

Proposal: Stockport Metroshuttle Service **MTFP Proposal 5: Stockport Local Transport** **Portfolio Lead: Economy and Regeneration**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This proposal is part of the 'Getting more out of our spending' theme, which includes a review of all key Stockport Local Transport services. The Stockport Local Transport Group leading this work, has carried out a review of key transport services provided by the Council and is proposing that the Council no longer funds the Town Centre Metroshuttle Service. This would result in the cessation of this free service.
- 1.2 This has been a difficult decision for the Council but there is no statutory requirement to provide free transport in the town centre. Attempts will be made to seek other potential funders for the service.
- 1.3 This proposal sets out the implications of ceasing the Town Centre Metroshuttle service when the current contract ends in April 2019.

2.0 Summary of the Proposal

- 2.1 To cease funding for the free Stockport Metroshuttle service after the current contract ends on 27th April 2019.

3.0 Background and History

- 3.1 The service was originally commissioned in the spring of 2007 and began operating in November 2008. It is not a statutory service, it is a Council initiative and its original aims were:
- To improve accessibility in the town centre, particularly for wheelchair/pushchair users,
 - To boost the local economy by attracting people to town centre shops,
 - To improve tourism by attracting people to the town centre's historic attractions,
 - To reduce demand for parking in the town centre.
- 3.2 In 2008 it was anticipated that the service would attract c.2,100 passengers per week in order to deliver value for money. The service has averaged around 4,000 passengers a week for the majority of its lifespan. Although, it should be noted that between 2011 and 2013 some data was based on estimates and not actual passenger numbers.

APPENDIX 1: STOCKPORT LOCAL TRANSPORT – METROSHUTTLE SERVICE

During 2017, three customer comments were received regarding the service, relating to staff and the quality of service issues. This equated to one complaint/ comment for every 5,049 journeys.

4.0 The Current Service

- 4.1 The Metroshuttle service currently operates on a set route around Stockport Town Centre, with stops at key sites such as Stockport Train Station, Merseyway Shopping Centre, Tesco supermarket, the Peel Shopping Centre and the Market Place.
- 4.2 The service operates seven days a week, Monday to Saturday: 8am to 6pm and Sunday: 10:30am to 5pm, every 15 minutes.
- 4.3 The service has an average of 15,000 passengers per month. This data is a count of passengers getting on the bus. The data that we are provided with from Manchester Community Transport and TFGM does not enable us to determine whether this includes passengers making multiple journeys, nor does it give us a breakdown of the passenger demographics.
- 4.4 Peak times of travel are during core shopping hours (between c.10am and 3pm).
- 4.5 The majority of journeys on the Metroshuttle are for around a mile or less. For example, one of the longest journeys that can be taken is from Stockport Train Station to the Tesco supermarket on Tiviot Way, a distance of 1.1 miles. However, it should be noted that some of the journeys cover steep hills.
- 4.6 The service is operated by Manchester Community Transport who have the contract until 27th April 2019. This contract was due to be retendered by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) who manage it on behalf of Stockport Council, but this has been put on hold pending the outcome of this proposal.

5.0 Scope

- 5.1 The only Council service in scope of this proposal is the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle bus service, which is part funded by Stockport Council.

6.0 Financial Summary

- 6.1 The service is jointly funded by Stockport Council 75%, and TfGM 25%. The total cost of the service for 17/18 was £0.295m, Stockport Council's contribution to this was £0.221m.
- 6.2 Based on 2018 usage figures and costs, the average cost per passenger per journey was c. £1.64.

7.0 Alternative Funding Options

7.1 The Council has considered four alternative funding options for the Metroshuttle Service.

7.2 Option 1: Charging for the service.

This option was not considered economically viable. For example, a charge of 50p per journey for an average of 180,000 journeys per year would generate £90,000. This is less than half the funding needed to run the service. The charge per journey would need to be at least £1.25 to make the service economically viable. However, there is the risk that passenger numbers may fall if a charge is introduced, resulting in the income target for the service not being met.

7.3 Option 2: Approaching Partners and Local Businesses

The Council will approach partner organisations and local businesses in Stockport over the next couple of months to establish if they are able to provide any financial support for the continuation of the Metroshuttle Service.

7.4 Option 3: Reducing the Service

This option would be to reduce the service by 50%. This could involve operating it on certain days of the week when demand is highest, such as Friday, Saturdays and Sundays or on market days. Or it could involve reducing the hours of operation to the peak times of 10am to 3pm. This could generate a saving of approximately £110,000 per year. Although, it should be noted that this option would have to be fully developed and a new tender process would need to be undertaken to establish the revised running costs. There is no guarantee that this would be a service that companies would tender for. It does not achieve the savings required and may result in financial impact on other higher priority transport services.

7.5 Option 4: Negotiating with TfGM

The Council could enter into negotiations with Transport for Greater Manchester to request that they increase their share of the funding for the service. Although, this is unlikely to yield the amount of funding that the Council would need to make the service viable.

APPENDIX 1: STOCKPORT LOCAL TRANSPORT – METROSHUTTLE SERVICE

8.0 Key Timescales

Milestone description	Date Expected	Output at milestone
Public consultation on the proposals	7 th December 2018	Feedback on the proposal
Cabinet consideration of proposals	18 th December 2018	Cabinet views on the proposal
Partners and local businesses contacted regarding financial support	15 th January 2019	Alternative funding options explored
Cabinet Decision	5 th February 2019	Cabinet decision on the proposal
Subject to Cabinet Decision – implementation of the approved proposals	27 th April 2019	Implementation of approved proposal

9.0 Consultation and Engagement

9.1 The consultation plans for this proposal are as follows;

- The following stakeholders will be invited to participate in the consultation:
 - Service users,
 - Stockport residents,
 - Local businesses in the Town Centre,
 - Disability Stockport.
- The consultation will be conducted via an online questionnaire published on the Have Your Say pages of the Council website. Paper copies of the questionnaire will be provided at libraries and Fred Perry House Reception for residents who don't have internet access to respond.
- Posters will be put on the Metroshuttle buses, at Stockport Bus Station, Stockport Train Station, in local libraries and Council public reception areas.
- A social media campaign will also be carried out during the consultation period using existing Council platforms.
- Articles will be put in the newsletters that are sent to local businesses in the Town Centre.

9.2 Elected Councillors will be involved throughout all stages of Consultation and Engagement at both Scrutiny Committee and in other settings.

APPENDIX 1: STOCKPORT LOCAL TRANSPORT – METROSHUTTLE SERVICE

10.0 Interdependencies, Constraints, and Risks

10.1 Interdependencies

- Any changes to the service would need to be agreed with Transport for Greater Manchester who manage the contract and provider on behalf of Stockport Council.

10.2 Constraints

- The Metroshuttle service is under contract until 27th April 2019 and cannot be cancelled before this date.

10.3 Risks

- Stopping the Metroshuttle service may have unintended adverse effects on trade and tourism in the town centre by making it more difficult for some people to access areas not served by a public bus service.
- Removal of the service goes against our strategy to invest in the Town Centre and our Transport Strategy to reduce car use in the Town Centre.

11.0 Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment

Title: Stockport Metroshuttle Service Proposal

Date: 16th November 2018

Stage: Draft

Stage 1: Do you need to complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Yes.

This proposal is to cease the Town Centre Metroshuttle free bus service when the current contract ends in April 2019, if alternative funding cannot be found.

This EIA will assess the potential impact of the removal of this service.

Stage 2: What do you know?

The service has an average of 15,000 passengers per month. This data is a count of passengers getting on the bus. The data that we are provided with from Manchester Community Transport and TFGM does not enable us to determine whether this includes passengers making multiple journeys, nor does it give us a breakdown of the passenger demographics.

Total number of Passengers boarding the bus per month

Month	Number of Passengers
September 2018	15,049
August 2018	16,586
July 2018	15,891
June 2018	Not available
May 2018	13,898
April 2018	14,512

APPENDIX 1: STOCKPORT LOCAL TRANSPORT – METROSHUTTLE SERVICE

We don't currently have any data about Metroshuttle passengers to indicate if they have any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, shown below:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

However, a public consultation will be undertaken with service users where we will ask respondents to categorise themselves against the protected characteristics. See stage 2a below.

Stage 2a: Further data and consultation

Subject to approval to progress to the consultation stage, an extensive consultation will be undertaken with the public and local businesses.

The results of the consultation will be used to inform the EIA to assess and mitigate against any disproportionate impact to those who identify with the protected characteristics.

Stage 3: Results and Measures

To be completed following the consultation stage.

Stage 4: Decision Stage

To be completed following the consultation stage.