

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Environment & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting:	23 October 2017
Report of:	Frank Jordan, Executive Director of Place
Subject/Title:	Supported Local Bus Service Review – Proposals for Implementation
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Bates – Finance and Communities Portfolio

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The Council provides financial support to operate socially-necessary bus services throughout the Borough. These services enable residents to benefit from local bus services in places where commercial services do not operate. The Council's objectives for subsidising bus services are, as follows;
- To provide passenger services for residents most in need to enable access to essential services, including health, education, employment, retail and leisure;
 - To provide bus services which maximise value for money and deliver an effective and efficient network of supported bus services;
 - To increase usage of the bus network;
 - To provide a balanced and equitable network of supported bus services which complements the commercial network in the Borough; and
 - To ensure that supported bus services are affordable and financially sustainable within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 1.2 The Council has completed a comprehensive review of its local supported bus network to assess whether these services best meet the needs of residents and represent value-for-money to the Council. The review has assessed how to maximise the effectiveness of the supported bus network in accordance with the medium term financial strategy, which identifies a target saving of £1.576m from the annual supported bus budget commencing 1st April 2018.
- 1.3 Following Cabinet approval on the 9th May 2017, a comprehensive public consultation has been completed, based upon on a consulted network of supported bus routes (the Consulted Network). The public consultation used various methods to engage members of the public, bus users and other stakeholders. In total, 3,959 responses were received and have been analysed to inform the recommended implementation plans. A copy of the Consultation Summary Report is included as Appendix 3.

1.4 This report presents the outcomes of the bus service review and recommends an approach to implement a new network of supported local bus services for Cheshire East. The recommendations in this report are based upon a strong evidence base, including the following:

- Outcomes from the public consultation on a set of proposals for revised supported bus services;
- Cost and patronage appraisal of the proposed routes, to assess their affordability and sustainability;
- How the network meets needs-based criteria (e.g. coverage of concessionary pass holders, etc)
- Updated impact assessments of the revised network proposals, including accessibility modelling and an Equality Impact Assessment.

This evidence base has informed the development of recommendations to Cabinet and key parts of the evidence base are included in the appendices to this report.

1.5 Following consideration of the evidence, it is recommended that a set of adjustments/modifications are made to the routes, as consulted, in order to better reflect the needs of residents as identified during the public consultation. A summary of the resulting network and the changes from the consulted network can be found in Appendix 1. The approach to developing the Recommended Network is documented in the Technical Report in Appendix 2.

1.6 Development of a final set of network proposals for implementation has taken account of the following further considerations:

- Impact of changes to the commercial bus network through operator de-registrations which have arisen since the Council commenced its consultation
- Impacts on Home to School transport provision/costs for eligible pupils
- Impacts of the national concessionary travel scheme
- Levels of service to be provided by the Little Bus (dial-a-ride) services
- Options for introducing a fare for Concessionary Travel passengers on Little Bus.

1.7 These considerations have been evaluated in order to derive a set of options for implementation (see section 3), including the Recommended Network option.

1.8 The recommended approach is for the Council to adopt the following network of supported local buses.

- A - Macclesfield – Prestbury
- B - Crewe – Wybunbury – Nantwich – Nantwich Trade Park
- C - Crewe – Middlewich – Congleton
- D1 - Macclesfield – Forest Cottage – Burbage – Buxton
- D2 - Macclesfield – Hayfield
- E1 - Altrincham – Wilmslow – Knutsford – Macclesfield
- E2 - Altrincham – Wilmslow – Knutsford – Northwich
- F1 - Macclesfield – Poynton – Stockport
- G1 - Wrenbury – Nantwich
- G2 - Nantwich – Wrenbury Circular
- G3 - Nantwich – Audlem – Whitchurch
- G4 - Nantwich – Bunbury – Bulkeley / Tiverton (part-week only)
- H - Congleton (Beartown) Town Service

Further details on these indicative routes, and how they have been adapted to respond to the consultation outcomes are included in Appendix 1.

1.9 The consultation responses have identified particular impacts arising from the withdrawal of evening services. If the Recommended Network is approved at the Cabinet meeting on 7th November 2017; the Council, via TSS Ltd, will seek costs for providing these services from operators during procurement of the new network. The Council will seek to award tenders which offer best value with regard to the duration of route working throughout the day, including evening services. The Council will have full visibility on tendered costs for the new network, including evening services, only upon receipt of tender responses.

1.10 Whilst the consultation has also identified some adverse impacts from no longer supporting Sunday bus services, the impacts identified are less. As a result, it is recommended that Sunday services are not supported to allow more resources to be available for evenings and particularly daytime services when usage is greater.

1.11 In addition, it is recommended that the Council agrees to secure a Monday to Friday daytime service, to retain local bus services connecting Congleton, Alsager, Rode Heath, Scholar Green, Sandbach and Leighton Hospital with connections to Goostrey and town services within Sandbach. This route option is shown in Appendix 1 and would be as follows:

- J1 - Leighton Hospital – Sandbach – Alsager – Rode Heath – Scholar Green – Congleton
- J2 - Sandbach – Goostrey
- J3 - Sandbach Town services

1.12 Route J would provide bus access along the route of the current 78 service (the Coppenhall to Rode Heath section of which ceased operating commercially during the consultation) and would provide coverage in the

south east of the Borough as well as Goostrey and Cranage and Sandbach Town Services.

- 1.13 Regarding Little Bus, it is recommended that the Council revises the provision of Little Bus services to utilise 5 vehicles daily rather than the current 9 vehicles. This will ensure that Little Bus is retained as a service for users with no alternative access to local buses in Cheshire East. The reduction in resources is proportionate to the changes in the wider network and will necessitate an uplift in the utilisation rates, marketing and management of the current network. Further consideration of the timing of this change will take place during the procurement phase, to minimise the risk that Little Bus is unable to cope with demands that may be displaced as a result of other service changes. At this stage, assessments indicate that the introduction of fares on Little Bus for Concessionary passengers would have minimal impact on the overall costs.
- 1.14 The financial implications of these recommendations are stated in Section 7 of the report. In summary, the recommended approach will not meet the full funding target stated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.15 This approach will realise savings in excess of £1m (FY18/19) whilst responding positively to issues raised in the consultation. It should be noted that there is likely to be further financial flexibility following market testing and procurement of new contracts, when the Council will be informed by operators responses to tenders. In this context, it is recommended that the Executive Director for Place be authorised to commence a procurement exercise.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny committee is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1 Note the proposals for the new network of supported local bus services, which has been derived following detailed consideration of the outcomes from public consultation.
 - 2.1.2 Agree any comments that the Committee wishes to present to the Cabinet when this matter is considered on 7th November.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 In practice, there are innumerable options and potential configurations for local supported bus services in Cheshire East. A key tenant of our approach has been to ensure consistency and continuity for passengers, as far as is practical retain patronage, provide services for those most in need and to create a sustainable network.
- 3.2 The consultation provided the opportunity for members of the public and stakeholders to provide feedback on the Consulted Network, identifying key impacts and concerns for each route. These are summarised in the Consultation Summary Report (Appendix 3).

3.3 Costed solutions to the key concerns identified in the consultation have been developed and are set out in the Technical Report (Appendix 2). Our approach to decision-making has aimed to prioritise changes based upon:

- Whether a response can be incorporated as part of a coherent Recommended Network
- The impacts associated with each concern
- Costs of implementing the change
- A route assessment approach which considers:
 - Usage of the route
 - The consultation response coefficient (the number of consultation responses compared to the number of passengers)
 - A social impact score which identifies significant social impacts which would occur as a result of the proposals (e.g. someone implying the proposal would lead to them no longer being able to get to work).

3.4 The options considered reflect the approach to a set of key considerations in handling the outcomes of the consultation, changes to the commercial network during the consultation, and the targets within the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In this context the following approaches have been considered:

1. Do Nothing (No changes to the Consulted Network)

The Council has the option of proceeding to implement changes based upon the routes as presented during consultation, without modifications. This approach is likely to be subject to challenge from residents. It also misses a number of opportunities to improve the routes, as put out to consultation. This approach has been discounted.

2. Substitution of routes

In order to reinstate services which were consulted upon for withdrawal or which were commercially deregistered during the consultation (78 Coppenhall – Rode Heath and 378 Wilmslow – Handforth Dean), the Council could substitute one route for another in the consultation network. This approach would likely be challenged as affected residents could reasonably claim that the consultation had misrepresented options to them and therefore they had not had a fair opportunity to make representations. As a minimum, this approach would require a re-opening of the consultation on a location-specific basis which would delay implementation and not guarantee a successful resolution. This approach has been discounted.

3. Ensuring compliance with the Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Medium Term Financial Strategy identifies a saving of £1.576m from the annual supported bus budget commencing 1st April 2018. The outcomes from the review indicate that the opportunity to realise this saving in full is expected to require the following actions:

- Procure core network of Supported Bus Services (Routes A – H) as in Appendix 1
- Reduce Little Bus service from 9 vehicles to 5 vehicles Borough-wide from 1st April 2018.
- Introduce a standard fare of £2.50 per trip for Concessionary Travel Pass-holders

These actions are estimated to be sufficient to realise the MTFS savings target, though this would be confirmed through the procurement process.

The limitations associated with this approach are:

- Lack of a solution to the loss of the 78 Service in the south of the Borough
- Withdrawal of Little Bus simultaneously with wider network changes reduces the “safety net” for people who are dependent on local buses.
- Introduction of charges for Concessionary Pass-holders disproportionately impacts on low-income, low mobility pensioners.

The financial impacts of this option are set out in paragraph 7.11.

4. Flexibility of budget to procure the Recommended Network

The recommended approach is, at this stage, predicated on a degree of flexibility in the resources available for local supported buses (see paragraph 1.11). Greater certainty on the actual savings to be achieved from this approach will only be confirmed following a procurement exercise. At this pre-procurement stage, the estimated savings from April 2018 are in excess of £1m.

The financial impacts of this option are set out in paragraph 7.12.

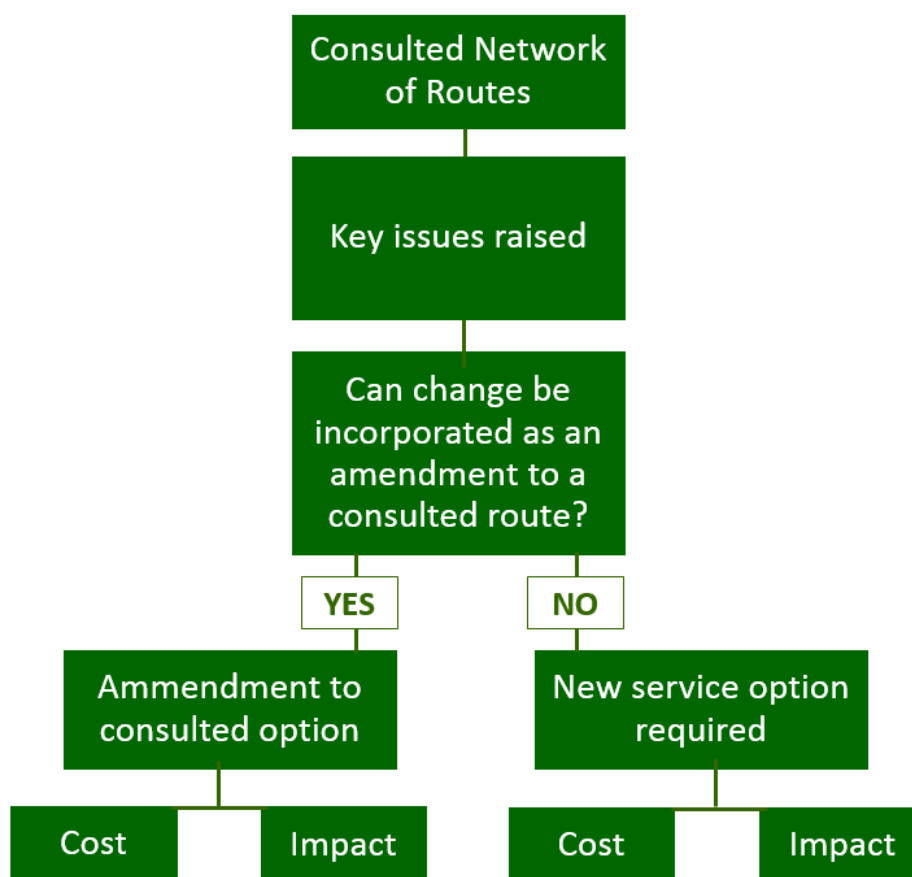
4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The changes to form the Recommended Network have been based on the evidence gathered and findings from the public consultation exercise which was undertaken between 18th May and 26th July 2017 following approval of the proposals by Cabinet. The public consultation used a variety of methods of engage with members of the public and other stakeholders with a total of

3,959 responses received. In addition, approximately 600 members of the public attended 'drop in sessions' where members of staff were available to discuss the proposals. A summary of the consultation methodology is provided in the Consultation Summary Report in Appendix 3.

- 4.2 The consultation has identified the key areas of concern with the Consulted Network and the proposed changes to 27 other routes (withdrawal of evening/ weekend services or full withdrawal of the route). These concerns are documented in the Consultation Summary Report in Appendix 3. In order to amend the proposals to form the Recommended Network, the key concerns identified in the consultation for each route have been considered, costed solutions developed and a 'decision tree' approach adopted (see Figure 1 below) to assist decision making on whether to implement a change. The following of the process for each route is documented in Appendix 2.

Figure 1 Decision Tree Approach Used to Determine Change to the Network



- 4.3 Following the public consultations, a number of adjustments to the proposals have been included to derive the Recommended Network. These are detailed in Appendix 1. Indicative timetables and key details for the network are provided in Appendix 4, and this information will form part of the procurement information issued to bidders. The recommended network is estimated to be slightly outside of the Council's budget for supported bus services from

2018/19 however certainty on costs will not be known until tender prices are received from prospective operators.

Assessment of Proposals

4.4 In accordance with the May 2017 Cabinet Report, accessibility analysis has been undertaken to show the number of Cheshire East addresses within 60mins travel (by public transport) of a key service centre or principal town. This modelling has been carried out for the following scenarios:

- Present situation: current commercially operated bus services, rail services and current supported bus services;
- Consulted Network: current commercially operated bus services, rail services and the Consulted Network of supported bus services;
- Recommended Network: current commercially operated bus services, rail services and the Recommended Network of supported bus services;

This provides a robust comparison of changes resulting from the proposals. The results for each scenario are set out in Table 2. Plans showing the changes in accessibility are presented in Appendix 5. With reference to Table 2, it is clear that changes following public consultation have improved the overall accessibility to bus services. During weekdays (daytime) the current proposals ensure that 99% of Cheshire East households are within the defined accessibility threshold.

Table 1: Number of Addresses with Access to Bus Services

Scenario	Number of Addresses within 60 Minutes Travel Time by Bus to a Key Service Centre or Principal Town		
	Jan 2017 Situation	Consulted Network	Recommended Network
Weekday Morning Peak (06:00-09:00)	164,962	161,354	164,925
Weekday Afternoon Peak (16:00-19:00)	165,574	161,481	165,074
Weekday Off-Peak Period (09:30-16.00)	170,817	163,642	169,344
Weekday Evening Period (19:00-23:00)	143,315	121,798	121,798
Sunday (09:30-16:00)	130,090	112,299	112,299
There are presently 182,625 residential addresses within Cheshire East			

4.5 The Recommended Network shows an overall increase in the number of residential addresses served by supported local buses, following revision of the Consulted Network.

- 4.6 Accessibility mapping of the coverage of the Recommended Network is provided in Appendix 5. The mapping shows that the Recommended Network retains limited areas which will have no access at all to a scheduled bus service, including:
- Northern Poynton
 - Styal
 - High Legh, Little Bollington, Mere
 - Warmingham
 - Worleston
- 4.7 A qualitative social impact assessment of the proposals has also been undertaken and is provided in Appendix 6.

Little Bus

- 4.8 The Little Bus flexible transport (Dial-a-Ride) provides a service for those residents unable to access fixed route bus services due to mobility constraints or rural isolation. As a result of the review, some areas of the borough will not be served by a fixed route bus service, as shown in the accessibility mapping (Appendix 5).
- 4.9 Options for changes to the Little Bus service were also included as part of the consultation. Little Bus will continue to provide a “safety net” for residents to ensure that there is a service available for the most vulnerable residents who rely on local bus services.
- 4.10 As set out in the summary, to assist in delivering the objectives of the Bus Review, it is recommended that:
- The Council makes a proportionate reduction in the resources available for Little Bus, moving from 9 vehicles to 5 vehicles serving the Borough
 - The implementation of changes to Little Bus are delayed until 6 months after the implementation of the Bus Review (i.e. November 2018), to account for any changes in demand in areas no longer served by a scheduled bus service.
 - Arrangements are made for an uplift in the utilisation rates, marketing and management of the Little Bus network to maximise its impacts borough-wide and reduce the costs per passenger.
 - The Council does not introduce fares for Concessionary pass holders using Little Bus at this time owing to the limited impact this would have on the overall financial position.
- 4.11 The Council will work with Transport Service Solutions and the operator to confirm changes to the management of Little Bus service in order to implement the recommendations of the Bus Service Review.

5 Background/Chronology

Development of the Consulted Network

- 5.1 In February 2017, Cabinet approved the methodology for carrying out a supported bus service review. This methodology was used to develop a 'Preferred Option' (i.e. the Consulted Network) which consisted of a series of proposed routes (A-H), the withdrawal of 15 routes and the partial withdrawal of a further 11 routes during the evening and / or at the weekend.
- 5.2 The methodology used to develop the Consulted Network was approved by Cabinet in February 2017. This methodology ensured that the Council had a reliable evidence base including passenger counts and on-board survey information to inform future decisions relating to the development of the Consulted Network.
- 5.3 The appraisal of the consulted network identified areas which would no longer be served by a scheduled public transport which would link the settlement to a key service centre or principal town within Cheshire East. Those areas without access included:
- Western Poynton
 - Styal
 - High Legh, Little Bollington
 - Cranage and Goostrey
 - Warmingham
 - Worleston
 - Rural areas to south and west of Nantwich
 - Rode Heath
 - Odd Rode parish between Alsager and Congleton
 - Disley– although this was as a result of a bus route change implemented in March 2017 and Disley would continue be served by bus services to areas including Stockport and Buxton.

Consultation

- 5.4 Following approval of the Consulted Network by Cabinet in May 2017, a 10-week public consultation was undertaken between 18th May and 26th July 2017 as detailed in the Consultation Summary Report in Appendix 3.
- 5.5 The public consultation used a variety of methods of engage with members of the public and other stakeholders with a total of 3,959 responses received. In addition, approximately 600 members of the public attended 'drop in sessions' where members of staff were available to discuss the proposals.
- 5.6 From the consultation a number of adverse impacts have been identified if the proposals are implemented as consulted. A summary of these impacts is provided in the Consultation Summary Report in Appendix 3. The impacts identified include a social impact score for each route which counts the total number of comments that implied a very significant social impact that could

occur as a result of the proposal for each route. The social impacts that were included in this score were someone implying the proposal would lead to them: losing their job; losing their accommodation/having to relocate; suffering from significant social isolation or significant negative impact on their wellbeing.

5.7 A summary of the Social Impact Score for each existing route not forming part of the recommended network is shown in Table 2. It is important to note that the Social Impact Score is one of a number of prioritisation criteria for any route, including:

- Outcomes from the public consultation on a set of proposals for revised supported bus services;
- Cost and patronage appraisal of the proposed routes, to assess their affordability and sustainability;
- How the network meets needs-based criteria (e.g. coverage of concessionary pass holders, etc)
- Updated impact assessments of the revised network proposals, including accessibility modelling and an Equality Impact Assessment.

Table 2: Status of existing supported bus routes following revision of proposals post consultation

Route	Proposed change	Social Impact Score	Changes
5, 6	Withdrawal of Sunday services	1	Not included in Recommended Network
6E	Withdrawal of evening services	8	Not included in Recommended Network
8	Withdrawal of evening and Sunday services	9	Not included in Recommended Network but evening services will be reviewed following procurement
9	Withdrawal of Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening services	1	Not included in Recommended Network
10, 10A	Withdrawal of Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening services	5	Not included in Recommended Network
12E	Withdrawal of a Sunday service	1	Not included in Recommended Network
31	Withdrawal of evening service	2	Not included in Recommended Network
32	Service withdrawn	5	Not included in Recommended Network
35	Service withdrawn	2	Not included in Recommended Network
37	Withdrawal of evening services	11	Not included in Recommended Network but evening services will be reviewed following procurement
38	Withdrawal of evening and some Sunday services	38	Not included in Recommended Network but evening services will be reviewed following procurement
47	Service withdrawn	6	Not included in Recommended Network
56, 75,	Services withdrawn	18	Incorporated in Recommended Option

79, 83 & 89			
77	Service withdrawn	9	Incorporated in Recommended Option
78	Withdrawal of Saturday and evening services, commercial part of route withdrawn during consultation	30	Incorporated in Recommended Option
99	Service withdrawn	2	Not included in Recommended Network
130	Withdrawal of Sunday services	6	Not included in Recommended Network
200	Service withdrawn	5	Not included in Recommended Network
300	Withdrawal of Saturday and evening services	1	Not included in Recommended Network
315	Service withdrawn	12	Incorporated in Recommended Option
319	Service withdrawn	25	Incorporated in Recommended Option
P1	Service withdrawn in Western Poynton	27	Incorporated in Recommended Option
SB1-3	Service withdrawn	14	Incorporated in Recommended Option

5.8 Further details of the impacts identified during the consultation are set out in the Impacts Assessment in Appendix 6, and the routes that are included in the Recommended Option are described in Appendix 1.

Future Stages of Project

5.9 Following approval of the proposals in this paper by Cabinet, a procurement exercise will be undertaken via TSS Ltd. Tender responses are expected in late December 2017 with the decision on letting of contracts expected to take place in January 2018. Following the letting of contracts a statutory 56-day registration period of the bus routes will take place with the new network to be in place from April 2018. A programme outlining these timescales is provided in Appendix 7.

5.10 The Little Bus service would remain in its current form for a period of six months. Changes to the membership and usage of Little Bus will be monitored during the six-month period and proposals for the management of Little Bus in the future will be determined.

6 Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1 All Wards and all Ward Members.

7 Implications of Recommendation

Policy Implications

- 7.1 The Council has existing criteria in place that is used to determine which local bus routes should be supported by the Council. These were adopted by Cabinet in August 2011. The existing criteria provided a fair, transparent and accountable process to prioritise investment by scoring and ranking each supported bus service against objective criteria.
- 7.2 The methodology used in the review is intended to retain the same principles of the criteria-based approach to determine which local bus routes the Council continues to support financially. By considering criteria at the Borough-wide level, rather than the route level, there is potential for a more holistic approach to network design. This is in comparison with the routine application of the policy criteria, which is typically to consider marginal changes to the overall network. However, Cabinet will be mindful that the context for this exercise is a significant reduction in the overall budget for supported local bus services.

Legal Implications

- 7.3 The Transport Act (1985) imposes duties on and grants powers to local authorities to establish policies and carry out certain functions in relation to public transport.

Section 63, (1) states:

- 7.4 In each non-metropolitan county of England and Wales it shall be the duty of the county council — (a) 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.

In addition, section 63 (6) states:

A non-metropolitan county council in England and Wales or, in Scotland, a . . . council shall have power to take any measures that appear to them to be appropriate for the purpose of or in connection with promoting, so far as relates to their area —

- (a) the availability of public passenger transport services other than subsidised services and the operation of such services, in conjunction with each other and with any available subsidised services, so as to meet any public transport requirements the council consider it appropriate to meet; or
- (b) the convenience of the public (including persons who are elderly or disabled) in using all available public passenger transport services (whether subsidised or not).

Finally, section 63(7) states:

- 7.5 It shall be the duty of a county council or (as the case may be) of a regional or islands council, in exercising their power under subsection (6) above, to have regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It shall be the duty of any council, in exercising or performing any of their functions under the preceding provisions of this section, to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled and to the appropriate bus strategy.
- 7.6 The outcome of the public consultation on the Consulted Network is set out in this report and has been published separately on the Council's website. The consultation outcomes need to be taken into account in making a decision (together with matters such as affordability, sustainability and need).
- 7.7 When the Council embarks on consultation it should be prepared to change course if persuaded by the outcome of consultation. To do otherwise would prevent an informed and integrated response and risk challenge to the final decision made on the basis that the outcome was pre-determined. The evidence collected had been used to inform the development of the recommendations and adjustments/modifications have been made to the routes consulted on as a result of the consultation process to better reflect the needs of residents. In accordance with basic consultation principles, the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account by Cabinet when it reaches its decision. Consultation is a continuing process and the principle to consider feedback applies up to the point at which the decision is actually made.
- 7.8 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to identify the impacts of any decisions, policies etc. on certain protected groups to ensure equality is promoted, and inequality minimised. For example, there must be an assessment made of the impacts on groups or individuals who are disabled, who belong to ethnic or racial groups, on the grounds of age or sex discrimination etc. The Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) completed as part of the consultation process have been updated and both assist in meeting the Council's equality duties and are available to be considered by Cabinet and to inform Cabinet's decision.

Financial Implications

- 7.9 As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, a target saving of £1.576m from the supported bus budget has been stated to commence on 1st April 2018. This saving is in relation to a current year budget of local bus support and flexible transport (Little Bus) totalling £3.539m. Failure to develop and implement proposals for a revised and more cost effective network of supported local buses would put additional pressure on the budget for the period April 2018 onwards.
- 7.10 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide transport services for pupils. A total of 84 pupils are currently allocated to supported bus services that would no longer be provided as part of the Recommended Network. This

cost has been netted off from the overall projected savings from implementing the recommended options.

It should be noted that the target savings for the recommended option include the “transitional” costs of phasing the recommended changes to Little Bus. It should be noted that the Council will only have certainty on the costs of revised services only following tender returns from operators. At this stage, a level of contingency has been allowed in the cost estimates. The estimated savings at this stage are c£1m.

Equality Implications

7.11 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken as part of the review and in accordance with the Council's Equality & Diversity Strategy 2017-2020 and is included as Appendix 8. The EIA has identified disproportionate impacts upon the following groups:

- Older people;
- People with disabilities;
- Women;

7.12 In addition, minor impacts have also been identified for the following groups.

- Religious groups that meet on a Sunday; and
- Women who are pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave.

Rural Community Implications

7.13 The implementation of the new network will resolve some of the accessibility impacts in rural communities, which were identified in the proposals at consultation. The areas no longer having access to a bus service are,

- Northern Poynton
- Styal
- High Legh, Little Bollington, Mere
- Warmingham;
- Worleston

7.14 Further details are shown in Appendix 5. The Little Bus flexible transport (Dial-a-Ride) will continue to provide a service for those residents unable to access fixed route bus services due to rural isolation.

Human Resources Implications

7.15 There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

Public Health Implications

7.16 The recommendations have no direct impact on public health. The consultation has however identified a number of indirect impacts including:

- Access to health facilities including:
 - Our proposed network is intended to ensure that residents have access to health care facilities during times when clinical care appointments occur. Evening access for visiting will be further considered when the Council has tender information on the costs of securing additional evening services.
 - Evening access to Leighton Hospital was identified as a key concern due to the proposed withdrawal of a number of evening routes in Crewe. During the procurement stage, a cost for providing evening services on the Recommended Network Route C will look to mitigate this impact if affordable.
 - Access to Macclesfield Hospital on a Sunday was a further concern, mainly from the proposed withdrawal of the 130 (Manchester – Macclesfield) route on a Sunday.
 - Direct access within Crewe to the Eagle Bridge Medical Centre was also identified as a concern in the consultation. The proposals will retain bus access to the facility through the proposed Route C although a number of residents along the current 85A route would no longer have direct access.
 - Access to the medical facilities at Scholar Green and Kidsgrove, particularly since the recent closure of the medical facilities at Rode Heath. Access to these facilities in this area would be retained by Route J.
- A number of respondents also identified the social benefits that are brought through bus services with several mentioning that the service is there only opportunity to meet with other people. A summary of the areas with no access to a bus service is provided in section 7.20 and in Appendix 5.

Implications for Children and Young People

7.17 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide transport services for eligible pupils. A total of 84 eligible pupils are currently allocated to supported bus services that would no longer be provided and the estimated cost of the replacement transport for these eligible pupils is £148,650.

7.18 The implications of the review have also been considered against other Children's Services programmes. The proposals in the recommended network complement the current Available Walking Routes programmes and changes in arrangements for home-to-school travel. The recommended network is expected to accommodate the travel needs of 139 eligible pupils in Cheshire East, negating the need for alternative provision for these pupils.

Other Implications (Please Specify)

7.19 None

8 Risk Management

8.1 Any proposed changes to local bus services are very likely to be unpopular with affected residents. The potential of withdrawing a bus service which residents often rely on can be very emotive and often receives a significantly negative public response.

8.2 The key risks associated with the Bus Service Review are considered in the project Risk Register. The headline risks should be noted as follows:

Risk		Mitigation
Reputational risks	Reductions to local bus services will attract adverse public and/or political comments from affected users – it is an emotive subject and often receives a significant backlash from users and residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultation process has enabled residents to inform proposals Demonstrable improvements to proposals following consultation
	Major employers and key businesses in Cheshire East are likely to be opposed to any reduction in the services which provide access to their site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultation process has enabled business to inform proposals Access to employment sites is a consideration in network design
Financial risks	Where supported buses are currently used by pupils eligible for free home to school travel, the Council will be liable to provide alternative provision if no alternative is available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs of eligible pupil transport are included in financial assessments
	Reduction in supported payments may affect the commercial viability of local bus operators, with the risk that other (commercial) services are withdraw. The Council is not party to any detailed business intelligence to inform an assessment of this risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus operators have engaged in consultation on proposals. Consideration of phasing changes has been included in the proposals Maximise engagement with operators during procurement stage
	Changes to the commercial bus network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals have taken account of commercial changes when making recommendations.
	The cost of the Recommended Network has been estimated and can only be confirmed once tender returns have been received from operators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencement of procurement exercise. Early engagement / consultation with operators to raise awareness of opportunities

- 8.3 A comprehensive Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan have been developed for the project and will continue to be used.

9 Access to Information/Bibliography

- 9.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

10 Contact Information

- 10.1 Contact details for this report are as follows:

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of Proposals

Appendix 2 – Technical Report

Appendix 3 – Consultation Summary Report

Appendix 4 – Recommended Network Details

Appendix 5 – Accessibility Mapping of Options

Appendix 6 – Social Impact Assessment

Appendix 7 – Project Programme Summary

Appendix 8 – Equalities Assessment