Appendix 1 – Bus Service Review Methodology

1   A methodology has been developed split over several tasks. These tasks include the identification of a reference case for future service proposals to be built upon, comprehensive data analysis to assess the 'need' for bus services across the borough, and development of proposals to ensure continued service coverage whilst maximising value for money.

2   The Council will engage with bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership at key stages to ensure that industry knowledge, experience and expertise inform and influence the review. There will also be an 8-week consultation with residents, businesses and stakeholders in May-June 2024.

Task 1: Bus Support Criteria (Reference Case)

3   The bus support criteria (approved by Committee in November 2023) enable existing and any potential future contracts to be tested using a fair, transparent and accountable process to manage contracts within budget constraints, provide maximum value for money and support wider strategic priorities in the Council. The application of the bus support criteria provides the reference case and a baseline against which to compare and to test future proposals. Task 1 is then supplemented by more detailed data and evidence outlined below.

Task 2: Bus Performance Data (Ticketer)

4   Since the previous bus service review the quantity and quality of data available regarding supported services has improved considerably. The availability of data sources, including ticketer data to show usage/patronage, negates the need for a detailed passenger survey on this occasion. Available data sources including ticketer will be analysed in detail to understand current service performance across the borough.

Task 3: Accessibility Mapping

5   Accessibility mapping will be undertaken to understand the impact of supported bus services by place, time of day and day of week. Mirroring the methodology adopted in 2017, and enabling a comparison between now and then, travel times will be assessed to the 9 key service centres and 2 principal towns within the borough:

Alsager	Middlewich
Congleton	Nantwich
Crewe	Poynton
Handforth	Sandbach
Knutsford	Wilmslow
Macclesfield	

6   Accessibility by public transport will be analysed for the following time periods:

- Morning peak period, weekdays
- Evening peak period, weekdays
- Off-peak period, weekdays
- Evenings
- Sundays

7   This mapping will help to show the added value provided by services across the borough at various times of the day. This process will be re-run following the development of service proposals to understand the impact/benefits/limitations of a new supported bus network.

8   This accessibility mapping will be expanded further using available local and national datasets within GIS to consider:

- Accessing shops, leisure and recreation
- Accessing jobs, education and training
- Accessing health, medical and welfare facilities
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Providing bus services for older and disabled people
- Providing bus services for deprived areas within the borough.

Task 4: Gap Analysis and Developing Proposals

9   Utilising the evidence base, options for redefining the local supported bus network will be developed. Proposals will be drawn up considering the overarching BSIP aims and objectives for the borough, the bus service review objectives, accessibility mapping, service patronage and an assessment of service need.

Task 5: Assessment of Redefined Network

10   At this stage the new network proposals will be tested to enable a comparison with the reference case / baseline from task 1. This task is important as it will ensure that the Council is able to respond to challenges about any impacts likely to result from service changes.

11   A gap analysis will also be conducted for the developed proposals to identify any locations where loss of connectivity could be experienced. It will then be necessary to consider the extent to which flexible transport could provide a solution (current provision is FlexiLink and Go-Too).