates on a commercial basis.	£11,700
6/645	Stagecoach	Herne and Broomfield in to Hillborough School	The 08:19 journey from Herne to Hillborough School via Broomfield and the return journey in the afternoon would be withdrawn.	£27,659
8	Chalkwell	Sittingbourne to Kenilworth Court / Conyer	Withdrawal of six off peak journeys, Monday to Friday operating between Sittingbourne, Borden, Kenilworth Court, Bapchild and Teynham plus the 15:20 from Sittingbourne Community College to Teynham.	£313,698
9	Chalkwell	Sittingbourne Town service	Withdrawal of the whole service, which operates on Mondays to Saturdays for Kenilworth Court, Bell Road and Northwood Avenue.	Included above

343/344/345	Chalkwell	Newnham, Doddington, Lynsted, Teynham, Bapchild and Conyer to Sittingbourne	Withdrawal of all three services in their entirety. The service operates Monday to Saturday providing the only public transport for rural parts of Sittingbourne including journeys for schoolchildren.	Included above
13	Nu-Venture	Hollingbourne to Maidstone	Withdrawal of the current Saturday service operating between Hollingbourne and Park Wood (for connections to Maidstone) via Leeds and Langley. Monday to Friday service continues unchanged.	£25,391
17	Stagecoach	Folkestone to Canterbury	Withdrawal of four journeys operating Monday to Saturday evening between Folkestone and Canterbury starting with the 19:40 from Folkestone. Daytime services not covered by this contract.	£46,613
24	Autocar	Sandhurst to Maidstone	Withdrawal of Tuesday only 09:30 journey from Sandhurst to Maidstone and the return journey at 13:20 from Maidstone.	£15,469
58	Nu-Venture	Addington, Ryarsh, Trottiscliffe, Birling to Maidstone (Mondays to Saturdays)	Withdrawal of the whole Monday to Saturday service which provides the only public transport for villages to the west of West Malling, including journeys for schoolchildren.	£84,915
59	Nu-Venture	Grafty Green, Ulcombe, Kingswood, Chart Sutton to Maidstone	Withdrawal of the whole service which operates Monday to Saturday between Grafty Green and Park Wood (for connections to Maidstone). Service 89 School journeys from the same area are not covered by this contract.	£126,000

61/61A	Stagecoach	Aycliffe, Dover Town Centre, River to Whitfield	Withdrawal of three Monday to Saturday evening journeys starting with the 18:18 from Whitfield. Daytime service not included as part of this contract.	£33,477
70	Nu-Venture	Borough Green, Platt, Offham to Larkfield	Withdrawal of all journeys on service 70 which provides eight off peak journeys for Borough Green, Platt and Offham.	£61,851
502	Nu-Venture	West Malling to Wrotham School	Withdrawal of the 502 service from West Malling to Wrotham School.	Included above
88	Nu-Venture	Maidstone to Kings Hill	Withdrawal of the commuter service operating Monday to Friday from Maidstone to Kings Hill via Barming and Watlingbury providing one journey in the morning and two journeys in the afternoon.	£30,444
90/61/61A	Stagecoach	Aycliffe, Dover Town Centre, River to Whitfield	Withdrawal of Sunday evening service including the 18:28 journey from Aycliffe and all later journeys. The rest of this service before this time and other days of the week is not covered by this contract.	£10,296
111	Stagecoach	Ashford to Folkestone	Withdrawal of Thursday only service also operating via Mersham, Aldington, Lympne, West Hythe and Burmarsh.	£13,007
123	Stagecoach	Biddenden to Ashford	Withdrawal of the whole service operating Monday to Friday to Ashford from Smarden, Pluckley, Egerton and Hothfield, including journeys to and from Ashford schools.	£85,627
222	Autocar	Wrotham, Ightham, Borough	Withdrawal of four journeys Monday to Friday and all	£40,500

		Green, Shipbourne to Tonbridge	Saturday journeys. Other Monday to Friday journeys, including those at school times will continue.	
255	Autocar	Benenden to Tunbridge Wells	Withdrawal of three day a week (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) service between Benenden and Tunbridge Wells via Hawkhurst, Flimwell and Lamberhurst.	£23,034
266	Autocar	Kilndown to Maidstone	Withdrawal of Tuesday only service between Kilndown and Maidstone via Horsemonden, Claygate, Laddingford and Nettlestead.	£11,115
277	Arriva	Henwood Green to Tunbridge Wells	Withdrawal of one early morning journey operating Monday to Friday leaving Stone Court Lane at 06:37.	£6,281
292/299	Autocar	Tenterden to Sandhurst and Tonbridge to Tenterden	Withdrawal of the 292 Tenterden to Sandhurst and 299 Tonbridge to Tenterden services which provide one return journey each operating on Fridays only.	£14,498
293	Autocar	Tunbridge Wells to Rye	Withdrawal of Thursday only bus service to Rye operating via; Lamberhurst, Kilndown, Flimwell, Hawkhurst, Benenden, Rolvenden and Appledore.	£15,498
296	Autocar	Paddock Wood to Tunbridge Wells	Withdrawal of the 296 service which operates on Monday, Thursday and Saturday between Paddock Wood and Tunbridge Wells via Horsmonden, Brenchley and Kippings Cross.	£25,720
332	Chalkwell	Stockbury, Yelsted to Sittingbourne schools	Withdrawal of school day only service to Sittingbourne schools.	£43,055

360	Chalkwell	Leysdown to Sheerness and Queenborough	Withdrawal of the whole Sunday service operating between Leysdown and Sheerness. The Monday to Saturday service is not covered by this contract.	£31,779
433	Arriva	Bluewater, Longfield, Hartley to New Ash Green	Withdrawal of the whole Sunday service. The Monday to Saturday service is not covered by this contract.	£34,005
489	Arriva	New Ash Green, Southfleet, Longfield, Gravesend	Withdrawal of the whole Sunday service. The Monday to Saturday service is not covered by this contract.	Included above
474/5	Go Coach	Bluewater to Longfield	Withdrawal of the whole service which runs Monday to Saturday, operating a circular service between Bluewater and Longfield via Bean, Betsham, Southfleet and New Barn.	£114,847
541/542/544	Regent's Coaches	Dover, Deal, Sandwich to Canterbury	Withdrawal of all 541, 542 and 544 journeys which operate on different days from Monday to Saturday for these rural parts of Dover. This includes the cancellation of the 541 journey to Adisham Primary School.	£81,270

662	Chalkwell	Teynham to Faversham schools	Withdrawal of school day only service.	£62,069
664	Chalkwell	Conyer to Lynstead Primary School	Withdrawal of school day only service.	Included above
666	Chalkwell	Faversham to Sheldwich School	Withdrawal of school day only service.	Included above

634	Regents Coaches	Studd Hill to Beltinge	Withdrawal of shopper service which operates between Studd Hill and Beltinge on a Thursday only.	£14,281
954	Regents Coaches	Birchington to Sandwich schools	Withdrawal of school day only service.	£47,500
Detling Shopper	Compaid	Detling to Maidstone	Withdrawal of Monday to Friday shopper bus from Detling Village to Maidstone.	£37,469
E1	Go Coach	Edenbridge Town Service	Withdrawal of the whole Monday to Friday circular service around Edenbridge.	£141,363
HC3	Clarkes Minibuses	Dunton Green to Hugh Christie	Withdrawal of school day only service.	£43,700
HS7/HS8	Chalkwell	Charing to Homewood School	Withdrawal of school services from Charing, Pluckley, Smarden and Biddenden into Homewood School.	£121,450

Sandwich Connect	Britannia	Staple, Sandwich, Northbourne	Withdrawal of the Sandwich Connect service which operates Monday to Friday to Sandwich from Northbourne, Staple and Ash.	£51,657
Tenterden Hopper Service	Tenterden Social Hub	Tenterden Village service	Withdrawal of the Tenterden Hopper Service which operates Monday to Friday and on four different routes to various villages just outside of Tenterden.	£50,934

TW9	Go Coach	Langton Green to Tunbridge Wells	Withdrawal of school day only service.	£38,170
X1/X2	Arriva	Kings Hill to Maidstone	Withdrawal of the whole Monday to Friday service linking Kings Hill with Maidstone and West Malling Station including an express link for students attending Maidstone schools.	£207,721
Total				£2,203,664

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title	Kent County Council Bus Service Funding Reduction 2022-2023
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Responsible Officer	Steven Benjamin - GT TRA
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Type of Activity

Service Change	No
Service Redesign	No
Project/Programme	No
Commissioning/Procurement	No
Strategy/Policy	No
Details of other Service Activity	Reduction of funding of £2.2m for supported local bus services and withdrawal of journeys impacting 52 bus services (48 contracts)

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate	Growth Environment and Transport
Responsible Service	Highways and Transportation (Public Transport Department)
Responsible Head of Service	Philip Lightowler - GT TRA
Responsible Director	Philip Lightowler - GT TRA

Aims and Objectives

Context

Bus services in Kent fall into two categories:

- commercially (profit-making) operated services
- subsidised (part-Kent County Council funded) services which includes our Kent Karrier (Dial-a-Ride) services.

Since bus privatisation in 1985, operators in Kent run routes on a commercial basis, where there are enough passengers to fund the service. Around 90% of journeys in Kent run in this way – with around 40 operators providing over 500 services – without any funding from Kent County Council (KCC). On these services, we have no say over routes, timetables, or fares.

But not all of Kent's bus services are run on a purely commercial basis. For the last 30 years, KCC has funded some routes which, while not cost effective (commercially viable), have been considered important to the needs of the communities and passengers they serve.

KCC currently spends about £6m per year to contract services which are not profitable for transport companies but which the Council thinks are important. These are often the services running in more rural areas, in the evenings and at weekends and includes our Kent Karrier (Dial-a-Ride) services and the Gravesend to Tilbury Ferry.

We have worked hard to protect this funding, but the financial pressures placed on KCC's budget mean that the Council faces an intensely challenging period ahead, where tough decisions will need to be taken. The impact of this does unfortunately mean that the Council is having to consider savings measures across a whole range of services.

Aims and Objectives

To meet the financial challenge being posed by this year's budget, KCC's Public Transport team has been asked to reduce planned spending on this funding by £2.2m from 2022/23. To achieve this reduction, we would need to end 48 contracts with a total value of £3m which would affect around 52 supported bus services from Summer 2022.

The Council is committed to doing so in the fairest way possible taking account of all legislation and its own criteria for the support of public bus services that governs activity in this area. Around 52 contracts / services are likely to be affected subject to the outcome of the consultation and these have been included as an appendix A and B to this EqIA.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) assesses the impact and considers the implications of this funding reduction for current passengers, particularly those who are part of a protected group within the Equality Act. Information on each service/contract identified will be included in an appendix to this EqIA along with individual assessments of the impact that may result from withdrawal of each contract/service.

The EQIA will be updated on an ongoing basis during and following completion of public consultation and more detailed analysis at individual service level of the implications for all bus passengers but particularly those protected under EQIA legislation.

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?	Yes
Have you consulted with stakeholders?	Yes
Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bus operators• Bus Users and Kent Karrier members• Parish Councils• Neighbouring local authorities & MPs• Schools and Student Groups• Specialist Groups (Aged UK, Kent Association for the Blind, Mobility and Access Groups etc.)• Passenger Groups (Bus Users UK, Passenger Focus etc)• Wider Public (through full public consultation)• KCC elected members	
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	Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?	No
Details of Positive Impacts	
Not Applicable	
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	
<p>Initial Assessment:</p> <p>Greater reliance on bus services due to availability of other transport modes heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group.</p> <p>However, the precise extent of this impact will remain unknown until completion of a full public consultation, detailed service analysis and identification of any mitigation measures and approval of final decisions.</p> <p>Update post consultation:</p> <p>The updated EQIA cannot record every relevant issue raised in the consultation but takes a general view on impacts to protected groups. The consultation as a whole has been carefully considered and the main themes recorded.</p> <p>The consultation highlighted that most respondents fell into the 65+ category (41%). While in contrast a much lower proportion fell in to the under 34's (9%) and the 35–64 year olds (26%).</p> <p>Overall, the consultation attracted a greater response from more senior age groups suggesting that these proposals will have a greater impact on the elderly. 29% of over 65's suggested they would have no alternative means of travel, while the main impacts were access to essential food shopping (78%) and access to medical services (65%).</p> <p>It is worth noting that a high percentage (40%) of Kent Karrier members, who may be eligible for the service based on age, indicated that the Kent Karrier was a lifeline, with 19% indicating that they would be unable to go anywhere and would lose their independence.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that there needs to be a more balance consideration with respect to Age and that the withdrawal of these services will also impact other age groups. For instance, young people who fall into the under 15 category are unable to drive and are dependent on parents/guardians who may work or are not able to provide alternative transport. We should clarify that this is not restricted to under 15's and that young people aged 16 and above will also be less likely to drive or have access to a car. It was noted in the consultation responses that as children reach the age of independence the withdrawal of services will impact on their ability to participate in wider society independently.</p> <p>The vast majority of respondents in the 0-15 year old category (87%) said that they could not access education and the majority of respondents in the 35 – 49 year category (70%) also said this would impact on their children's ability to get to school. Overall, 52% of respondents use these services to get to a place of education.</p> <p>It is important to recognise that there is also an impact on the 35-49 year old category in this regard as</p>	

there may be an impact on their ability to work or look for work or means that they have to pay for more costly transport provision for their children.

Looking at responses of those commenting on the Equality Impact Assessment 38% believed it disproportionately impacted the elderly while 25% believed it disproportionately impacted children/young people and those accessing education. We therefore conclude that while impacts vary across all age groups these two age groups will in particular likely be more adversely impacted by these proposals and that the effects of not being able to access transport and or lack of an alternative may be more acutely felt by the elderly and children than for other groups.

Mitigating Actions for Age

Initial Assessment:

Approach identified will seek to work with community transport providers to develop local schemes.

Implementation of Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (subject to funding from Government) giving particularly priority to developing the network to fill any gaps or areas left unserved and to recovery post pandemic.

Utilising Local Transport Fund over the next 6 months to help support and develop the network to achieve a sustainable post covid level of service.

Update post consultation:

In order to respond to the financial pressure and meet the current 2022/23 budget gap the Public Transport Department has had to identify a range of cost saving measures focused on discretionary spend areas. Consultees suggested reducing spend in other areas, however these savings have not solely or disproportionately focused on the Local Bus Budget or the Public Transport Department but have also included other areas for example reducing spend on the Kent Travel Saver Bus Pass and more widely savings are also being sought from other areas and budgets across the Council as part of this year's financial settlement.

Consultees suggested making reductions in frequency and scale backs rather than withdrawing services outright. However, the nature of services that are provided on a subsidised basis mean that often it is not possible to scale back provision or provide a reduced timetable where for example we may only provide funding for a single vehicle paid for at a daily or annual rate. In recent years the Council has been able to realise and meet smaller scale reductions to the budget through service redesign and working with operators to push some services commercial, however the opportunities for this and the size of the saving as well as the current climate within the industry has meant these opportunities are limited.

The following provides further detail on mitigating actions identified as part of the initial assessment in addition to any further actions we propose to take to address impacts that may resulting from withdrawal of the identified services.

1.) KCC's Community Transport Grant enables communities in Kent to develop their own community transport schemes. KCC allocates funding for this each year and each year KCC invites bids from community groups and provides grants to organisations whose goals and purpose align with our strategic aims and priorities. This means that any award could take into consideration gaps in the network resulting from these service withdrawals.

Grants are awarded for wide ranging projects from booking software systems and new office equipment to vehicles or retro fitting vehicles with accessible ramps etc. KCC provides a Toolkit to guide organisations through this process and while we do not get directly involved with the running of the schemes, the Council does offer its expertise in helping to facilitate and enable organisations to run these schemes by themselves. The team who look after this area are also looking to increase this funding in this area over the next few years as part of Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) giving a greater ability to mitigate against any service withdrawals.

2.) The Department for Transport (DFT) has provided an indicative settlement of £35.1 million towards our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which the Council is in the process of confirming. This funding comes with a set of requirements and caveats stipulating that it cannot be put towards maintaining existing services; however, a small portion of this funding can be used to provide new services to help fill gaps in the network.

£7.5m may be available for this purpose up to March 2025 and KCC will consider means of using this funding to fill gaps in the network. This could be used to fill gaps in the network by introducing new services. A network review is currently being carried out as part of the Local Transport Fund to understand where funding can be targeted as part of a re based network post October 2022 and will inform any year 1 initiatives as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). KCC are also looking to procure a network planning tool to inform further enhancements to the network for years 2 and 3 initiatives. This could focus on areas impacted by both commercial and subsidised bus withdrawals

3.) The Council has received just over £1.5m as part of the Local Transport Fund which will be used to support the network over the next 6 months as the Council works with operators to develop a based and sustainable network post covid. This will take account of gaps left in the network and the Council will be working with operators through its county wide network review to identify opportunities where adaptations to the network can be made.

4.) In consideration of the consultation response and the impacts identified on protected groups, the Council will consider retaining its Kent Karrier services, where we see a particular impact given the criteria for joining the scheme includes age and disability. The consultation shows that these services were particularly important to the elderly and disabled with 40% of respondents saying they were a lifeline.

Retention of the Kent Karrier services will also mitigate against impacts of this protected group resulting from withdrawal of other services as it will ensure that no resident of Kent is left entirely without a public transport option or is left isolated. The Kent Karrier Dial a Ride scheme is open to anyone who is more than 500m from their nearest service and as such any area that has lost a service would have the Kent Karrier as an alternative to access essential amenities.

5.) The EQIA notes that some groups maybe at a disadvantage when accessing information as such the measures below were carried out to make sure the consultation was accessible to all.

Hard copies available in Libraries, Gateways on request and posted to Kent Karrier members

Easy Read and Large Print versions

KCC's Community Warden service asked to engage on behalf of the service with their communities, raising awareness and supporting participation (hard copies provided)

Letters or emails providing feedback analysed and considered alongside the questionnaire responses

Freepost address for hard copy returns

Phone numbers and email addresses for queries and requests for hard copies and alternative formats on consultation and promotional material

Mix of comms activity carried out to ensure that individuals who do not have access to online channels would hear about the consultation and be able to take part (see summary of activity below).

Promotional activities included:

Letter to Kent Karrier members with hard copy of doc and questionnaire

Emails to Kent Travel Saver and English National Concessionary Travel Scheme passholders and stakeholder list (including Kent MPs, Healthwatch Kent and equality organisations)

Media release – coverage included Cabinet Member interviews on BBC Politics Southeast programme and BBC Radio Kent (at start and towards end of consultation), KentOnline, Kent Live and KM newspapers

KM newspaper adverts – 10 appearances between 9 and 10 March and 23 and 24 March

Posters displayed on buses/stations

Postcards and posters displayed in libraries and gateways and a feature on library computer welcome screens

Invite sent to 5,759 Let's talk Kent registered users who have expressed an interest in transport and roads and general interest

Organic social media posts on KCC Facebook, Twitter, and Nextdoor accounts and two weeks of paid Facebook adverts

Promoted on Kent.gov homepage and service pages and through KNet and KMail

Briefing provided to all KCC Members and promotional material left in pigeonholes.

Articles in KCC e-residents' newsletter, Kelsi Schools e-bulletin and KALC newsletter

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age	Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager
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20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?	Yes
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Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Initial Assessment:

Greater reliance on bus services due to availability of other transport modes heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group.

Access to information about the consultation and any subsequent service changes which could be compromised by disability, most notably visual impairment.

However, the precise extent of this impact will remain unknown until completion of a full public consultation, detailed service analysis and identification of any mitigation measures and approval of final

decisions.

Update post consultation:

The updated EQIA cannot record every relevant issue raised in the consultation but takes a general view on impacts to protected groups. The consultation as a whole has been carefully considered and the main themes recorded.

18% of respondents to the consultation indicated that they have a disability. 44% of respondents did not consider themselves to have a disability and 38% preferred not to say. Further analysis suggested that this spanned all age groups.

Of those who indicated they had a disability, 37% indicated that their service was a lifeline, and they would not be able to survive without it, with 24% saying they did not have access to a car/train or it was too far to walk. The main impacts being access to shops for food/banks/post offices (36%) and access to health care (27%). The consultation indicated that these impacts were of greater concern to those with a disability.

A higher proportion of users of the Kent Karrier service than other services are disabled, which is to be expected because one of the criteria for membership is disability. Removal of the Kent Karrier service would therefore likely have a particularly significant impact on disabled people as compared to other services. The main impacts of access to shops for food, banks and post offices was much higher (39%) than non-Kent Karrier users. This is to be expected given the nature of the Kent Karrier service which membership criteria focuses on the elderly and disabled.

The above reinforces our initial assessment that those with a disability will be impacted by these proposals with a particularly high percentage indicating it was a lifeline and that they would not be able to survive without it compared to other groups. We therefore conclude that this group will likely be more adversely impacted by these proposals and that the effects of not being able to access transport and or lack of an alternative may be more acutely felt by the disabled than for other groups

Mitigating actions for Disability

Initial Assessment:

Approach identified will seek to work with community transport providers to develop local schemes.

Implementation of Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (subject to funding from Government) giving particularly priority to developing the network to fill any gaps or areas left unserved and to recovery post pandemic.

Utilising Local Transport Fund over the next 6 months to help support and develop the network to achieve a sustainable post covid level of service.

Update post consultation:

In order to respond to the financial pressure and meet the current 2022/23 budget gap the Public Transport Department has had to identify a range of cost saving measures focused on discretionary spend areas. Consultees suggested reducing spend in other areas, however these savings have not solely or disproportionately focused on the Local Bus Budget or the Public Transport Department but have also included other areas for example reducing spend on the Kent Travel Saver Bus Pass and more widely savings are also being sought from other areas and budgets across the Council as part of this year's financial

settlement.

Consultees suggested making reductions in frequency and scale backs rather than withdrawing services outright. However, the nature of services that are provided on a subsidised basis mean that often it is not possible to scale back provision or provide a reduced timetable where for example we may only provide funding for a single vehicle paid for at a daily or annual rate. In recent years the Council has been able to realise and meet smaller scale reductions to the budget through service redesign and working with operators to push some services commercial, however the opportunities for this and the size of the saving as well as the current climate within the industry has meant these opportunities are limited.

The following provides further detail on mitigating actions identified as part of the initial assessment in addition to any further actions we propose to take to address impacts that may resulting from withdrawal of the identified services.

1.) KCC's Community Transport Grant enables communities in Kent to develop their own community transport schemes. KCC allocates funding for this each year and each year KCC invites bids from community groups and provides grants to organisations whose goals and purpose align with our strategic aims and priorities. This means that any award could take into consideration gaps in the network resulting from these service withdrawals.

Grants are awarded for wide ranging projects from booking software systems and new office equipment to vehicles or retro fitting vehicles with accessible ramps etc. KCC provides a Toolkit to guide organisations through this process and while we do not get directly involved with the running of the schemes, the Council does offer its expertise in helping to facilitate and enable organisations to run these schemes by themselves. The team who look after this area are also looking to increase this funding in this area over the next few years as part of Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) giving a greater ability to mitigate against any service withdrawals.

2.) The Department for Transport (DFT) has provided an indicative settlement of £35.1 million towards our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which the Council is in the process of confirming. This funding comes with a set of requirements and caveats stipulating that it cannot be put towards maintaining existing services; however, a small portion of this funding can be used to provide new services to help fill gaps in the network.

£7.5m may be available for this purpose up to March 2025 and KCC will consider means of using this funding to fill gaps in the network. This could be used to fill gaps in the network by introducing new services. A network review is currently being carried out as part of the Local Transport Fund to understand where funding can be targeted as part of a re based network post October 2022 and will inform any year 1 initiatives as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). KCC are also looking to procure a network planning tool to inform further enhancements to the network for years 2 and 3 initiatives. This could focus on areas impacted by both commercial and subsidised bus withdrawals

3.) The Council has received just over £1.5m as part of the Local Transport Fund which will be used to support the network over the next 6 months as the Council works with operators to develop a based and sustainable network post covid. This will take account of gaps left in the network and the Council will be working with operators through its county wide network review to identify opportunities where adaptations to the network can be made.

4.) In consideration of the consultation response and the impacts identified on protected groups, the Council will consider retaining its Kent Karrier services, where we see a particular impact given the criteria for joining the scheme includes age and disability. The consultation shows that these services were particularly important to the elderly and disabled with 40% of respondents saying they were a lifeline.

Retention of the Kent Karrier services will also mitigate against impacts of this protected group resulting from withdrawal of other services as it will ensure that no resident of Kent is left entirely without a public transport option or is left isolated. The Kent Karrier Dial a Ride scheme is open to anyone who is more than 500m from their nearest service and as such any area that has lost a service would have the Kent Karrier as an alternative to access essential amenities.

5.) The EQIA notes that some groups maybe at a disadvantage when accessing information as such the measures below were carried out to make sure the consultation was accessible to all.

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Responsible Officer for Disability	Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager
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21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex	Yes
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Details of negative impacts for Sex

Initial Assessment:

Greater barriers to the use of alternative transport solutions heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group.

However, the precise extent of this impact will remain unknown until completion of a full public consultation, detailed service analysis and identification of any mitigation measures and approval of final decisions.

Update post consultation:

The updated EQIA cannot record every relevant issue raised in the consultation but takes a general view on impacts to protected groups. The consultation as a whole has been carefully considered and the main themes recorded.

The consultation received a greater response from females (45%) to Males (20%) although 35% preferred not to say.

When looking at responses of those commenting on the Equality Impact Assessment 5% believed it disproportionately impacted women and mothers. It is noted that there is a certain amount of interplay between sex and maternity with specific references in the consultation to parents with babies and that this is more likely to be women.

Given the profile of responses to the consultation, it should be concluded that the impact of these proposals will be felt more acutely by females, as such this confirms our original assessment that there would be an impact on this group specifically women.

Mitigating actions for Sex

Initial Assessment:

Approach identified will seek to work with community transport providers to develop local schemes.

Implementation of Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (subject to funding from Government) giving particularly priority to developing the network to fill any gaps or areas left unserved and to recovery post pandemic.

Utilising Local Transport Fund over the next 6 months to help support and develop the network to achieve a sustainable post covid level of service.

Update post consultation:

In order to respond to the financial pressure and meet the current 2022/23 budget gap the Public Transport

Department has had to identify a range of cost saving measures focused on discretionary spend areas. Consultees suggested reducing spend in other areas, however these savings have not solely or disproportionately focused on the Local Bus Budget or the Public Transport Department but have also included other areas for example reducing spend on the Kent Travel Saver Bus Pass and more widely savings are also being sought from other areas and budgets across the Council as part of this year's financial settlement.

Consultees suggested making reductions in frequency and scale backs rather than withdrawing services outright. However, the nature of services that are provided on a subsidised basis mean that often it is not possible to scale back provision or provide a reduced timetable where for example we may only provide funding for a single vehicle paid for at a daily or annual rate. In recent years the Council has been able to realise and meet smaller scale reductions to the budget through service redesign and working with operators to push some services commercial, however the opportunities for this and the size of the saving as well as the current climate within the industry has meant these opportunities are limited.

The following provides further detail on mitigating actions identified as part of the initial assessment in addition to any further actions we propose to take to address impacts that may resulting from withdrawal of the identified services.

1.) KCC's Community Transport Grant enables communities in Kent to develop their own community transport schemes. KCC allocates funding for this each year and each year KCC invites bids from community groups and provides grants to organisations whose goals and purpose align with our strategic aims and priorities. This means that any award could take into consideration gaps in the network resulting from these service withdrawals.

Grants are awarded for wide ranging projects from booking software systems and new office equipment to vehicles or retro fitting vehicles with accessible ramps etc. KCC provides a Toolkit to guide organisations through this process and while we do not get directly involved with the running of the schemes, the Council does offer its expertise in helping to facilitate and enable organisations to run these schemes by themselves. The team who look after this area are also looking to increase this funding in this area over the next few years as part of Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) giving a greater ability to mitigate against any service withdrawals.

2.) The Department for Transport (DFT) has provided an indicative settlement of £35.1 million towards our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which the Council is in the process of confirming. This funding comes with a set of requirements and caveats stipulating that it cannot be put towards maintaining existing services; however, a small portion of this funding can be used to provide new services to help fill gaps in the network.

£7.5m may be available for this purpose up to March 2025 and KCC will consider means of using this funding to fill gaps in the network. This could be used to fill gaps in the network by introducing new services. A network review is currently being carried out as part of the Local Transport Fund to understand where funding can be targeted as part of a re based network post October 2022 and will inform any year 1 initiatives as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). KCC are also looking to procure a network planning toll to inform further enhancements to the network for years 2 and 3 initiatives. This could focus on areas impacted by both commercial and subsidised bus withdrawals

3.) The Council has received just over £1.5m as part of the Local Transport Fund which will be used to support the network over the next 6 months as the Council works with operators to develop are based and sustainable network post covid. This will take account of gaps left in the network and the Council will be working with operators through its county wide network review to identify opportunities were adaptions to the network can be made.

4.) In consideration of the consultation response and the impacts identified on protected groups, the Council will consider retaining its Kent Karrier services, where we see a particular impact given the criteria for joining the scheme includes age and disability. The consultation shows that these services were particularly important to the elderly and disabled with 40% of respondents saying they were a lifeline.

Retention of the Kent Karrier services will also mitigate against impacts of this protected group resulting from withdrawal of other services as it will ensure that no resident of Kent is left entirely without a public transport option or is left isolated. The Kent Karrier Dial a Ride scheme is open to anyone who is more than 500m from their nearest service and as such any area that has lost a service would have the Kent Karrier as an alternative to access essential amenities.

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Responsible Officer for Sex	Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager
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22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender	No
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Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender	Not Applicable
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23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race	No
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Negative impacts for Race

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race	Not Applicable
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24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief	No
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Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief	Not Applicable
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25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation	No
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Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation	Not Applicable
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26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity	No
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Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Update Post Consultation:	
Consultation responses note that there may be an interaction between sex and maternity. This has been dealt with above under Sex.	
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity	
Not Applicable	
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity	Not Applicable
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	Yes
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities	
Initial Assessment:	
<p>Greater reliance on bus services due to availability of alternatives heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group.</p> <p>However, the precise extent of this impact will remain unknown until completion of a full public consultation, detailed service analysis and identification of any mitigation measures and approval of final decisions.</p>	
Update post consultation:	
<p>The updated EQIA cannot record every relevant issue raised in the consultation but takes a general view on impacts to protected groups. The consultation as a whole has been carefully considered and the main themes recorded.</p> <p>The consultation identified that 10% of those responding considered identified as carers. While 53% were not and 37% preferred not to say. However, 24% of consultees indicated that they used one or more of these services to care for a friend or relative.</p> <p>When looking at responses of those commenting on the Equality Impact Assessment 2% believed that these proposals disproportionately impacted on carers.</p> <p>The above supports our initial assessment that carers will be impacted by these proposals.</p>	
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities	

Initial Assessment:

Approach identified will seek to work with community transport providers to develop local schemes.

Implementation of Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (subject to funding from Government) giving particularly priority to developing the network to fill any gaps or areas left unserved and to recovery post pandemic.

Utilising Local Transport Fund over the next 6 months to help support and develop the network to achieve a sustainable post covid level of service.

Update post consultation:

In order to respond to the financial pressure and meet the current 2022/23 budget gap the Public Transport Department has had to identify a range of cost saving measures focused on discretionary spend areas. Consultees suggested reducing spend in other areas, however these savings have not solely or disproportionately focused on the Local Bus Budget or the Public Transport Department but have also included other areas for example reducing spend on the Kent Travel Saver Bus Pass and more widely savings are also being sought from other areas and budgets across the Council as part of this year's financial settlement.

Consultees suggested making reductions in frequency and scale backs rather than withdrawing services outright. However, the nature of services that are provided on a subsidised basis mean that often it is not possible to scale back provision or provide a reduced timetable where for example we may only provide funding for a single vehicle paid for at a daily or annual rate. In recent years the Council has been able to realise and meet smaller scale reductions to the budget through service redesign and working with operators to push some services commercial, however the opportunities for this and the size of the saving as well as the current climate within the industry has meant these opportunities are limited.

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Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities

Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager

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