

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
03.11.2022	2	Chris Taylor	N/A

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

Department	<i>Place</i>		Lead officer responsible for assessment		<i>Chris Taylor</i>	
Service	<i>Strategic Infrastructure</i>		Other members of team undertaking assessment		<i>Jenny Marston Richard Hibbert</i>	
Date	03.11.2022		Version		2	
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	
<p>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)</p> <p>Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service</p>	<p>Bus Support Criteria for Prioritisation of Services</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Significant challenges have been posed to the bus industry in recent years on a national level. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic bus services within Cheshire East have witnessed a sharp decrease in patronage which remains lower than pre-pandemic.</p> <p>For the bus industry, there is continued uncertainty surrounding passenger and revenue recovery, coupled with cost increases associated with fuel and driver wage rates. These uncertainties alongside slow patronage recovery have further undermined the viability of the current network.</p> <p>Due to these challenges, the Department for Transport (DfT) have provided the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) for operators and the Local Transport Fund (LTF) for Local Transport Authorities to aid the delivery of the existing bus network. Both are due to cease in March 2023.</p> <p>As BRG/LTF funding comes to a close and concessionary reimbursement aligns with actual patronage (rather than 2019 values) commercial operators will begin to evaluate the viability of their commercial services. At the moment it is uncertain what this might mean for the bus industry nationally and locally. This could lead to commercial services</p>					

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being withdrawn and supported contracts being handed back. For this reason the DfT has proposed that Local Transport Authorities should conduct detailed Bus Network Reviews, to understand services that are at risk and the support that would be required to provide a sustainable public transport network.

At the moment within Cheshire East, around 70% of services are supported by the council which costs £2.3m per annum.

In accordance with the Government's guidance on Network Reviews issued in April 2022, analysis has been conducted with operators to help identify which services within Cheshire East are deemed to be commercial, marginal or non-viable after the cessation of the BRG and LTF funding support. Conducting this network review is a condition of gaining access to the next phase of the BRG/LTF funding.

As services adapt to changing funding arrangements, there is a need to prioritise services. Cheshire East utilises a set of criteria which are used to score and prioritise bus services based on their ability to meet LTP priority themes, accessibility requirements for users and financial considerations.

The current criteria are summarised below:

- LTP Priority Themes: Including business growth (journey purpose), sustainable economic growth and impact on carbon emissions.
- Accessibility: Including transport interchange and travel choice
- Financial Considerations: Including cost per passenger, funding options/alternatives, service usage and patronage trends (commercial potential).

This set of criteria was developed in 2011 and used as a reference case in 2017 during the bus service review to reflect the key themes and aspirations contained within the LTP.

The bus network and industry within Cheshire East has witnessed significant challenges and changes since the adoption of this support criteria in 2011. For this reason, a refresh has been proposed in order to ensure services are scored based on relevant criteria as of 2022.

The new criteria includes the following additions which are being presented for consideration:

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	<p>Decarbonisation – Cheshire East Council aims to be carbon neutral in its own operations by 2025, as outlined within the council’s Environment Strategy (2020-2024). Cheshire East made a further pledge in January 2022 to be a carbon neutral borough by 2045. With these targets in place, there is a need to ensure bus services contribute to their attainment. The emission standard of vehicles being used has been suggested as a new criterion, here services will be scored based on whether EV/Hydrogen, Euro 6, 5 or 4 vehicles are in operation.</p> <p>Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) – For this metric, the percentage of route length that sits within the top 25% most deprived areas will be used to score each bus service. Areas of deprivation typically rely on bus services for access to facilities and amenities, therefore this metric ensures that the social value of bus services is considered during decision making.</p> <p>Fare Paying and Concessionary Patronage Recovery post-covid (compared to 2019) – Recovery post-covid is still ongoing and significantly impacting the viability of bus services across the borough. While fare paying patronage on average has returned to around 80% of pre-covid levels, concessionary travel (which constitutes half of total passengers for many services) still remains at around 60%. These metrics therefore score services based on their rate of recovery for all ticket types.</p>
Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)	<p>New criteria have been added to better represent the current bus network and its duties to serve the people of Cheshire East. In particular, the support criteria have been expanded to consider indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). This provides a measure of relative deprivation for small areas based on seven distinct domains of deprivation: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment. IMD has been introduced to limit the impact of bus service alterations on vulnerable groups. Conversations with vulnerable groups will be conducted to ensure impacts on those with protected characteristics are minimised.</p> <p>Consultation and engagement with bus user groups, and other key stakeholders will take place to discuss the proposed criteria and take account of any comments. Early conversations are to be held in November-December 2022 with full consultation taking place during January 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Space4Autism * Disability Information Bureau (DIB) * Cheshire Centre for Independent living * Cheshire Eye Society * Deafness Support Network * ADCA Medical Transport Service * Congleton Disabled Club * Care4CE * Leonard Cheshire Disability * The Stroke Association • Transport interest groups; Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crewe & District Bus Users Group • Transition Wilmslow • Active Travel Congleton • Travel Cheshire • Environmental groups; • MPs
<p>What consultation method(s) did you use?</p>	<p>Early conversations are to be held with key stakeholders (vulnerable groups and bus operators). Once these conversations have been held, discussions will be recorded within future iterations of this EqIA.</p> <p>It is important for the council to be open and transparent on the purpose of this engagement/consultation, which is to review the proposed criteria as a framework for decision making going forward. The consultation will need to clearly describe why the criteria are suitable for forming a framework that guides decision making. It is noted that the consultation will not propose any direct changes to the network.</p>

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Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	There will not be a direct impact on bus services as a result of this revised support criteria. The future of the bus industry within Cheshire East remains uncertain, this criteria will be used as a tool to help manage future changes to the network. The criteria itself will not have an impact on the public or bus operators. Application of this criteria will require additional Equality Impact Assessments to be conducted.							
Who is intended to benefit and how?	There will be no direct benefits associated with having this set of criteria in place. The criteria will serve as a tool for assessing the future bus network as it continues to evolve using more up to date and relevant criteria.							
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	No							
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	No							
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (e.g. 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	

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The outlined criteria will not lead to any direct changes to the bus network within Cheshire East. This is simply a scoring mechanism to evaluate bus services operating within the borough.		No
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. This will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.	
Disability	No particular negative impacts have been identified at this stage. However positive or adverse impacts are possible depending on how the criteria is implemented. 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 will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.	
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. This will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.	
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. This will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.	
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. This will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.	
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. This	

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	will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.				
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. This will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.				
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. This will be considered in future EqlAs following application of the criteria.				
Proceed to full impact assessment? (Please tick)	No			Date: 03/11/2022	
/					

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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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 <i>List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</i>	Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc....) on any of the groups? Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations <i>List what positive impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</i>	Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified <i>High:</i> Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation <i>Medium:</i> Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures <i>Low:</i> 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) <i>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.</i>
Age				
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage & civil partnership				
Pregnancy and				

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maternity				
Race				
Religion & belief				
Sex				
Sexual orientation				
<p>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)</p>				

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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

Acceptance of the proposed criteria for bus service support prioritisation will be determined as a result of Committee review and detailed consultation. The Council will continue to work with specific groups and focus groups to monitor the impact of all future alterations. At this stage there will not be a direct impact on bus services as a result of this revised support criteria. The future of the bus industry within Cheshire East remains uncertain, this criteria will be used as a tool to help manage future changes to the network. The criteria itself will not have an impact on the public or bus operators. Application of this criteria will require additional Equality Impact Assessments to be conducted.

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 consultation period	Results of consultation	Chris Taylor & Jenny Marston	March 2023
Undertake future consultation to further determine the impacts on groups identified as having a significant impact	Through stakeholder engagement.	Chris Taylor & Jenny Marston	TBC following application of criteria.
When will this assessment be reviewed?	This will be reviewed at following acceptance of the criteria and during future application of the criteria.		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	Yes, when the criteria is required and applied to existing services for prioritisation.		
Lead officer sign off	Jenny Marston	Date	03/11/2022
Head of service sign off	Richard Hibbert	Date	03/11/2022

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

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