

# STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING: GETTING MORE OUT OF OUR SPENDING

## **Proposal 5: Stockport Local Transport**

**Lead Portfolio: Adults Social Care; Children's Services; Education;  
Communities and Housing; Economy and Regeneration**

### **1.0 Summary of report**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the proposals and the recent determinations of Cabinet members. The accompanying appendices provide details of the consultation methodology adopted and responses received to date to the consultation. The consultation for the Metroshuttle was undertaken between 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019, and for the Free School bus pass consultation ran between 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019.
- 1.2 Scrutiny members have also had the opportunity to discuss and comment on these proposals at their meetings in November/December 2018 and January 2019.
- 1.3 This report also provides further information on the second phase of the Stockport Local Transport review. This involves a more detailed review of specialist travel arrangements we currently have for SEND children and young people, and for some of our older residents. It highlights the work we have developed to date and our future intentions.

### **2.0 Proposal Update**

- 2.1 The individual proposals were as follows
  - a) To cease funding for the free Stockport Metroshuttle service after the current contract ends on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

There are no changes to the proposal to remove the free Stockport Metroshuttle service.
  - b) To change the entitlement criteria for Free School Transport to statutory levels i.e. low income defined as:
    - i. Pupils who qualify for free school meals,
    - ii. Pupils whose parents/guardians are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

- 2.2 Cabinet members have given further consideration to this proposal especially in the light of the uncertainty of the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit. They have also reviewed the responses that have been provided to date in the consultation. Cabinet members have decided that the proposal relating to changing the eligibility criteria for Working Tax Credit should be postponed at this time, but a further review and consideration will take place once the Universal Credit roll out in Stockport has been completed.
- 2.3 To remove the faith element of free school travel eligibility. This will involve omitting catchment and associated Catholic school areas in the Free School Transport Policy in favour of: *The nearest School to the pupil's home address with places available*. And omitting the criteria regarding provision of funding or assistance to pupils wanting to attend faith institutions outside of the Borough, where there isn't provision within the Borough boundaries.
- 2.4 Cabinet members intend to continue to proceed with the Faith Schools proposal. However after hearing the concerns of the parents and in light of other responses to the consultation, have agreed to phase the introduction of this proposal in order to mitigate the impact on parents and families who have already made choices regarding their child's school.
- 2.5 Cabinet members have considered a number of options for a phased implementation and have agreed that the new proposal will apply to the cohort of pupils entering secondary faith schools at and later than September 2020. This would include any in-year transfers post September 2020 to year cohorts where the new policy applies. Pupils who are receiving free school travel under the current policy as it relates to faith schools will be given two years notice of the full implementation of the new policy from September 2022. This would mean that the full savings outlined would be achieved at September 2022 across both primary and secondary schools.
- 2.6 **Phase two** of this review focusses on local travel provision in Stockport. A range of travel services are commissioned by the Council and Partner agencies to help people access services, school, or their local area. We intend to undertake a piece of work to consolidate these approaches and develop a Stockport Local Specialist Travel Plan
- 2.7 The major part of the review will continue to identify efficiencies in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities transport budget supporting 19 – 25 year olds. We will complete the review ensuring that we are fully compliant with SEND legislation and all statutory requirements. We are aware that the SEND population is likely to increase at a higher rate than the general population, and a likely effect is more pupils requiring specialist provision and hence eligible for transport too. This exacerbates the need to ensure that we are securing value for money in all our procurement activities.

- 2.8 Specialist transport commissioning expertise will be sourced for a period of 6 months to review all the transport provision provided by the Council. This will include reviewing all other transport programmes, suppliers and contracts in order to secure efficiencies through improved commissioning, procurement and contract management. The current commissioning arrangements are complex and indicate an expenditure of £3 million with over 133 providers. The range of transport services in scope of this review include:
- Home to educational settings (excluding nurseries) travel for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs or disabilities. This is provided through free bus passes for local bus services, coaches, minibuses, taxis, private hire cars and personal budgets. It also includes the provision of passenger assistants where required and independent travel training. We currently transport 548 pupils on 130 different routes and we have another 49 who are in receipt of a personal budget. Demand levels are expected to increase.
- 2.9 Any transport proposal needs to be seen in the context of Transport for Greater Manchester and their activities in this area. This may result in current service provision changing, a review of eligibility and a determination of more efficient travel routes which take into account individual children's needs. The review needs to ensure that the money available to subsidise transport best serves those with the greatest needs and that our transport system as a whole meets strategic priorities across the Stockport Partnership.
- 2.10 The key aim of this work is to identify a new approach that meets the needs of the wider Stockport Partnership, schools and colleges, health and social care providers, respite providers and residents in general and achieves savings in operational costs of at least £0.300m by April 2020.
- 2.11 A report on the options and stakeholder presentations/workshops are the expected outputs of this phase of work. It is anticipated that up to 3-4 options may be generated as the plan develops and that a workshop will be held with key stakeholders including families to identify the preferred options to be incorporated in the final plan. The outputs that will be incorporated in the options report include
- The aspirations and potential projects already identified by key stakeholders need to be captured as an early element of the option generation process.
  - 3-4 potential options which should include information about potential timescales e.g. short, medium and long term, approximate savings, benefits and risks. The options promoted should consider minimum, optimal and aspirational solutions.
  - The draft implementation plan, resource requirements and analysis of potential impact
  - A strategic case for the future delivery of travel services, leading to a clear vision for the future
  - An understanding and analysis of key stakeholder aspirations and planned projects

- A transport capacity analysis (taking into account future forecast demand as well as current demand and recent trends)
- Detailed analysis of the committed transport and non-transport projects that impact on, or are impacted by, the proposed changes to transport provision.
- Development of preferred options for future travel provision for children and young people with SEND and adult community travel within Stockport. These options should include information about potential timescales e.g. short, medium and long term, the potential savings to be achieved and risks and benefits.

2.12 In addition we will also review Community Transport for adults with mobility difficulties or disabilities who are unable to use public transport. This is currently delivered through the Stockport Car Scheme volunteer driver service and Easy-Go accessible vehicles. We will explore whether this model provides further opportunities for service delivery enhancements.

### **3.0 Consultation update summary – Full report in the Appendix 5a and 5b**

#### **3.1 Town Centre Shuttle Bus**

Consultation methods included publicly available online questionnaire, posters on buses, at key transport locations, libraries and council public reception areas, social media messages, targeted communication through local business networks, targeted consultation with Disability Stockport. There have been 659 responses to the consultation.

The majority of respondents so far (526, 79.8%) either disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal. A lower proportion of respondents either agree or agree strongly with the proposal (101, 15.3%). There were 18, 2.7% of respondents that neither agree or disagree and just 7 respondents chose 'don't know'.

One of the key issues that was raised during the consultation was that there are no other bus services that cover parts of the Stockport Metroshuttle route, such as Stockport Train Station. In order to try and mitigate the impact of the removal of this service we have negotiated with Transport for Greater Manchester the alteration of an existing bus service to include Stockport Train Station every hour, at no extra cost. In addition, from April 2019 we will undertake promotional activity to raise awareness of the alternative buses that cover parts of the Metroshuttle route.

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

<b>Issue identified in the consultation</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>
There is particular concern for vulnerable groups, notably elderly	Provide publicity and inform users of the services of alternative bus routes which may cover part of their journey

Issue identified in the consultation	Mitigating Action
and disabled residents who use the bus	<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 this is the only way that the elderly and disabled can do their grocery shopping.	<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>
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. Discussion to be held with TfGM whether they could use some of the savings they will secure if the service is ceased to reinvest in extending existing bus routes particularly around the Peel Centre and Tesco
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>

In addition Paul Taylor at Totally Stockport submitted comments following engagement with a number of businesses to gauge their opinion during the period of consultation. His comments were “Overall, opinion is showing a fairly even split. However, the majority of the businesses located on Little Underbank would like to see the bus removed from this area of the town centre. Some expressed a feeling that the buses pose a danger to pedestrians on the narrow road while others view it as preventing them from applying to extend their café and restaurant facility and make the area more attractive by including tables and chairs outside”

**Outlined below is an overview of options explored by the Council:**

**a) Seeking alternative funding:**

We have written to large businesses in the Town Centre to ask if they are able to make a contribution, however, we think this is unlikely given the amount of funding that is needed. We are awaiting responses on this.

**b) Identifying alternative Bus Services**

As mentioned above the Council have been in regular contact with Transport for Greater Manchester about any existing bus services that could be diverted to include Stockport Train Station on their route. They have identified the 312 service, which currently runs from Stockport Bus Station to Handforth Dean and have agreed that this service be extended to include the Train Station every hour, Monday to Saturday (see proposed timetable below).

<b>Service 312 extension to Stockport Rail Station</b>						
Monday to Saturday (only showing extended journeys - other 312 journeys are unchanged).						
Handforth Dean, Shopping Centre	0910	1010	1110	1210	1310	1410
Heald Green, Southgate Centre	0918	1018	1118	1218	1318	1418
Outwood Road/Finney Lane	0924	1024	1124	1224	1324	1424
Heald Green, Griffin Hotel	0928	1028	1128	1228	1328	1428
Schools Hill	0931	1031	1131	1231	1331	1431
Cheadle, Post Office	0935	1035	1135	1235	1335	1435
Boundary Bridge	0941	1041	1141	1241	1341	1441
Stockport, Bus Station (Dep)	0952	1052	1152	1252	1352	1452
Edward Street, Stockport Town Hall	0957	1057	1157	1257	1357	1457
Stockport, Railway Station	1002	1102	1202	1302	1402	1502
Stockport, Railway Station	1010	1110	1210	1310	1410	1510
Piccadilly, Stopford House	1015	1115	1215	1315	1415	1515

<b>Service 312 extension to Stockport Rail Station</b>						
Monday to Saturday (only showing extended journeys - other 312 journeys are unchanged).						
Stockport, Bus Station (Dep)	1025	1125	1225	1325	1425	1525
Boundary Bridge	1033	1133	1233	1333	1433	1535
Cheadle, Post Office	1040	1140	1240	1340	1440	1542
Schools Hill	1042	1142	1242	1342	1442	1544
Heald Green, Griffin Hotel	1047	1147	1247	1347	1447	1554
Outwood Road/Finney Lane	1049	1149	1249	1349	1449	1557
Heald Green, Southgate Centre	1055	1155	1255	1355	1455	1603
Handforth Dean, Shopping Centre	1104	1204	1304	1404	1504	1613

- The Council have also identified four bus routes that currently run from Stockport Bus Station to Portwood / the Peel Centre. Three of these bus services run approximately every 10 minutes, Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.
- Only one of these services stops at Tesco Extra, the number 7 and this runs every 30 to 35 minutes.
- Promotional activity of raise awareness of the alternative buses that cover parts of the Metroshuttle route will be run from April.

	<b>Bus Number</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>203</b>
	<b>Route</b>	<b>Stockport to Ashton</b>	<b>Stockport - Brinnington Circular</b>	<b>Stockport to Ashton</b>	<b>Stockport to Manchester</b>
	<b>Frequency Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm</b>	<b>Every 30-35 mins</b>	<b>Not more than every 10 mins</b>	<b>Not more than every 10 mins</b>	<b>Every 10 mins up to 2pm then every 11 mins</b>
<b>Bus Stops</b>	Stockport Bus Station	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Mersey Square	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Great Egerton Street	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Bridge Street	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Warren Street	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Great Portwood Street	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Tesco Extra	Y			

- Transport for Greater Manchester will continue to look at ways to mitigate the impact of the removal of the shuttle bus service through existing transport provision.

### 3.2 Free School Bus Passes

The consultation focussed on the proposal to change the eligibility criteria for free school bus passes. Consultation methods included publicly available online questionnaire, targeted communication to all families in receipt of school bus passes, targeted communication to all schools served by the school bus service, social media messages.

The consultation was undertaken between 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019. Interim consultation results were shared with relevant Scrutiny Committees in January 2019. There were a total of 343 responses to the consultation.

The majority of respondents (291, 84.8%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to change eligibility for free school bus passes to only parents in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credits. A small proportion of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with the proposal (41, 12%) and 10 (2.9%) of the respondents chose neither agree nor disagree.

In relation to the proposal to change the criteria for the allocation of free school bus passes we asked respondents to indicate their preference on the following two options:

- Option 1: To remove all faith schools, including those within the borough, from the eligibility criteria. This would mean, pupils would only be eligible for a school bus pass for the nearest school to their home (with places available) based on distance or other benefits criteria.
- Option 2: Only remove faith schools located outside the borough from the qualifying criteria for free school bus passes.

The highest number of respondents (152, 44.3%) chose neither option 1 or 2. However, a significant proportion of respondents chose Option 2 (138, 40.2%). There was a much lower level of support for Option 1 (43, 12.5%) and 10 (2.9%) respondents didn't have a preference.

On the question of whether people agreed with the timing of the introduction of the new criteria from September 2019, the majority of respondents either disagreed or disagreed strongly (266, 77.6%). Only 34 respondents (9.9%) either agreed or agreed strongly with the proposal.

There were 245 responses to the question about what the impact the reduction in eligibility would have.

The most frequent issue that was raised was the potential negative financial impact this proposal would have, straining household budgets and increasing child poverty. The view that the proposal would adversely impact on religious families and schools was the next most frequent issue raised.



The remaining major issues were:

- Attendance – schools would see a drop in attendance
- Increased travel times – resulting from children having to take alternative travel routes
- Danger – children would be forced to travel in an unsafe manner on unsafe walking and cycling routes
- Traffic – increased congestion on the roads as a result of less taking the bus

A letter was also received from Mary Robinson, MP for Cheadle which is detailed in full in the accompanying consultation report.

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

<b>Issue identified in the consultation</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>
Financial Impact on families	Free travel will continue for those pupils whose nearest qualifying school is outside statutory walking distance. Free travel will continue to be provided to pupils from low income families
Impact on families who have already made choices regarding their child's school.	Consideration to be given to a phased implementation
Religious discrimination	The proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy are intended to ensure that all pupils are treated equitably regardless of whether they attend a denominational or non-denominational school
Faith schools may not have sufficient numbers of pupils	Alternative funding models could be considered to support the retention of the existing free travel or a reduction to part-funded free travel. This could be a combination of funding from the denominational schools or Diocesan authorities

Further details of the consultation results are available in Appendix 5b.

## 4.0 Financial Summary

4.1 The Stockport Local Transport project needs reduce the budget by £0.530m by 2020/2021. The proposals in this report would achieve £0.220m of the £0.530m budget saving required by April 2019. A further £0.275m of savings is proposed for 2019/20 bringing the total savings to £0.495m. This saving is £0.035m below the target savings of £0.530m, however, further options for savings will be explored as part of Phase 2.

4.2 The table below shows the proposed savings and changes to them following Cabinet decisions in relation to the free school bus passes proposals.

Saving Name	Original Full Year Saving 2019/20 £000	Original phased saving 2019/20 £000	Original TOTAL saving £000	New Full Year Savings £000	New Phased Saving £000	New Total Saving 2019/20 £000
Removal of funding for the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle	(220)		(220)	(220)		(220)
School Bus Passes: changes to Working Tax Credit eligibility	(35)		(35)	(0)		(0)
School Bus Passes: removal of discretionary faith element	(17)		(17)		(17)	(17)
Transport Project Phase 2		(258)	(258)		(258)	(258)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(272)</b>	<b>(258)</b>	<b>(530)</b>	<b>(220)</b>	<b>(275)</b>	<b>(495)</b>

## 5.0 Key timescales

Proposal	Milestone description	Date Expected	Output milestone at
Metroshuttle Bus Service	Consultation completed	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	Final report produced
Free School Bus Passes		25 <sup>th</sup> January 2019	
All proposals	Cabinet Decision	5 <sup>th</sup> February 2019	Cabinet decision on the proposal
Metroshuttle Bus Service	Subject to Cabinet Decision – implementation of the approved proposals	27 <sup>th</sup> April 2019	Implementation of proposal
Free School Bus Passes – Faith Schools	Subject to Cabinet Decision – implementation of the approved proposals	Sept 2020	Phased implementation begins

## 6.0 Interdependencies, Constraints, and Risks

Proposal	Interdependencies	Constraints	Risks
Town Centre Metroshuttle Bus	Changes need to be agreed with TfGM who manage the contract on behalf of the Council	Contract in place until 27 <sup>th</sup> April 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative impact on trade and tourism on the town centre</li> <li>Is contrary to the Council's Town Centre investment strategy and Transport Strategy</li> </ul>
School Bus Passes: changes to Working Tax Credit eligibility	Year 6 cohort currently applying for secondary school places will be entering the process under a different set of Free School Transport criteria	Changes cannot be made until the start of the 19/20 academic year in September 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rise in statutory eligible applicants</li> <li>Increased number of unreasonable offers</li> <li>Implementation of Universal Credit causing more students to be eligible</li> <li>Reduced pupil attendance in priority 1 areas</li> <li>Financial impact to families in priority 1 areas</li> </ul>
School Bus Passes: removal of discretionary faith element	Uncertainty regarding the number of children who will be eligible year to year	Changes cannot be made until the start of the 19/20 academic year in September 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flux within the in-year transfer system creates uncertainty as to whether a pupil will be deemed eligible.</li> <li>Redefining 'Suitable School' will affect non-faith applications as well as faith applications</li> <li>Changes in pupil numbers each year affects the eligibility of students</li> <li>Savings may not be realised if pupil numbers increase, causing school capacity issues</li> </ul>

## 7.0 Equality Impact Assessments

### Equality Impact Assessment

**Title:** Stockport Metroshuttle Service Proposal

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Stage:** Final

**Lead Officer:** Caroline Simpson

### 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.

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

We do not 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 has been undertaken where we have asked respondents to categorise themselves against the protected characteristics. This is detailed below in stage 2a below. Whilst the numbers of responders is small compared to the total users we believe there is merit in considering this data.

## Stage 2a: Further data and consultation

Through the consultation we received responses from 442 people who categorised themselves as users of the bus service.

From these responses the following information about the service users was established.

### Gender of Bus Users

	Number	%
Male	113	25.6%
Female	304	68.8%
Prefer to self-describe	1	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	8	1.8%
Not answered	16	3.6%
Total	442	100%

### Age of Bus Users

Age	Number	%
0-17	5	1.1%
18-24	23	5.2%
25-34	40	9.0%
35-44	72	16.3%
45-54	55	12.4%
55-64	92	20.8%
65-74	106	24.0%

75-84	27	6.1%
85+	1	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	9	2.0%
Not answered	12	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

  

Ethnicity of bus users		
	Number	%
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please specify	1	0.23%
Mixed- White and Asian	2	0.45%
Mixed- White and Black African	1	0.23%
Mixed- White and Black Caribbean	1	0.23%
Other ethnic group- Arab	2	0.45%
Prefer not to answer	21	4.75%
White- any other White background, please specify	6	1.36%
White- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	369	83.48%
White- Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0.23%
White- Irish	11	2.49%
Not answered	27	6.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

  

Bus users with an impairment, disability or long term health condition		
	Number	%
No	176	39.8%
Not Answered	14	3.2%
Prefer not to answer	47	10.6%
Yes	205	46.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

  

Religion of Bus Users		
	Number	%
Buddhist	2	0.45%
Christian	211	47.74%
Jewish	2	0.45%
Muslim	1	0.23%
No religion	153	34.62%
Not Answered	25	5.66%
Other	5	1.13%
Prefer not to answer	43	9.73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## Stage 3: Results and Measures

Based on feedback from the results of the consultation exercise, included below 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 this is the only way that the elderly and disabled can do their grocery shopping.	<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>
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. Discussion to be held with TfGM whether they could use some of the savings they will secure if the service is ceased to reinvest in extending existing bus routes particularly around the Peel Centre and Tesco
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</p>

	Ring and Ride, Easy-Go and Stockport Car Scheme.
Impact on Town Centre growth and viability of shops	Continue to seek alternative funders and if successful reintroduce the service at the same or a different frequency  Continue discussions with TFGM

## Stage 4: Decision Stage

This EIA will accompany the proposal through the decision making stages.

### Equality Impact Assessment

Proposal A: Removal of Discretionary Faith Element

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019

Stage: Final

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

Yes, this document will examine the potential impact on groups sharing protected characteristics and ensure any disproportionate impact can be mitigated in some way.

## Stage 2: What do you know?

Background already presented as part of this business case. Further to this:

### Free School Travel Pass Uptake

The table below provides information on free school travel pass uptake in Stockport since 2011. It is evident from the figures provided that there has been a decrease year on year. The decrease ties in with pupil numbers in the secondary sector whereby they've plateaued; capacity has been added to the school system in preparation for predicated increases which in the short term has eased pressures however further capacity is needed to meet the demand our projections indicate. Pupil numbers are going to rise as these cohorts have been tracked through primary sector. Of the 1226 passes issued so far this year 374 are pupils whose eligibility has been based upon faith or a philosophical belief, equalling 30.5% of total applications in this period.

YEAR	TOTAL
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	PASSES ISSUED
2011/12	1482
2012/13	1497
2013/14	1476
2014/15	1419
2015/16	1368
2016/17	1308
2017/18	1294
2018/ to date	1226

Breakdown of pupils made eligible based on faith or philosophical belief:

School	Total Passes Issued
Harrytown Catholic High School	146
St Annes' catholic High School	7
St James' Catholic High School	205
The King David High School	10
Trinity Church of England High School	6

Pupils made eligible based on faith or philosophical belief who will still be eligible following the redefining of 'Suitable School':

School	Still eligible	No longer eligible
Harrytown Catholic High School	146	0
St Annes' catholic High School	7	0
St James' Catholic High School	184	21
The King David High School	0	10
Trinity Church of England High School	0	6

The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are as follows:

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

On the basis of the data outlined above it would seem that pupils who are seeking education at a denominational institution which is not provided within Stockport are being disproportionately affected given that all pupils are impacted by the change. Whilst the numbers remain low, political sensitivities, particularly regarding pupils of the Jewish faith need to be considered by senior management.

Section 509AD of the Education Act 1996 requires the Council to have regard to, amongst other things, a parent's wish for their child to be provided with education or training at a school/institution on grounds of the parent's religion or belief when carrying out their duties/exercising their powers relating to travel. Paragraph 39 of the Guidance referred to above sets out the basis for compliance with these duties/powers, requiring the Council to have due regard to the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires that the Council, in the exercise of its functions, has 'due regard' to the need to;

- a) eliminate discrimination, victimisation, and harassment;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not,
- c) foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

Schedule 3, part 2 of the Equality Act 2010 provides an exemption to discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in relation to transport to or from school.

Local Authorities remain under a general duty to 'have regard' to the wish of a parent for their child to be provided with education at a particular establishment on the grounds of the parents' religion or belief. However, other than the statutory duty towards pupils who are from low income families, there is no statutory duty to provide free transport to denominational schools for children generally.

### **Stage 2a: Further data and consultation**

A consultation was undertaken between 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The results of the consultation have been analysed and can be found in Appendix 5b.

### **Stage 3: Results and Measures**

Cabinet members intend to continue to proceed with the Faith Schools proposal. However after hearing the concerns of the parents and in light of other responses to the consultation, have agreed to phase the introduction of this proposal in order to mitigate the impact on parents and families who have already made choices regarding their child's school.

Cabinet members have considered a number of options for a phased implementation and have agreed that the new proposal will apply to the cohort of pupils entering secondary faith schools at and later than September 2020. This would include any in-year transfers post September 2020 to year cohorts where the new policy applies. Pupils who are receiving free school travel under the current policy as it relates to faith schools will be given two years notice of the full implementation of the new policy from September 2022. This would mean that the full savings outlined would be achieved at September 2022 across both primary and secondary schools.

### **Stage 4: Decision Stage**

This EIA will accompany the proposal through the decision making stages.

## Equality Impact Assessment

Proposal B: Variation in Low Income definition

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019

Stage: Final

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

Yes, as decisions are being made regarding the future provision of Free School Transport in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit and possible changes to the existing eligibility criteria.

This EIA considers the potential change to the criteria within the existing Free School Transport policy to the minimum statutory duty for the above category of applicants.

The document will consider the potential impact of the proposal with regard to protected characteristics and ensure that the needs of individual groups within the customer base are met.

### Stage 2: What do you know?

Background already presented as part of this business case. Further to this:

#### Free School Travel Pass Uptake

The table below provides information on free school travel pass uptake in Stockport since 2011. It is evident from the figures provided that there has been a decrease year on year. The decrease ties in with pupil numbers in the secondary sector whereby they've plateaued; capacity has been added to the system in preparation for predicated increase in pupil numbers and as such competition for places has been eased. Pupil numbers are going to rise as these cohorts have been tracked through primary sector. Of the 1226 passes issued (2018 to date) 94 are for families who are not in receipt of their maximum Working Tax Credit, equalling 7.6% of total applications in this period.

YEAR	TOTAL PASSES ISSUED
2011/12	1482
2012/13	1497
2013/14	1476
2014/15	1419
2015/16	1368
2016/17	1308
2017/18	1294
2018 to date	1226

Breakdown of working tax credit from this students eligible in 2018 to date

	NUMBER	COST
MAXIMUM WORKING TAX CREDIT	7	£2,646
BELOW MAXIMUM WORKING TAX CREDIT	94	£35,541
TOTAL	101	£38,187

#### Breakdown of working tax credit by area in 2018 to date

	MAX WTC	WTC Will lose bus passes	Current Total
Adswood		9	9
Brinnington	5	49	54
Cale Green		6	6
Cheadle		3	3
Cheadle Heath		2	2
Edgeley	1	3	4
Hazel Grove		3	3
Heald Green		4	4
Heaton Chapel		1	1
Heaton Norris		1	1
High Lane		2	2
Marple		1	1
North Reddish		2	2
Offerton		3	3
Portwood		3	3
Romiley	1	1	2
South Reddish		1	1

There is a potential negative impact on low income families who fall just below the threshold for maximum Working Tax Credits, who do not receive free school meals and live over 2 miles from a suitable school, which would have entitled them to free school transport. This is the group that is most likely to be affected by the proposed change to eligibility criteria and would result in families either having to pay £378 per child (as at November 2018) for an annual travel pass or seeking alternative arrangements. For families with multiple siblings there is the potential for significant additional costs.

It is important to note that the majority of travel passes issued under the existing eligibility criteria are for pupils from areas of deprivation (priority 1) within the Borough and particularly in Brinnington. For example in 2018 to date 52% of the total passes issued were to families who lived in Brinnington and of that 52% only 4.9% will be eligible should the proposals be implemented. Furthermore there is no alternative school provision in the Brinnington area for pupils to attend without the need for bus travel.

### **PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

**Race:** In the context of free school travel in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit, consideration of this matter indicates it is unlikely that there will be any differential impact.

**Disability:** In the context of free school travel in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit, consideration of this matter indicates it is unlikely that there will be any differential impact.

**Gender:** In the context of free school travel in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit, consideration of this matter indicates it is unlikely that there will be any differential impact

**Religion and Belief:** In the context of free school travel in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit, consideration of this matter indicates it is unlikely that there will be any differential impact

**Sexual Orientation:** In the context of free school travel in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit, consideration of this matter indicates it is unlikely that there will be any differential impact

**Age:** In the context of free school travel in respect to families who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit, consideration of this matter indicates it is unlikely that there will be any differential impact

**Socio-economic:** Low income families are likely to be affected by the proposal.

### **Stage 2a: Further data and consultation**

A consultation was undertaken between 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The results of the consultation have been analysed and can be found in Appendix 5b.

### **Stage 3: Results and Measures**

Cabinet members have given further consideration to this proposal especially in the light of the uncertainty of the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit. They have also reviewed the responses that have been provided to date in the consultation. Cabinet members have decided that the proposal relating to

changing the eligibility criteria for Working Tax Credit should be postponed at this time, but a further review and consideration will take place once the Universal Credit roll out in Stockport has been completed.

#### **Stage 4: Decision Stage**

This EIA will accompany the proposal through the decision making stages.

### **9.0 Appendices**

Appendix 5a: Town Centre Metroshuttle Bus Consultation Report

Appendix 5b School Bus Passes: Consultation Report