

**MTFP: STOCKPORT LOCAL TRANSPORT - TOWN CENTRE METROSHUTTLE
BUS CONSULTATION REPORT**

1. Executive Summary

The consultation focussed on the proposal to cease funding for the free Stockport Metroshuttle service after the current contract ends on 27th April 2019.

This report provides an interim summary of the consultation feedback received as at 2nd January 2019. The consultation will remain open until 18th January 2019 and final results will be provided to Cabinet in February 2019.

There have been 309 responses to the consultation as at 2nd January 2019. The service currently has 4,000 passengers a week.

The majority of respondents so far (237, 77%) either disagree or strongly disagreed with the proposal. A lower proportion of respondents either agree or agree strongly with the proposal (54, 17.5%). There were 14, 4.5% of respondents that neither agreed or disagreed and just 3 respondents chose 'don't know'.

2. Consultation Methodology

A range of consultation methods were undertaken between 7th December 2018 and 2nd January 2019. The main method was an online public survey on the Council website.

The following communication activity was undertaken to communicate the consultation to stakeholders:

- Posters on Metroshuttle buses, at Stockport Bus Station and the Travel Shop
- Posters in the Council public reception areas in the Town Hall and Fred Perry House
- Paper copies of questionnaires in Fred Perry House reception and local libraries.
- Social media messages sent via the Council's platforms containing a link to the consultation
- Email to Disability Stockport
- Article in local business newsletters

3. Background

The proposal is to cease providing Council funding for the free Stockport Metroshuttle service after the current contract ends on 27th April 2019. This would mean the service would end after this date. 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.

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.

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.

The service operates seven days a week, Monday to Saturday: 8am to 6pm and Sunday: 10:30am to 5pm, every 15 minutes. 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.

Peak times of travel are during core shopping hours (between c.10am and 3pm). 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 1.1m. However, it should be noted that some of the journeys cover steep hills.

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.

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.

Based on 2018 usage figures and costs, the average cost per passenger per journey was c. £1.64.

4. Results of the Consultation

In total, to date, 309 responses have been received to this consultation.

Responses to the proposals

Q1. Are you aware of the free Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle service?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	293	94.82%
No	15	4.85%
Not Answered	1	0.32%

Are you aware of the Metroshuttle service?



Q2. Are you?

Option	Total	Percent
Someone who uses the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle service	213	68.93%
A local business	8	2.59%
A Stockport resident (who doesn't use the service)	78	25.24%
Other	7	2.27%
Not Answered	3	0.97%

Q3. When were you last on the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle bus?

Option	Total	Percent
In the last 24 hours	58	18.77%
In the last 3 days	50	16.18%
In the last week	50	16.18%
In the last month	45	14.56%
In the last 12 months	18	5.83%
Not Answered	88	28.48%

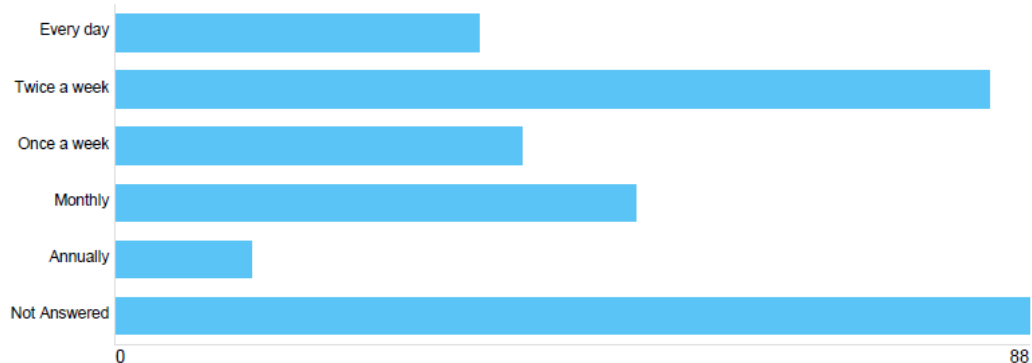
When were you last on the Metroshuttle bus?



Q4. Approximately how often do you use this service?

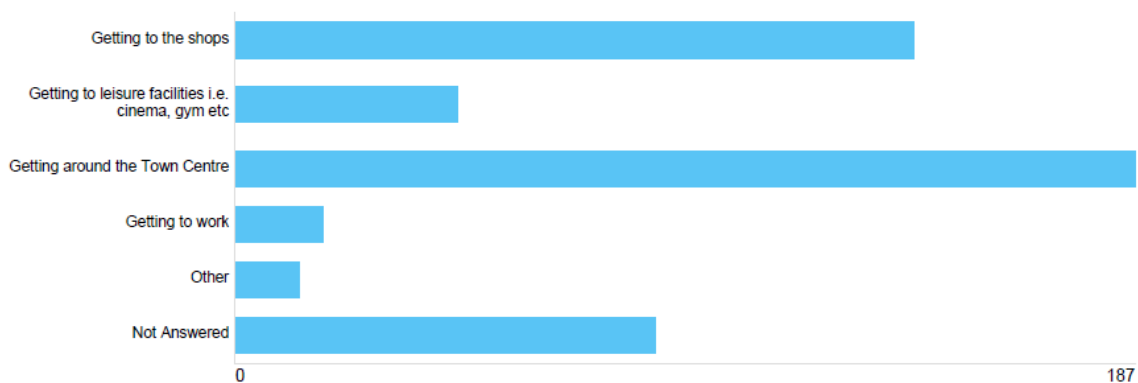
Option	Total	Percent
Every day	35	11.33%
Twice a week	84	27.18%
Once a week	39	12.62%
Monthly	50	16.18%
Annually	13	4.21%
Not Answered	88	28.48%

Approximately how often do you use this service?



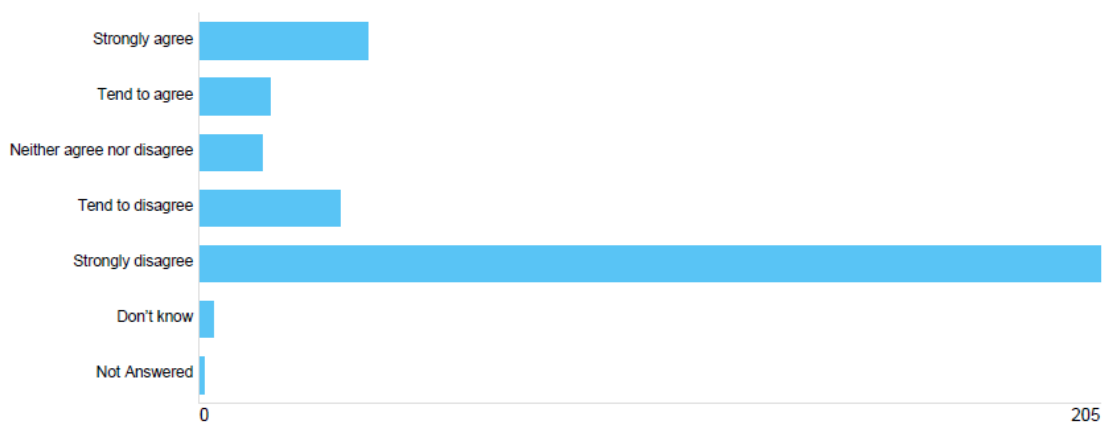
Q5. What do you use this bus service for? (select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percent
Getting to the shops	141	45.63%
Getting to leisure facilities i.e. cinema, gym etc	46	14.89%
Getting around the Town Centre	187	60.52%
Getting to work	18	5.83%
Other	13	4.21%
Not Answered	87	28.16%



Q6. Given the need to balance the budget and ensure that funding is targeted at areas of greatest need, how far do you agree or disagree that we should remove this free service?

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	38	12.30%
Tend to agree	16	5.18%
Neither agree nor disagree	14	4.53%
Tend to disagree	32	10.36%
Strongly disagree	205	66.34%
Don't know	3	0.97%
Not Answered	1	0.32%



Q7. How would it affect you if this service was no longer available?

There were 250 responses to this part of the question.

The majority of the comments were on the impact of stopping this service on older people (particularly pensioners on low income), people with a disability and families. Concern was also expressed that this would have an adverse impact on the use of town centre shops with older and people with a disability unable to access the town facilities. Reference was also made to the gradients in the town centre which impede easy access. Some individual comments have been included to illustrate these issues.

Impact on people with a disability.

- I am disabled and use this bus to get to work.
- I am severely mobility impaired and use it to negotiate Stockport's many gradients and to get from shops to bus station and railway station
- As I have a slow degenerative disease of the spine, I am unable to use ring and ride, as the suspension on the busses are inadequate for my condition which causes me to have excruciating pain, which affects my legs, knock and spine
- I would not be able to visit Tesco or the Peel centre or the market/marketplace on the days I can't use a mobility scooter from Shop mobility as they are closed on Wednesdays and soon to close on a Saturday if they can't obtain a suitable volunteer to run their service, so I will be completely stuffed.
- As I have carpal tunnel I can't carry heavy shopping bags. This service helps me a lot.

Impact on families

- It would make getting round the town centre with a disabled child very difficult. It is very difficult getting up to the town hall, station and market with a wheelchair and an utter nightmare in the winter when it's slippy. We would probably just not bother and get the 192 into Manchester instead or stay at home. Please don't get rid of these buses they are a lifeline for disabled and older people and it would be a huge step backwards for Stockport if you make this cut.
- I have had problems walking due and would be unable to take my daughter to nursery or the shops as other buses do not go the right way

Impact on older people

- Elderly people use this service as a lifeline, it would have a massive impact on their quality of life.
- It's very well used by pensioners who don't drive have access to cars or have a lot of money to spend on bus fares
- With the main town centre shops becoming worst many people go to the Portwood complex which as you get older is a distance to walk from the bus station
- I am sure many people especially the elderly and disabled section of the community will become more isolated.

Impact on the Town centre

- By cancelling this service, you are limiting the town centre to those who are able to walk around easily, have cars, or are coming into the town for leisure purposes. Pure discrimination.
- You are not encouraging the people into the town centre for shopping, which I am sure will have an impact on the few stores which are currently open in the town centre.
- If it were to be discontinued I feel it would undo all the hard work that Stockport council has done in the last few years to bring the town shops together.

- Some respondents felt that the proposals would not affect them as they either do not use the service or they currently walk or would have to walk if the service was stopped.

Q8. Do you have any other comments?

There were 157 responses to this part of the question. These focussed on a number of areas. Many reiterated their concern that it may lead to more shops closing and the loss of business rates, and that it was contrary to the investment in new office developments and residential accommodation in the city which may result in increased usage. The impact on older people and people with mobility issues was again raised in this section.

Alternative suggestions to the proposal were also identified in this section included more direct routes, running it only at weekends or offering a reduced service, adopting a charging policy, and finding alternative funding such as retail providers

There were a few negative comments about the bus with safety concerns, its impact on road surfacing, it not being popular with local traders and its routing impacting on the development of street cultural offers.

5. Demographics

Gender

Option	Total	Percent
Male	95	30.74%
Female	195	63.11%
Prefer to self-describe	0	0%
Prefer not to answer	7	2.27%
Not Answered	12	3.88%

Age

Option	Total	Percent
0 - 17	1	0.32%
18 - 24	8	2.59%
25 - 34	29	9.39%
35 - 44	50	16.18%
45 - 54	48	15.53%
55 - 64	79	25.57%
65 - 74	69	22.33%
75 - 84	9	2.91%
85+	1	0.32%
Prefer not to answer	7	2.27%
Not Answered	8	2.59%

Do you consider yourself to have an impairment, disability or long term health condition?

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	121	39.16%
No	155	50.16%
Prefer not to answer	24	7.77%
Not Answered	9	2.91%

How would you describe your ethnic group?

Option	Total	Percent
White- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	261	84.47%
White- Irish	5	1.62%
White- Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0%
White- any other White background, please specify	5	1.62%
Mixed- White and Black Caribbean	0	0%
Mixed- White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed- White and Asian	0	0%
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please	0	0%
Asian or Asian British-Indian	0	0%
Asian or Asian British- Pakistani	0	0%
Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	0	0%
Asian or Asian British- Chinese	0	0%
Any other Asian background, please specify	0	0%
Black or Black British- African	0	0%
Black or Black British- Caribbean	0	0%
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please specify	0	0%
Other ethnic group- Arab	0	0%
Any other ethnic group, please specify	1	0.32%
Prefer not to answer	14	4.53%
Not Answered	23	7.44%

Employment Status

Option	Total	Percent
Employed Full Time	97	31.39%
Employed Part Time	52	16.83%
Self-Employed	19	6.15%
Unemployed	6	1.94%
Long term Disabled/Sick	20	6.47%
Homemaker/Carer	7	2.27%
Retired	82	26.54%
Student	1	0.32%
Other	3	0.97%
Prefer not to answer	13	4.21%
Not Answered	9	2.91%

How would you describe your religion or belief?

Option	Total	Percent
No religion	113	36.57%
Christian	152	49.19%
Muslim	0	0%
Hindu	0	0%
Buddhist	1	0.32%
Jewish	1	0.32%
Sikh	0	0%
Other	2	0.65%
Prefer not to answer	27	8.74%
Not Answered	13	4.21%

Respondents by Ward

Of the 309 people who responded to the consultation 284 provided postcodes, and 259 were able to be matched to Ward areas. The number of respondents by Ward are shown in the table below.

Area	Number of responses	% of overall responses
Brinnington and Central	42	13.6%
Manor	31	10.0%
Davenport and Cale Green	24	7.8%
Edgeley and Cheadle Heath	24	7.8%
Reddish South	21	6.8%
Stepping Hill	16	5.2%
Offerton	14	4.5%
Bramhall North and Woodford	11	3.6%
Cheadle Hulme North	10	3.2%
Heatons South	10	3.2%
Heatons North	8	2.6%
Bredbury and Woodley	7	2.3%
Bramhall South	6	1.9%
Marple South	6	1.9%
Reddish North	6	1.9%
Cheadle and Gatley	5	1.6%
Marple North	5	1.6%
Bredbury Green and Romiley	4	1.3%
Hazel Grove	4	1.3%
Heald Green	4	1.3%
Cheadle Hulme South	1	0.3%
Not provided or incomplete postcode provided	50	16.2%
Total	309	100%

6. Mitigation

Based on feedback from the results of the consultation exercise, included here are details on how the issues would be mitigated against if the proposals were to be implemented.

Issue identified in the consultation	Mitigating Action
There is particular concern for vulnerable groups, notably elderly and disabled residents who use the bus	<p>Provide publicity and inform users of the services of alternative bus routes which may cover part of their journey</p> <p>Provide publicity and inform users about Community Transport services such as Ring and Ride, Easy-Go and Stockport Car Scheme.</p> <p>Continue to seek alternative funders and if successful reintroduce the service at the same or a different frequency.</p>
Concern that the only alternative for people without cars to get around the Town Centre would be taxis and that these are too expensive.	Provide publicity and inform users about Community Transport services such as Ring and Ride, Easy-Go Community Transport and Stockport Car Scheme.
Lack of availability of alternative direct routes on public transport from key points around the Town Centre	Discussions to be held with local transport providers regarding the potential to run new routes.
Concerns about personal safety if people had to walk around the Town Centre.	<p>Provide publicity and inform users of the services of alternative bus routes which may cover part of their journey</p> <p>Provide publicity and inform users about Community Transport services such as Ring and Ride, Easy-Go and Stockport Car Scheme.</p>
Impact on Town Centre growth and viability of shops	<p>Continue to seek alternative funders and if successful reintroduce the service at the same or a different frequency</p> <p>Continue discussions with TFGM</p>

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Scrutiny Members are asked to provide comments for Cabinet.