

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.

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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.

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£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 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.

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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:

Greater reliance on bus services due to availability of alternatives 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 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.

When looking at responses of those commenting on the Equality Impact Assessment 2% believed that these proposals disproportionately impacted on carers.

The above supports our initial assessment that carers will be impacted by these proposals.

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.

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 Carer's responsibilities

Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager