

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>09 May 2017</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Frank Jordan, Executive Director of Place</b>
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Bus Service Review – Proposals for Consultation
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr David Brown – Highways and Infrastructure

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### 1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The Council provides financial support to secure the operation of socially-necessary bus services throughout the Borough. These services enable residents to benefit from local bus services where commercial services do not operate. The Council's objectives for subsidising bus services are set out below and have been adopted in the review process:
- Provide passenger services for residents most in need to enable access to essential services, including health, education, employment, retail and leisure;
  - Provide bus services which maximise value for money and deliver an effective and efficient network of supported bus services;
  - Increase usage of the bus network;
  - Provide a balanced and equitable network of supported bus services which complements the commercial network; and
  - Provide supported bus services which are affordable within the Council's budget from 2018/19 onwards and are financially sustainable.
- 1.2 The supported bus network has not been reviewed in detail for a number of years. A review has been beneficial to assess whether these supported services are best meeting the needs of residents and whether network adjustments are required.
- 1.3 The review has also allowed the Council the opportunity to assess how to maximise the benefits from the resources available for the supported bus network. As part of the medium term budget plan for the Council, a saving target of £1.576m from the supported bus budget is proposed to commence from 1st April 2018. In order to achieve this level of saving a fundamental review of the whole network has been undertaken to optimise the social and financial benefits that the supported bus network provides.
- 1.4 In February 2017, Cabinet approved the methodology for carrying out a supported bus service review. This stage by stage methodology has now been applied to develop a proposed network referred to as the 'Preferred Option'. If approved by Cabinet, the Preferred Option would go forward for a

10 week period of public consultation commencing in late May 2017. This consultation will be targeted at both bus users and non bus users and would look to engage through a wide range of methods. The outcomes from the consultation will inform a recommendation to Cabinet in autumn 2017 which will include the final supported bus network proposed for implementation.

- 1.5 The consultation will provide an opportunity for residents to provide feedback via the methods described in the Consultation Plan attached in Appendix 1. The consultation will allow responses to be submitted online and by post, with 'drop-in sessions' held at each principal town and key service centre in the Borough. The consultation will also engage bus operators to ensure the Council's proposals fit well with commercially operated services.
- 1.6 If the Preferred Option is implemented, in the weekday daytime there would be a reduction of up to 4% of the number of residential addresses within 60 minutes public transport travel time of a key service centre or principal town. When reviewing the changes in accessibility above, it should be noted that both the Preferred and Reference Case networks present a 43% saving on the current annual supported bus service budget.
- 1.7 The change to each of the current bus services within the Borough is listed in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 lists all the bus service currently supported by the Council (both fixed route and flexible 'on-demand' services) and explains what the future proposals are and the reasons why changes are proposed. This would form the basis of a public consultation. A key point to note is that in order to retain as many weekday and Saturday services as possible, there are no evening and Sunday services included in the Preferred Option for consultation as patronage of these services is significantly lower than for daytime services.
- 1.8 The implications of the bus service review on home to school transport services have also been fully assessed. Currently 123 pupils eligible for travel assistance are provided with a bus pass to travel on one of the supported local bus services which are proposed to be withdrawn. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide alternative transport services for the affected pupils and the estimated cost of the replacement transport for these eligible pupils is £180,500.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 2.1.1 Approve the proposals in the Preferred Option (Appendix 3) as the basis for 10 week period of public consultation.
- 2.1.2 Authorise the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Infrastructure, to conduct a Borough-wide public consultation in accordance with the Consultation Plan and Communications Plan (see Appendix 1 & 4).

- 2.1.3 Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Infrastructure, to approve the final versions of all consultation material.
- 2.1.4 Note that the outcomes of the consultation and any proposed amendments to the network of supported local buses will be reported back to Cabinet.

### **3. Other Options Considered**

- 3.1 To provide a measure of the effectiveness of the Preferred Option, stage 1 of the methodology for this review has carried out an assessment of the network using the Council's bus support criteria adopted by Cabinet in August 2011. The criteria enable supported bus services to be scored and ranked according to objective criteria, which creates a prioritised list of services.
- 3.2 In order to achieve savings, the list is cut-off at the point where the cumulative subsidy exceeds the proposed budget from April 2018. In the approved methodology, this provides a "Reference Case" for service provision against which the effectiveness of the Preferred Option can be assessed. The scoring for each current supported service is contained in Appendix 5 and indicates that some very well-used and / or good-value services would be lost if these criteria were used to derive an affordable network.
- 3.3 It can therefore be demonstrated that the Preferred Option, based on a detailed assessment of passenger needs, provides better value-for-money, retains more of the existing network and results in a more effective and efficient network of services, in line with the Council's objectives for supported bus services as listed above.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 The review has been carried out in accordance with the methodology approved by Cabinet in February 2017. The methodology ensures that a robust evidence base was in place to inform the development of the Preferred Option supported bus network. The evidence base includes data on patronage, usage, accessibility mapping and mapping of a series of criteria relating to the needs for supported local buses.
- 4.2 In developing the Preferred Option for a supported bus network, the approach has been to complement the current commercial bus network in the Borough. The Preferred Option thus provides access to areas that would otherwise be unserved e.g. Knutsford which is not served by any commercial services.
- 4.3 In the Preferred Option, priority was given to providing services that operate throughout the day, for six days a week (Monday – Saturday). These services cater for a higher proportion of residents' needs such as journeys to work, to school, for shopping and healthcare. The Preferred Option does not include any evening or Sunday supported services.

- 4.4 The majority of local bus services are conventional fixed route services which operate to a published timetable. Table 1 summarises the fixed route services included in the Preferred Option.

**Table 1 Summary of Preferred Option (Fixed Route Services)**

Ref.	Route	Notes
A	Macclesfield-Prestbury	The current 19 service would be retained with changes to the timetable.
B	Crewe-Wybunbury-Walgherton-Nantwich	The current 39 service would be retained in its present form.
C	Crewe-Leighton Hospital-Middlewich-Holmes Chapel-Congleton	The current 42 service route would be retained with timetable changes from Congleton to Crewe. Within Crewe the service would travel via the Eagle Bridge medical centre to cover the route of the current 1B service.
D	Macclesfield-Buxton/Hayfield	The current services 58 and 60 would be retained in their present form.
E	Macclesfield-Knutsford-Wilmslow-Altrincham. Northwich-Knutsford-Wilmslow-Altrincham. Inc School Bus	The current 88 service from Altrincham to Knutsford would operate hourly. At Knutsford alternate services would travel to Macclesfield (27 route) or Northwich (289 route) serving each destination every two hours as at present.
F	Macclesfield-Bollington/Kerridge-Poynton-Hazel Grove	The current 392 route would terminate at Hazel Grove to the north and operate hourly. Within Poynton the route would follow the current P1 route to serve Middlewood. Between Macclesfield and Bollington alternate journeys would serve Dorchester Way and South West Avenue or Badger Road and Kerridge (11 and 392 routes) before continuing to Macclesfield.
G	Nantwich-Audlem/Wrenbury	The current 51, 52, 53, 71, 72 and 73 services would be retained with timetabling changes. Services 72 and 73 would terminate at Wrenbury and Audlem with the onwards route to Whitchurch no longer served.
H	Congleton Local Services	The current 90, 91 and 92 services would be retained in their present form.

- 4.5 The network design process has been led by specialists from Transport Service Solutions Ltd to ensure it is informed by current local market intelligence. In addition, the proposals have been subject to independent peer review, which has found that the process has been based soundly on

evidence, leading to a robust compromise between practicable coverage and the available budget.

- 4.6 The supported bus budget also provides flexible transport services, a pre-booked demand-responsive bus service offering a door-to-door service (formerly known as Dial-a-Ride). The Council currently provides two flexible transport services – Little Bus which operates Borough-wide and the Crewe Flexi-Rider.
- 4.7 The Preferred Option would retain a form of the current Little Bus flexible transport service which is affordable within the reduced budget but still provides accessibility for the disadvantaged. The purpose of flexible transport is to provide a service for those unable to use conventional fixed route services due to mobility constraints or rural isolation. The flexible transport service will focus on those with an absolute need to travel and 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.
- 4.8 The consultation will be key in helping to shape the flexible transport service going forward. The options for consultation include changes to days and hours of operation, and changes to fares to make the service more cost effective and provide greater value-for-money.
- 4.9 Following approval of the Preferred Option by Cabinet, the proposals would be put forward for a 10 week public consultation period commencing in late May 2017. The Consultation Plan is included in Appendix 1 and will allow responses to be submitted online and by post, with ‘drop-in sessions’ held at each principal town and key service centre in the Borough.
- 4.10 The consultation will allow the full impact of these proposals to be assessed before a final decision is made. The consultation will target both bus users and non-bus-users with the following groups identified as the key target audience:
- Users of the affected bus services
  - Vulnerable and equality groups (e.g. older people, people with disabilities)
  - Cheshire East residents
  - Community and voluntary groups
  - Town and Parish Councils
  - Businesses / major employers
  - Schools and educational establishments
  - Bus operators
  - Partner organisations
  - Neighbouring local authorities
  - Council Members/ councillors
- 4.11 The current forward programme prior to implementation is presented in Appendix 6. The outcome of the consultation will be published on the Council’s consultation results pages.
- 4.12 A briefing session has been held with bus operators to set out the Council’s budgetary position, given the potential financial implications of changes to

current services. As one of the identified groups, bus operators will be asked to provide their feedback on the Preferred Option as part of the 10 week public consultation period.

- 4.13 In summary, the outcomes of the consultation will inform a final supported bus network recommendation to Cabinet in autumn 2017. Following a period of retendering and statutory notice periods, the new supported bus network would be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

## **5 Background/Chronology**

- 5.1 The methodology used to develop the Preferred Option was approved by Cabinet in February 2017. This methodology was developed to ensure that the Council has a reliable evidence base to inform future decisions relating to the level of support for local bus services.
- 5.2 The following sections summarise the approach with full detail of the methodology provided in the Cabinet Report approved in February 2017.

### **Stage 1: Run the 2011 prioritisation process to derive a Reference Case**

- 5.3 As set out in section 3, the previously adopted 2011 methodology has been used to provide a Reference Case against which the effectiveness of the Preferred Option can be considered. The methodology provides a criteria based score for each route of the current supported bus network with a cut-off at the point where the cumulative subsidy exceeds the proposed budget. The scoring for each route and resultant network is shown in Appendix 5 with the evaluation of the Preferred Option against the Reference Case set out in section 5.13.

### **Stages 2 to 5: Development of evidence base**

- 5.4 Stages 2-5 of the methodology have provided the evidence base to guide the Network Redesign (Stage 6). The data gathered during these stages includes:
- On-board passenger counts on all supported bus services to identify where passengers board, alight and use the supported bus network;
  - On-board questionnaires to ascertain details about passenger journeys – journey purpose, type of ticket used (including concessionary), frequency of journey and times of day that services are used;
  - Historic monthly patronage data from operators to identify longer term trends in usage as well as any seasonal variation;
  - Mapping the current levels of public transport accessibility across Cheshire East to show accessibility to principal towns and key service centres; and
  - GIS mapping of the Council's criteria-based assessment framework.
- 5.5 The above ensures that an appropriate evidence base has been compiled to inform the network redesign and consider the opportunities and implications

arising. Full detail of the methodology and data used for the above was provided previously in the February 2017 Cabinet Report.

### **Stage 6: Network redesign to develop Preferred Option**

- 5.6 The network redesign to develop the Preferred Option has been undertaken taking full account of the evidence base established in Stages 2 to 5 above and the design principles set out in the February 2017 Cabinet Report.
- 5.7 The approach to developing the Preferred Option has looked to provide a balanced and equitable network of supported bus services which complements the commercial network in order to maximise coverage and provide bus access to areas otherwise unserved, all within the resource constraints defined by the medium term budget plan.
- 5.8 In order to ensure a dependable network for users, priority has been given to providing services that operate throughout the day for at least six days a week which caters for a larger proportion of the needs of residents. Owing to the financial limitations in place on the revised network, the Preferred Option thus does not include any evening or Sunday supported services. Patronage of evening and Sunday services is significantly lower than for daytime services meaning that they are more costly to operate per passenger, and consequently they deliver lower value-for-money.
- 5.9 The proposed network put forward as the Preferred Option was presented previously in Table 1 (section 4.4) and would be presented for a 10 week public consultation period commencing in late May 2017. Outcomes from the consultation will then inform a recommendation to Cabinet in autumn 2017 on the implementation of a new network of supported local buses.
- 5.10 Costing of the network proposals has been based on recent costs for similar contracts with passenger revenues based on previous patronage data, adjusted for changes to the level of service. Whilst this is a good benchmark for future costs, Members should note that the final costs of the proposed new network will only be confirmed after the services are put out to tender.
- 5.11 Members should be aware that currently 123 pupils eligible for free transport to and from school are provided with a bus pass to travel on one of the supported local bus services which are proposed to be withdrawn. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide alternative transport services for the affected pupils and the estimated cost of the replacement transport for these eligible pupils is £180,500. The Preferred Option thus represents a net saving of £1.395m.
- 5.12 An assessment on changes to the level of accessibility from implementing the Preferred Option is set out in the following section. For clarity, the operation of each current bus service within the Borough (whether commercial, supported or partially supported) is set out in Appendix 2 with the implications of the Preferred Option on each service also set out.

### **Stage 7: Assessment of Preferred Option**

- 5.13 The Preferred Option for a new supported bus network has been assessed against the evaluation methodology outlined in the February 2017 Cabinet Report and ensures that the Council is able to respond to challenges about the impact of any changes arising from the review.
- 5.14 The routes provided in the Preferred Option are similar to the Reference Case but are more sustainable and offer better value for money.
- 5.15 Gap analysis modelling has been undertaken to show the number of Cheshire East residential addresses within 60 minutes public transport travel time of a Cheshire East key service centre or principal town. This modelling has been carried out for the following scenarios:
- Present situation: current commercially operated rail / bus services and current supported bus services;
  - Preferred Option: current commercially operated rail / bus services and the Preferred Option proposed network of supported bus services;
  - Reference case: current commercially operated rail / bus services and the Reference Case network (detailed in section 3.1) using the appraisal tool developed in 2011.
- 5.16 The above provides a robust comparison of the present, the proposed Preferred Option and the Reference Case option.
- 5.17 The results for the five modelled time periods are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Number of Residential Addresses Able to Access Bus Services for Each Modelled Scenario**

Scenario	Number of Residential Address Output Areas Within 60 Minutes Bus Travel Time of a Key Service Centre and / or Principal Town		
	Present Situation	Preferred Option	Reference Case
Weekday Morning Peak (06:00-09:00)	164,962	161,354	158,785
Weekday Afternoon Peak (16:00-19:00)	165,574	161,481	157,477
Weekday Off-Peak Period (09:30-16.00)	170,817	163,642	163,225
Weekday Evening Period (19:00-23:00)	143,315	121,798	132,722
Sunday (09:30-16:00)	130,090	112,299	112,299
There are presently 182,625 residential addresses within Cheshire East			



- 5.18 The Preferred Option shows some reductions in the number of households served by rail and bus services within Cheshire East under both options for a revised supported bus network. In the weekday morning peak period (06:00-09:00) the number of households served reduces from 164,962 to 161,354. In the weekday afternoon peak period (16:00-19:00) the number of households served reduces from 165,574 to 161,481. In the weekday off peak period (09:30-16.00) households served reduces from 170,817 to 163,642.
- 5.19 The Preferred Option does offer an enhanced level of accessibility over the Reference Case option during weekdays. This difference is most pronounced in the weekday afternoon peak (16:00-19:00 with 4,004 more households served) and the weekday morning peak (06:00-09:00 with 2,569 more households served).
- 5.20 As no services are proposed for the supported network during evenings and Sundays, the numbers of households served falls back to that provided by the commercial network in these periods for both the Preferred and Reference Case options.
- 5.21 When reviewing the changes in accessibility above, it should be noted that both the Preferred and Reference Case Networks present a 43% saving (38% net saving for Preferred Option) on the current annual supported bus service budget. In terms of vehicle requirements, the current supported bus network in Cheshire East has a Peak Vehicle Requirement (the number of buses at peak times) of some 36 vehicles. With the target savings in place, the budget for the Preferred Option would allow for a Peak Vehicle Requirement of around 16 vehicles.
- 5.22 Accessibility mapping has also been undertaken to highlight the areas of the Borough which would no longer have accessibility to a key service centre or principal town in Cheshire East. Mapping of the results is presented in Appendix 7, with the areas of the Borough which would no longer have weekday 60 minutes bus travel time access by rail or bus including (but are not limited to):
- Disley (all time periods) – whilst Disley is shown as no longer having access, the level of accessibility would remain as at present following the change to the 60 service in March 2017. Disley would continue to be connected to Stockport and Buxton through the commercial 199 service but would not have bus access to a key service centre or principal town in Cheshire East;
  - Some areas of Poynton (all time periods);
  - Areas to the west of Handforth (all time periods);
  - High Legh, Little Bollington, Mere (PM peak, off peak);
  - Cranage and Goostrey (off peak);
  - Warmingham (all time periods);
  - Worleston (AM peak);
  - Rural areas to south and west of Nantwich (mainly off peak);
  - Rode Heath (AM and PM peak periods);
  - Scholar Green (all time periods); and
  - A34 corridor between Alsager and Congleton (off peak).

- 5.23 For areas not served by rail, commercial or supported bus services, measures will be required in terms of flexible and community transport to provide a safety net for people who may be negatively impacted. These measures will also need to be considered for other areas of the Borough who may lose supported bus services during the evenings and Sundays.

### **Flexible Transport**

- 5.24 The Little Bus flexible transport bus service (pre-booked demand responsive bus services offering a door- to- door service, formerly known as Dial-a-Ride services) provide transport for pre-registered members who are unable to use scheduled bus services.
- 5.25 The costs of the Little Bus flexible transport service presently accounts for 16% of the total annual cost of supported bus routes with the subsidy cost per passenger markedly higher than scheduled supported bus services.
- 5.26 The Preferred Option would reduce the cost of the Little Bus flexible transport service proportionally in line with scheduled supported bus services. Savings to the Little Bus network would be achieved by:
- Reducing the number of vehicles operating the service from nine to four/five;
  - Applying a charge of up to £3 for each journey to concessionary bus pass holders.
- 5.27 The public consultation will be used to inform more detailed proposals for the Little Bus flexible transport service. The reduction in vehicles would not be able to meet the current level of demand and some form of prioritisation mechanism will be required as well as focusing on residents with greatest need and in rural areas.

### **Future Stages of Project**

- 5.28 Following approval of the Preferred Option by Cabinet, a thorough and detailed 10 week public consultation would be undertaken, which is scheduled to commence in late May 2017.
- 5.29 A detailed Communications Strategy and Consultation Plan have been prepared and are enclosed in Appendices 2 and 4 respectively. The consultation will allow responses to be submitted online and by post, with 'drop-in sessions' held at each principal town and key service centre.
- 5.30 The consultation will target both bus users and non-bus users with the following groups identified as the key target audience:
- Users of the affected bus services
  - Vulnerable and equality groups (e.g. older people, people with disabilities)
  - Cheshire East residents
  - Community and voluntary groups
  - Town and Parish Councils
  - Businesses / major employers
  - Schools and educational establishments

- Bus operators
  - Partner organisations
  - Neighbouring local authorities
  - Council Members/ councillors
- 5.31 Outcomes of the consultation will then inform a recommendation to Cabinet in autumn 2017 on the implementation of a new network of supported local buses.
- 5.32 Following Cabinet approval of the final network, a period of retendering of contracts and re-registration of services would take place in late 2017 / early 2018.
- 5.33 The timing of all stages in this approach is intended to enable the Council to implement any changes to local supported buses on 1st April 2018.

## **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 which are used to determine which local bus routes should be supported by the Council. These were adopted by Cabinet in August 2011. The current adopted criteria provide a fair, transparent and accountable process to prioritise investment by scoring and ranking each supported bus service against objective criteria.
- 7.2 The proposed methodology is intended to retain the same principles of 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 when compared 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 In May 2016 the Government introduced the ‘Bus Services Bill’ with the aim of improving local buses and ultimately increase usage of services. The Bill will affect bus services operating in England (excluding London) and is currently progressing through Parliament with Royal Assent planned for early 2017. The key aspects of this bill are:
- 1. Strengthen arrangements for partnership working in the sector, introducing ‘enhanced partnerships’
  - 2. Introduce new franchising powers with decision making at a local level
  - 3. Provide for a step change in the information available to bus passengers
  - 4. Powers for local authorities to obtain information from providers and also to set up municipal owned bus operators.

- 7.7 It remains important to monitor progress of the Bill and examine any legislation that arises from it during the contemplated service re-design and to assess the impact that any actual/planned legislation may have on the proposals so that they can take into account the up to date law and future proof service delivery.
- 7.8 Once the Preferred Option is approved by Cabinet, the Council will publically consult on the proposal. The consultation process embarked upon must be “fair” and certain basic principles must be adhered to:
- a. Consultation must be undertaken at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;
  - b. It must include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response;
  - c. Adequate time must be given for this purpose; and
  - d. The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when the ultimate decision is taken.
- 7.9 A Consultation Plan has been produced which sets out the way in which consultation is planned to take place and provides an evidence base for compliance with the consultation process.
- 7.10 When the Council embarks on the 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.
- 7.11 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. Completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) as part of the consultation process will both assist in meeting the Council's equality duties and inform the eventual final recommendation made to Cabinet and inform Cabinet's consideration of that proposal.

## **Financial Implications**

- 7.12 As part of the medium term budget plan for the Council, a saving of £1.576m from the supported bus budget has been agreed to commence on 1st April 2018. 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.
- 7.13 A summary of the supported bus service budget is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 Summary of Supported Bus Service Budget**

2017/18 supported bus service budget (including flexible transport)	£3.641m
Gross medium term budget plan saving 2018/19	£1.576m
2018/19 supported bus service budget (including flexible transport)	£2.065m

- 7.14 As set out in the above, the Council would still be investing £2,065,470 in local bus services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 onwards.
- 7.15 As noted in section 5.11, the Council has a statutory responsibility to provide transport services for pupils. A total of 123 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 £180,500. This cost would be picked up as part of the Council's school transport budget however it should be noted that the Council's net saving as a result of implementing the Preferred Option would be £1.395m.
- 7.16 The Council will also continue to explore external funding opportunities both nationally through central government and locally in conjunction with external partner organisations.

### **Equality Implications**

- 7.17 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 available upon request. The EIA has identified potential impacts upon the following groups and further work will be undertaken to explore these further and develop robust mitigation plans:
- Older groups
  - Disabled
  - Females
  - Religious groups that meet on a Sunday
  - Women who are pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave
- 7.18 The EIA will be regularly updated as the review develops and will be informed by the feedback received during the public consultation.

### **Rural Community Implications**

- 7.19 The implementation of the Preferred Option would result in some minor reductions in accessibility in rural communities as outlined in section 4.7 and shown in Appendix 7.

## Human Resources Implications

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

## Public Health Implications

7.21 The recommendations have no immediate impact on public health. Access to healthcare facilities is one of the criteria for the development of the Preferred Option.

7.22 Further detail on any potential issues with residents accessing healthcare facilities is expected to be determined as part of the consultation of the Preferred Option.

## Implications for Children and Young People

7.23 As set out above, the Council has a statutory responsibility to provide transport services for eligible pupils. A total of 123 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 £180,500.

7.24 The implications of the review have also been considered against other Children's Services programmes. The proposals in the Preferred Option do not affect the Available Walking Routes programme and subsequent changes for home to school travel. Detail on the linkages between the review and the home to school travel programme will be available as part of the consultation.

## Other Implications (Please Specify)

7.25 N/A

## 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:

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.
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	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.
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.
	Reduction in supported payments may affect the commercial viability of local bus operators, with the risk that other (commercial) services are withdrawn. The Council is not party to any detailed business intelligence to inform an assessment of this risk.
	Changes to the commercial bus network.
Project risks	Some communities (identified in section 5.22) would be left without a scheduled bus service as a result of the Preferred Option. If not eligible for flexible transport, this may leave residents in these areas with no alternative transport options. The extent of this is to be identified during the consultation.

- 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 – Supported Bus Service Review Consultation Plan**

**Appendix 2 – Changes to Bus Services within Cheshire East as a Result of Preferred Option**

**Appendix 3 – Preferred Network Details**

**Appendix 4 – Supported Bus Service Review Communications Plan**

**Appendix 5 – Reference Case Scoring Results Using 2011 Evaluation Criteria**

**Appendix 6 – Project Programme Summary**

**Appendix 7 – Accessibility Mapping of Options**