EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: Cheshire East Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
12.07.2022	**3**	Chris Taylor	Updated following BSIP settlement letter

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT 0026

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service /

Department	*Place*		**Lead officer responsible for assessment**		*Chris Taylor*	
Service	*Strategic Infrastructure*		**Other members of team undertaking assessment**		*N/A*	
Date	**12.07.2022**		**Version**		**3**	
Type of document (mark as appropriate)	~~**Strategy**~~	**Plan**	~~**Function**~~	~~**Policy**~~	~~**Procedure**~~	~~**Service**~~
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	**New**		~~**Existing**~~		~~**Revision**~~	
Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation) Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service	Bus Service Improvement Plan for Cheshire East Council Background Bus services in Cheshire East connect people and places and provide essential access to local services including employment, education, health and recreation. The bus network in Cheshire East comprises of commercial and supported services. Cheshire East Council (CEC) is responsible for the coordination and information provision for bus network operating within the borough. CEC also have a statutory obligation to provide free home-to-school transport for children under 16 who live more than a certain distance from their nearest school or who have special educational needs (SEN) and in some other circumstances. CEC also has the statutory duty to "(…) secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council consider 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" (Transport Act 1985). At present the bus network in Cheshire East is facing a number of important challenges, including a progressive decline in patronage, reduced ridership as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, fuel inflation, driver shortages and budget constraints affecting the Council's ability to support bus services.					

	Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, patronage had declined progressively and consistently affected the financial viability and commercial sustainability of bus services. In 2016/17, there were approximately 4.5 bus passenger journeys per resident with bus patronage declining by 22% since 2009/10. These statistics place Cheshire East within the bottom five Local Authorities for the lowest number of passenger journeys per head and amongst the lowest number of trips per head of resident population in England. During the early stages of the pandemic, the industry demonstrated some resilience as services were able to adapt and maintain at least some level of service relevant to patronage levels before Government help was provided. However, as a result of reduced utilisation, the profitability of running bus services has been a significant challenge and serious questions have been raised whether the resilience is there for operators to withstand falling profitability associated with a crisis such as COVID-19. As bus service patronage continues to fall year on year and services become less financially viable, there is a risk that services across Cheshire East will be deregistered which could have lasting impacts on communities. On the 15 March 2021, the UK Government released a National Bus Strategy for England. This strategy sets out the vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. As part of the National Bus Strategy, all LTAs were expected to produce and publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), detailing how the LTA propose to use their powers to improve services. On the 31st October 2021 Cheshire East published its first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in accordance with DfT guidance. This document aims to deliver local bus networks that support our urban and rural economies and contribute to our Environment Strategy. Improving the speed, reliability and quality of public transport and encouraging more residents to choose bus, making fewer car journeys and contributing to our carbon reduction challenge. The BSIP has been guided by the Council's Corporate Plan1 which identifies six outcomes to improve the lives of all residents: 1. Our local communities are strong and supportive; 2. Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy; 3. People have the life skills and education they need in order to thrive;

[1] Cheshire East Council, *Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020*

	4. Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place; 5. People live well and for longer; and 6. A responsible, effective and efficient organisation. Following the production of a BSIP for Cheshire East, it was announced that Cheshire East would not receive any BSIP funding and as such the vision and objectives for the borough needed to be scaled back. Despite this funding outcome Cheshire East Council has continued to work in unison with operators to publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP Plan) and Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EP Scheme) which function based on current funding availability. The bus network in Cheshire East is a fundamental part of the local transport network providing accessibility to residents and businesses in the borough. The work to develop a BSIP and Enhanced Partnership with bus operators will assist in delivering the following strategic objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan (2021-2025). OPEN - undertaking consultation and engagement with the bus industry, key stakeholders and statutory consultees will ensure that the Council's response to developing an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators meets the Government's stated requirements and maximises the prospect on securing funding for bus networks in Cheshire East. Active and open engagement with the bus sector is fundamental to developing successful partnership working arrangements. FAIR – the approach to partnership working and data sharing with the commercial bus operators is expected to help the Council address some of the gaps and inconsistencies in the provision of local bus services across the borough. GREEN - through our responses to the National Bus Strategy, the aim would be to develop proposals that improve the local bus network and ensure it plays a stronger role in meeting the transport needs of local communities, encouraging greater reliance on local bus as a viable alternative, and more sustainable mode of transport across the borough. Achieving these outcomes will contribute to the Council's stated aims for reducing carbon impacts and improving local air quality.
Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)	With an estimated population of 378,900, Cheshire East is the third biggest unitary authority in the North West, and the sixteenth largest in the country The age profile of Cheshire East according to the latest data as of April 2019 is as follows: 0 - 15: 67,400 16 - 64: 226,100 65 +: 85,300

The Ethnic breakdown in Cheshire East according to the 2011 CENSUS

White	* 357, 940	96.7%
(*Includes White - Other	9,122	2.46%
Mixed - Multiple Ethnic groups	3,873	1.0%
Asian/Asian British	6,060	1.6%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1,402	0.4%
Other ethnic group	852	0.2%

Nationality Breakdown in Cheshire East according to the 2011 CENSUS

English only	243,425	65.77%
British only identity	60,134	16.25%
English and British only identity	42,460	11.47%
Polish	4,073	1.10%
Scottish only	3,411	0.92%
Welsh only	3,212	0.87%
Irish or Other, and at least one UK identity	1,576	0.43%
Irish only	1,378	0.37%

- The general public (including residents and visitors to the Borough);
- Cheshire East Council stakeholders;
- Public transport operators;
- Local businesses/organisations;
- Schools and education establishments;
- Neighbouring local authorities;
- Governmental bodies (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership);
- Statutory transport bodies (e.g. Department for Transport and Transport for the North).
- Partner organisations
- Town and Parish Councils;
- Umbrella organisations for people with specialist transport needs; such as:
  * Space4Autism
- * Disability Information Bureau (DIB)
- * Cheshire Centre for Independent living
- * Deafness Support Network

	○ * ADCA Medical Transport Service ○ * Congleton Disabled Club ○ * Care4CE ○ * Leonard Cheshire Disability ○ * The Stroke Association ○ Transport interest groups; Such as: * Crewe & District Bus Users Group * Transition Wilmslow * Active Travel Congleton * Travel Cheshire ○ Environmental groups; ○ MPs; and ○ Emergency services.
What consultation method(s) did you use?	As part of the process to develop the BSIP, engagement activities were undertaken with Councillors, Towns and Parishes, community groups, passengers and the public to collect a wide range of thoughts and ideas which helped to shape the vision and priorities for the bus network. The BSIP and EP Documents have been made publicly available and comments to the BSIP@cheshireeast.gov.uk inbox were welcomed. Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme documents have recently been through a 4 week consultation period (running from 13th June 2022 to the 11th July 2022), with the statutory consultees as identified within DfT guidance contacted directly and invited to comment. Statutory consultees include: • All operators of local bus services • Organisations that represent local passengers • Other local authorities that would be affected by the proposals • Traffic Commissioner • Chief of Police • Transport Focus • Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) The outcome of consultation will be reported and key findings shared amongst the Enhanced Partnership Forum and Board which are due to be initiated. The Enhanced partnership Forum in particular will allow for a wider conference of interested parties to raise thoughts and opinions on the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership documentation. The EP Forum will consist of the following members and will facilitate future variations and updates to the BSIP, Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme: • Cheshire East Borough Council • All local bus operators

	• Bus User Groups • Train operating companies • Healthcare and education providers • Police • Chamber of Commerce • Neighbouring Authorities and LEP • Traffic Commissioner

Stage 2 Initial Screening

Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	All residents of Cheshire East may be impacted by the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership as any optimisation of the existing bus network would involve the review of routes and the efficiency of existing services. These would include: • Transport Operators • People who live / work in the borough • Education / training providers • Anyone with a travel need in the borough • Local Businesses / employers
Who is intended to benefit and how?	The BSIP includes a number of key investment themes which are outlined below alongside their impact on protected characteristics in order to identify who is intended to benefit from the BSIP. Protected characteristics include: • Age; • Disability; • Gender; • Race/ethnicity; • Sexual orientation; • Gender reassignment; • Marriage/Civil partnership; and • Pregnancy/Maternity • Religion & belief
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	There is a potential for varying impacts on some groups: • Young People – can be vulnerable to social exclusion through reliance on public transport, walking & cycling. Personal security and the cost of public transport can be a barrier. Also, the desire to access public transport during evenings / weekends where availability is less • Elderly – reliant on public transport and can face particular challenges relating to physical access to public

	transport. Also fear of crime can be a barrier • Disabled - can face particular challenges relating to physical access to public transport. Access to transport information is a potential barrier restricting, for instance, deaf and visually impaired people. Access to disabled parking can also be a challenge • Gender – women are likely to be more reliant on public transport than men which can impact on their access to services. Fear of crime can be more of an issue for women. • Racial Groups – access to appropriate transport information could be a barrier through language difficulties and the ability to read / understand timetables • Deprivation – lack of access to a car can be a common cause of social exclusion. Cost of public transport can be an issue for those on low income who tend to be reliant on this form of transport and walking / cycling
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	No
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)	No
Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?	There is no specific targeted action to promote equality other than to ensure that the importance of the challenges faced and the absence of strategic guidance on the matter recognise the need for CEC to develop a strategic approach to bus passenger transport

Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)

Age		**N**	**Marriage & civil partnership**		**N**	**Religion & belief**		**N**
Disability		**N**	**Pregnancy & maternity**		**N**	**Sex**		**N**
Gender reassignment		**N**	**Race**		**N**	**Sexual orientation**		**N**

What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts	**Consultation/ involvement carried out**	
As part of the BSIP, EP Plan and EP Scheme development a comprehensive review of the current bus market within Cheshire East has		**No**

taken place. This evidence base explores the following data: • Network and routes • Fleet composition • Bus user patronage and trends • Bus passenger feedback and user groups • Fares and ticketing • Population and overview of socio economic factors • The Cheshire East Council Tartan Rug • Bus Accessibility and Connectivity - Mapping the current levels of bus accessibility across Cheshire East to show accessibility to principal towns and key service centres; and • Historic monthly patronage data from operators to identify longer term trends in usage as well as any seasonal variation; The full evidence base is detailed within the latest Cheshire East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).			
Age	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage however, there may be positive or adverse impact on older and younger people who tend as groups to use public transport more than other age groups. Nationally the proportion of trips made by bus is highest amongst those aged between 17 and 20. Young people also face barriers to transport, include the availability and cost of public transport, particularly to further and higher education. Bus use is higher for those aged 60 and over than those in middle aged groups and this has been considered within the BSIP.		
Disability	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage, however positive or adverse impacts are possible depending on how the BSIP is implemented but generally the BSIP itself is intended to be positive. Key challenges faced by disabled people on the transport system include being able to access accurate and relevant travel information both before and during the journey, being able to access public transport interchanges, especially at night when these may be poorly lit, being able to access public transport vehicles and concerns regarding safety and comfort on the public transport network. This has been considered within the BSIP.		
Gender reassignment	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage however it is widely accepted that gendered abuse and sexual harassment are particularly associated with public transport with concerns around personal safety when travelling and this has been considered within the BSIP.		
Marriage & civil partnership	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage.		
Pregnancy & maternity	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage, however a lack of		

	adequate public transport provision creates further barriers to accessing medical establishments providing essential maternity services and has been considered within the BSIP.		
Race	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage however it is important to recognise that Bus Services are aimed at all potential users regardless of ethnicity. Consideration also needs to be given to how fears and risks of violence associated with public transport disproportionately affect people from ethnic minorities.		
Religion & belief	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage however, consideration needs to be given to how fears and risks of violence associated with public transport disproportionately affect people because of their religion or religious beliefs		
Sex	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage however, it is widely recognised that women are very often constrained by several barriers that shape how they travel. Women are also more likely to travel by bus and less likely to travel by rail than men and this has been considered within the BSIP.		
Sexual orientation	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage however, it is crucial to consider how fears and risks of violence associated with public transport proportionately affects people from the LGBT community.		
Proceed to full impact assessment? (Please tick)	**Yes**		**Date: -**

If yes, please proceed to Stage 3. If no, please publish the initial screening as part of the suite of documents relating to this issue

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Cheshire East Council

Stage 3 Identifying impacts and evidence

This section identifies if there are impacts on equality, diversity and cohesion, what evidence there is to support the conclusion and what further action is needed

Protected characteristics	**Is the policy (function etc….) likely to have an adverse impact on any of the groups?** **Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations** *List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).*	**Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc….) on any of the groups?** **Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations** *List what positive impacts were recorded in **Stage 1** (Initial Assessment).*	**Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified** ***High:*** *Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation* ***Medium:*** *Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures* ***Low:*** *Little/no identified impacts; heavily legislation-led; limited public facing aspect*	**Further action (only an outline needs to be included here. A full action plan can be included at Section 4)** *Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.*
Age	Following funding announcements there will be a need to review bus services operating within Cheshire East. Any changes to bus services will most significantly affect older and younger age groups. Younger people are likely to be affected by changes to bus services following BSIP funding	Within the BSIP and EP documents there is ambition to make bus services more appealing and available for residents within Cheshire East. There is a desire for fares to be cheaper, services to be more frequent and comfortable. These measures will be put in place	High	Gather further data from future consultation on impact and alternatives for older and younger people during consultation period. Explore possibilities for mitigation.

	announcements which may limit leisure and employment opportunities should any service withdrawals take place.	to increase patronage and as a result existing bus users (including the young and old who make up a significant proportion of current bus users) will benefit from these service enhancements.		
Disability	Previous consultations have shown that people with disabilities make up a disproportionately high number of bus users. As a result of BSIP funding decisions any future service alterations may leave residents isolated with no alternative travel options.	The BSIP and EP Scheme document propose to enhance vehicle and bus stop accessibility (which is critical to anyone with a physical impairment) in a bid to draw more passengers to local services. Similarly more accessible information is proposed in an easy to read/understand format which will benefit passengers with visual, hearing and physical disabilities as well as all other customer groups.	High	Gather further data from future consultation on the impact and alternatives for people with disabilities during consultation period. Explore possibilities for mitigation.
Gender reassignment	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	
Marriage & civil partnership	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	

Pregnancy and maternity	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	
Race	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	
Religion & belief	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	
Sex	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	
Sexual orientation	This policy is not expected to have any greater impact on this group than it does on the general public.	No	N/A	
Is this change due to be carried out wholly or partly by other providers? If yes, please indicate how you have ensured that the partner organisation complies with equality legislation (e.g. tendering, awards process, contract, monitoring and performance measures)				

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Stage 4 Review and Conclusion

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed			
The full impact of the proposed service alterations detailed within the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership Scheme document will be determined as a result of data collection and detailed consultation. The Council will continue to work with specific groups and focus groups to monitor the impact of all future alterations as a result of the BSIP and EP.			
Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	**How will this be monitored?**	**Officer responsible**	**Target date**
Review consultation findings following the close of the EP consultation period (closed 11th July 2022)	Results of consultation	Chris Taylor & Jenny Marston	July 2022
Undertake future consultation to further determine the impacts on groups identified as having a significant impact through the EP Forum.	As part of the Enhanced Partnership Forum	Chris Taylor & Jenny Marston	Autumn 2022
When will this assessment be reviewed?	This will be reviewed at BSIP annual renewal and following any alterations to services as a result of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	Yes, when further data on the implemented schemes has been gathered.		
Lead officer sign off	Jenny Marston	**Date**	12/07/2022
Head of service sign off	Richard Hibbert	**Date**	12/07/2022

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Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website