

## **APPENDIX 5a**

### **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 a summary of the feedback received from the consultation exercise that was undertaken between 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

There were a total of 659 responses to the consultation, 598 responses provided through the online questionnaire and 61 paper questionnaires were received.

The majority of respondents (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 agreed or disagreed and 7 (1%) 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.

The response from local businesses located on Little Underbank is that they 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

#### **2. Consultation Methodology**

A range of consultation methods were undertaken between 7<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The main method was an online public survey on the Council website.

The following consultation and communication activity was undertaken to encourage stakeholders to take part:

- 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
- An 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. From April 2019, the contribution the Council would need to make increases to £0.248m each year.

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

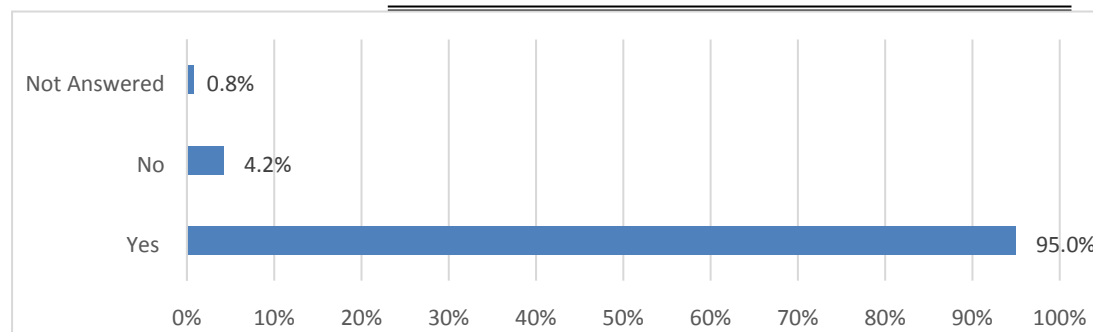
## 4. Results of the Consultation

In total, 659 responses have been received to this consultation.

### Responses to the proposals

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

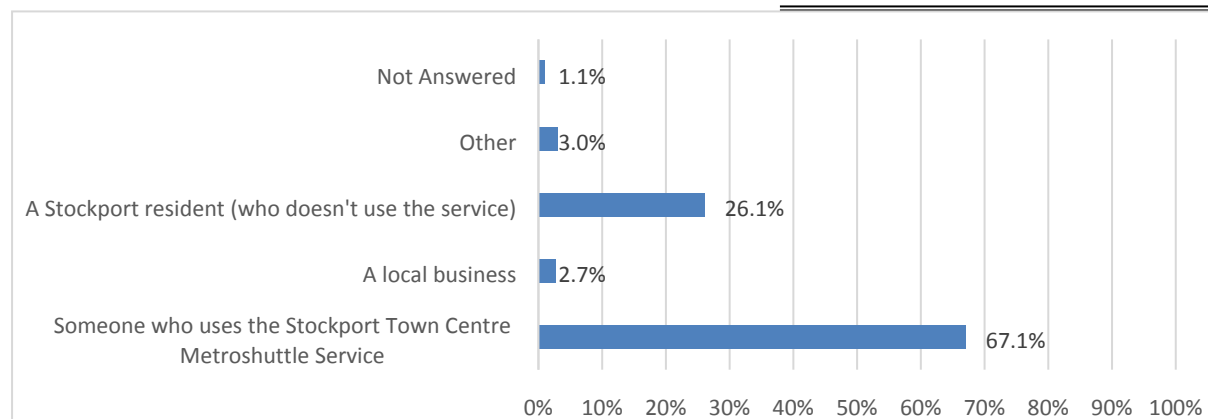
	Online	Paper	Total	%
Yes	568	58	626	95.0%
No	28	0	28	4.2%
Not Answered	2	3	5	0.8%
	598	61	659	100.0%



Q2. Are you?

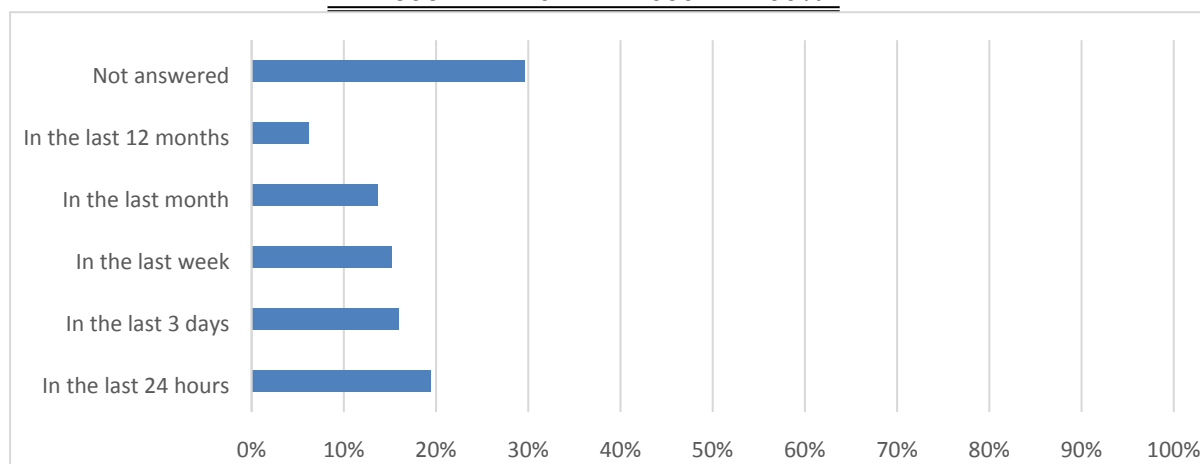
Someone who uses the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle Service  
 A local business  
 A Stockport resident (who doesn't use the service)  
 Other  
 Not Answered

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Someone who uses the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle Service	398	44	442	67.1%
A local business	18	0	18	2.7%
A Stockport resident (who doesn't use the service)	159	13	172	26.1%
Other	20	0	20	3.0%
Not Answered	3	4	7	1.1%
	598	61	659	100%



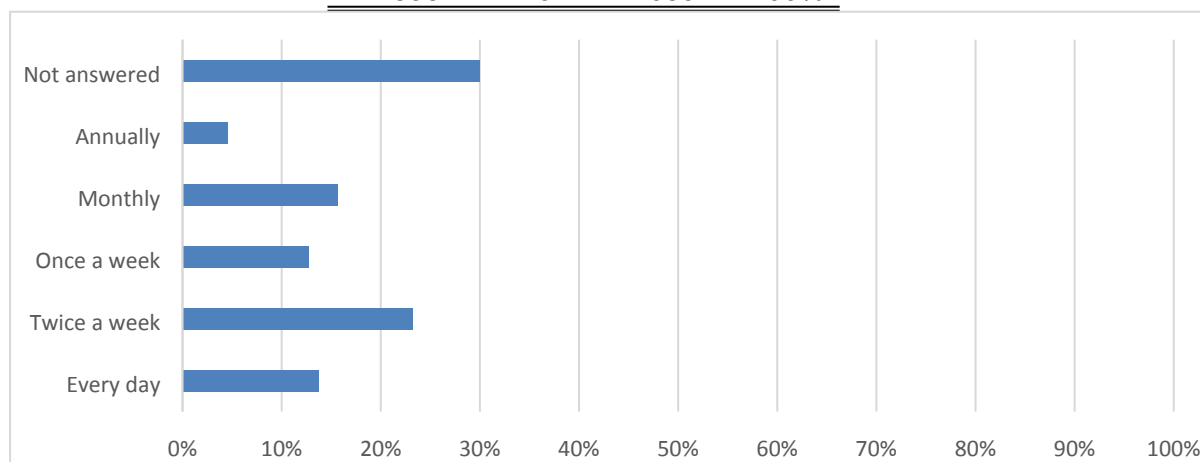
### Q3. When were you last on the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle bus?

	Online	Paper	Total	%
In the last 24 hours	114	14	128	19.4%
In the last 3 days	92	13	105	15.9%
In the last week	91	9	100	15.2%
In the last month	86	4	90	13.7%
In the last 12 months	34	7	41	6.2%
Not answered	181	14	195	29.6%
	598	61	659	100%



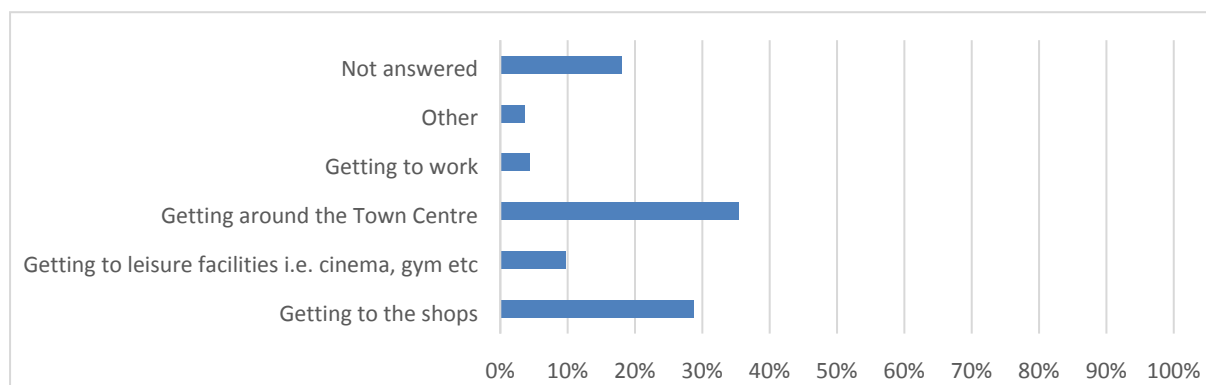
### Q4. Approximately how often do you use this service?

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Every day	76	15	91	13.8%
Twice a week	140	13	153	23.2%
Once a week	79	5	84	12.7%
Monthly	95	8	103	15.6%
Annually	26	4	30	4.6%
Not answered	182	16	198	30.0%
	598	61	659	100%



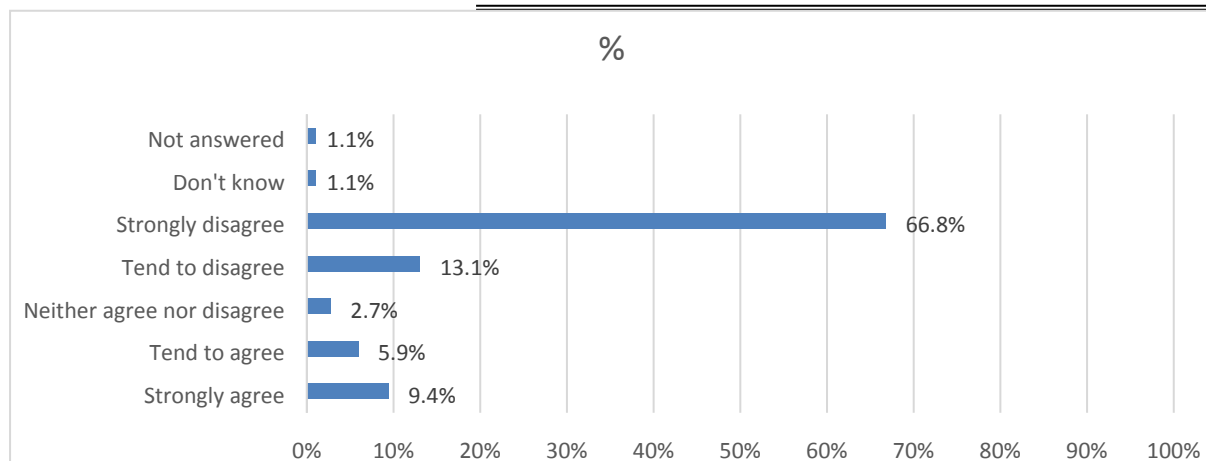
Q5. What do you use this bus service for? (select all that apply)

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Getting to the shops	270	38	308	28.8%
Getting to leisure facilities i.e. cinema, gym etc	95	9	104	9.7%
Getting around the Town Centre	342	37	379	35.4%
Getting to work	39	8	47	4.4%
Other	33	6	39	3.6%
Not answered	180	14	194	18.1%
	959	112	1071	100%



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?

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Strongly agree	57	5	62	9.4%
Tend to agree	38	1	39	5.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	18	0	18	2.7%
Tend to disagree	80	6	86	13.1%
Strongly disagree	396	44	440	66.8%
Don't know	7	0	7	1.1%
Not answered	2	5	7	1.1%
	598	61	659	100%



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

There were 547 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 people 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, neck 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 slippery. 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.
- If the service was no longer available, it would greatly limit my ability to carry out daily routine activities like grocery shopping (especially since I have two young children and often have to bring them with me).
- I have had problems walking 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
- If you don't have a car, Stockport Town Centre is quite stretched out and carrying large shopping bags from Portwood to the bus station is enough for fit able-bodied people but will become impossible for the less abled/elderly.
- I am sure many people especially the elderly and disabled section of the community will become more isolated.
- Would become very isolated, very bad at walking and without this bus would find it hard to get around Stockport to do food shopping and daily activities

#### **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 351 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 town 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 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 Metroshuttle 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

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Male	194	18	212	32.2%
Female	370	37	407	61.8%
Prefer to self-describe	1	0	1	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	14	1	15	2.3%
Not answered	19	5	24	3.6%
	598	61	659	100%

### Age

	Online	Paper	Total	%
0-17	5	0	5	0.8%
18-24	32	2	34	5.2%
25-34	70	1	71	10.8%
35-44	107	7	114	17.3%
45-54	93	10	103	15.6%
55-64	131	12	143	21.7%
65-74	115	13	128	19.4%
75-84	21	10	31	4.7%
85+	1	0	1	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	13	0	13	2.0%
Not answered	10	6	16	2.4%
	598	61	659	100.0%

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

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Yes	226	25	251	38.1%
No	310	25	335	50.8%
Prefer not to answer	50	4	54	8.2%
Not answered	12	7	19	2.9%
	598	61	659	100.0%

## How would you describe your ethnic group?

	Online	Paper	Total	%
White- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	507	40	547	83.0%
White- Irish	8	3	11	1.7%
White- Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	3	4	0.6%
White- any other White background, please specify	12	2	14	2.1%
Mixed- White and Black Caribbean	1	0	1	0.2%
Mixed- White and Black African	1	0	1	0.2%
Mixed- White and Asian	2	2	4	0.6%
Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please	0	0	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British-Indian	1	0	1	0.2%
Asian or Asian British- Pakistani	1	0	1	0.2%
Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	0	1	1	0.2%
Asian or Asian British- Chinese	0	0	0	0.0%
Any other Asian background, please specify	1	0	1	0.2%
Black or Black British- African	0	0	0	0.0%
Black or Black British- Caribbean	0	0	0	0.0%
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please				
specify	1	0	1	0.2%
Other ethnic group- Arab	1	1	2	0.3%
Any other ethnic group, please specify	1	0	1	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	26	3	29	4.4%
Not answered	34	6	40	6.1%
	598	61	659	100.0%

## Employment Status

	Online	Paper	Total	%
Employed Full Time	193	6	199	30.2%
Employed Part Time	91	10	101	15.3%
Self-Employed	36	2	38	5.8%
Unemployed	15	1	16	2.4%
Long term Disabled/Sick	48	10	58	8.8%
Homemaker/Carer	21	0	21	3.2%
Retired	144	21	165	25.0%
Student	11	1	12	1.8%
Other	4	0	4	0.6%
Prefer not to answer	23	3	26	3.9%
Not answered	12	7	19	2.9%
	598	61	659	100.0%

## How would you describe your religion or belief?

	Online	Paper	Total	%
No religion	233	13	246	37.3%
Christian	278	28	306	46.4%
Muslim	2	1	3	0.5%
Hindu	0	0	0	0.0%
Buddhist	3	0	3	0.5%
Jewish	2	0	2	0.3%
Sikh	0	0	0	0.0%
Other	8	3	11	1.7%
Prefer not to answer	52	4	56	8.5%
Not answered	20	12	32	4.9%
	598	61	659	100.0%

## Respondents by Ward

Of the 659 people who responded to the consultation 609 provided postcodes, and 519 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	99	15.0%
Edgeley and Cheadle Heath	58	8.8%
Manor	53	8.0%
Davenport and Cale Green	42	6.4%
Reddish South	31	4.7%
Stepping Hill	26	3.9%
Heatons South	26	3.9%
Offerton	23	3.5%
Bredbury and Woodley	22	3.3%
Cheadle Hulme North	19	2.9%
Heatons North	15	2.3%
Bramhall North	15	2.3%
Hazel Grove	15	2.3%
Cheadle and Gatley	13	2.0%
Marple South	11	1.7%
Reddish North	11	1.7%
Bredbury Green and Romiley	11	1.7%
Marple North	10	1.5%
Heald Green	9	1.4%
Bramhall South and Woodford	8	1.2%
Cheadle Hulme South	2	0.3%
Incomplete postcode provided	90	13.7%
Postcode not provided	50	7.6%
	<b>659</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In addition feedback was also received from Paul Taylor at Totally Stockport. His response was as follows:

Following Stockport Council's intention to remove funding for Stockport's Metroshuttle Free bus service in the town centre, I have engaged with a number of businesses to gauge their opinion during the period of consultation. 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.

### Scrutiny Committees

The proposal has been shared with the relevant Scrutiny Committees on a number of occasions over the past few months. A wide range of comments have been provided to cabinet members. The full range of comments can be found in the published minutes of the Scrutiny Committees.

Comments included that this was a valued and well used service and that discontinuing the free bus would be a significant loss to residents, particularly older residents, those with a disability and those residents on a low income. The impact on existing businesses was also highlighted. Other comments noted that given the other reductions to services being proposed it was not possible to justify continued expenditure on a free bus service. There was strong support for officers to continue to seek other funding options from local business, particularly the large supermarkets, as they were benefiting from the service, and with TfGM to negotiate extending existing routes.

### **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.

<b>Issue identified in the consultation</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>
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>

Issue identified in the consultation	Mitigating Action
	Continue to seek alternative funders and if successful reintroduce the service at the same or a different frequency.
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>

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Cabinet Members are asked to note the report.