

KCC - Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate (GET).

Equality Analysis / Impact Assessment (EqIA) template

Thanet Bus Network and Sevenoaks Service 404/405 revisions 2018 / 19

Name of decision, policy, procedure, project or service:

Thanet Bus Network and Sevenoaks Service 404/405 revisions 2018 / 19

Brief description of policy, procedure, project or service

Since deregulation of the bus industry in 1985, local transport authorities have had a duty to consider funding public bus services that are not commercially viable for bus operators to run but the authority considers to be important for residents and users as without them they would not be able to access essential services such as education, employment, healthcare and food shopping.

Although there is a statutory requirement to consider funding this activity, the actual provision of these services is discretionary and local transport authorities can conclude not to financially support them. Kent County Council (KCC) has a tradition of providing funding for these bus services which operate in rural areas or at times of the day or on days of the week where usage is low and today spends around £5.7m per annum subsidising 116 bus services or journeys that would otherwise not operate.

Aims and Objectives

In order to meet the financial challenge being posed by reducing funding from central government, KCC's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) had previously identified a reduction in what we spend on buses of £4m over the 2018/19 and 2019 / 20 financial years.

The process to prepare and plan a program to materialise this saving raised significant public concern about the impact of this level of reduction which in turn raised concern among KCCs elected Members about the extent to which this level of cuts would effect some Kent residents. Meanwhile a better than anticipated financial settlement from Central Government enabled the Council to significantly reduce the savings target from £4m to £0.45m.

The Council is needing to make this £0.45m saving by the start of the 2019/20 financial year and is committing to doing so in the fairest way possible, having taken account of equality factors. It is proposed to achieve this through an approach which is more intelligent than simply applying the Councils criteria for funding buses and cancelling contracts which in turn would likely result in bus services ceasing to operate completely.

Instead, officers have engaged with all operators of subsidised services to invite ideas for savings where similar replacement services might carry on unchanged or where alternative services could provide slightly reduced levels of service or journeys running at different times or from slightly different locations, all without impacting on the ability of children to get from home to school.

A number of proposals have been received but some, for example those which relate to the use of demand responsive transport, are considered too sensitive or radical for progression without further thought and engagement with stakeholders and the wider public.

Two proposals; one from Stagecoach in respect of services running in Thanet and one from Goach in respect of services running in Sevenoaks were received and are intended to be progressed following local consultation. The proposals will save KCC a total of £410k per annum.

The services affected are identified below along with a summary of the changes that may be applied.

Thanet changes

- 39: Sherwood Gardens loop, Dumpton and Nixon Avenue*
- 42: Windermere Avenue/Rydal Avenue, Nethercourt*
- 56: St Peter's Road/Vicarage Street, St Peter's and Stone Road/Lanthorne Road/Knights Avenue, Broadstairs*

Stagecoach has undertaken to amend its current commercial network in the area to provide similar journey opportunities to the services identified albeit they may operate less frequently, at different times and in some instances require passengers to walk to mainline bus routes – whilst this will mean that most areas continue to have access to reasonable alternatives a loss of journey choice and some particular difficulties for disabled or elderly passengers unable to undertake the walk distances concerned may be experienced.

Sevenoaks Changes

- 404: Edenbridge – Sevenoaks – Plaxtol*
- 405: Sevenoaks – Otford – West Kingsdown*

Go Coach have proposed revisions to service 404 from Edenbridge to Sevenoaks/Plaxtol to Borough Green. The proposal has two elements, the first is to take a current coach contract carrying children entitled to free mainstream home to school transport from Edenbridge and other outlying areas served to Sevenoaks School and convert it to a school-focused commercial bus service. The second element is the refocusing of the current service 404 on Edenbridge to Sevenoaks, dropping Plaxtol to Borough Green which is already covered by another service which offers more regular journeys but to Borough Green and Tonbridge as opposed to Sevenoaks. Similarly, the withdrawal of 'Wednesdays only' 405 is mitigated for most areas served by the presence of alternative service (429) from this area operating hourly to Dartford and Swanley.

The EQIA and the more detailed assessment of the services and current service users will consider the impact of the changes and on service users in protected groups. It will be updated on an ongoing basis, notably following completion of local consultation which will be used to help inform us of the implications for all bus passengers but particularly those protected under The Equality Act 2010.

JUDGEMENT

Initial Screening : Continue the policy

The approach being proposed to materialising the saving has been specifically identified to protect Kent residents and service users from the very acute impact of complete service withdrawals without alternative solutions.

Three protected groups (relating to age, disability and those with carer responsibilities) have been identified as being more reliant on public transport than other bus users and also being represented on one or more of the services identified for potential subsidy withdrawal. Understanding of the full impact on these groups and of any unique impacts on others protected groups will be informed through the consultation process. This will be used to update the EQIA which in turn will feature as part of the final decision making process.

I have found the Adverse Equality Impact Rating to be High

GET Document Control

Revision History

Version	Date	Authors	Comment
V1	13.03.18	Steve Pay	Initial Screening; first draft of EQIA document provided to the director for signing. This will be supported by the more detailed service analysis which is being worked on separately will be included an appendix to this document.
V2	15.05.18	Steve Pay	Second Draft updated to take account of completion of detailed appendix and associated detail.
V3	03.10.18	Steve Pay	Third draft to take account of update to detailed impact assessment by service in respect of Thanet changes and pending progression towards consultation.
V4	21.11.18	Steve Pay	Final draft taking account of further comments from the Equalities team.

Date Document Updated 21/11/2018

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This document is available in other formats. Please contact diversityinfo@Kent.gov.uk or telephone on 03000 415 762

Document Sign-Off (this must be both the relevant Head of Service and the relevant Director)

Attestation

I have read and paid due regard to the Equality Analysis/Impact Assessment. I agree with the actions to mitigate any adverse impact(s) that has /have been identified.

Name	Signature	Title	Date of Issue
Phil Lightowler		Head of Service	21.11.18
Simon Jones		Director	21.11.18

Part 1 - Screening

Regarding the decision, policy, procedure, project or service under consideration,

Could this policy, procedure, project or service, or any proposed changes to it, affect any Protected Group (listed below) less favourably (negatively) than others in Kent?

Could this policy, procedure, project or service promote equal opportunities for this group?

Please note that there is no justification for direct discrimination; and indirect discrimination will need to be justified according to the legal requirements

Protected Group	You MUST provide a brief commentary as to your findings, or this EqlA will be returned to you unsigned			
	High Negative Impact	Medium Negative Impact	Low Negative Impact	High/Medium/Low Favourable Impact
Age	It has been identified that older persons are potentially more reliant on the public transport network than other protected groups or members of the wider public. Some services proposed for withdrawal have been identified as carrying passengers from this group and the impact			

	of the withdrawal of transport will be significant particularly if this represents the only available transport for a given area.			
Disability	It has been identified that disabled persons are potentially more reliant on the public transport network than other protected groups or members of the wider public. Some services proposed for withdrawal have been identified as carrying passengers from this group and the impact of the withdrawal of transport will be significant particularly if this represents the only available transport for a given area.			
Gender				

Gender identity/ Transgender				
Race				
Religion and Belief				
Sexual Orientation				
Pregnancy and Maternity				
Marriage and Civil Partnerships				
Carer's Responsibilities	It has been identified that persons with carer responsibilities are potentially more reliant on the public transport network than other protected groups or members of the wider public. Some services proposed for withdrawal have been identified as carrying passengers from this group and the impact of the withdrawal of transport will be significant particularly			

	if this represents the only available transport for a given area.			
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Part 2 - Full Equality Analysis /Impact Assessment

From the screening grid, identify the Protected Groups impacted

Any user of one of the services potentially included within the savings measures will be adversely affected by any reduction or withdrawal of service. However, of the protected groups covered by Equality legislation, it is considered that those within the protected groups of; Age, Disability and those with Carer responsibilities are likely to be more reliant on public transport and have been identified as being user groups of one or more of the services included for potential reduction or withdrawal.

Information and Data used to carry out your assessment

The overall EqIA and more individual service analysis will be informed by a range of intelligence including;

- Passenger and ticketing information provided to the Council by operators throughout the life of the contract. This will inform the initial screening and enables the Council to identify some passenger groups through ticket types.
- Data held by the Council, held on its concessionary travel database, in relation to concessionary travel journeys, analysed by service.
- On bus inspections that will complement the passenger data and will seek to identify particular user groups (such as the older persons and persons with mobility impairments) and particular travel habits and journey purpose (i.e. day / time critical journeys not achievable on other, remaining public transport).
- Existing knowledge of contract managers and other officers of the Council regarding service and user characteristics.
- Local consultation that will invite information from users about their journey purpose and the impact of the proposed changes.
- Bus operator, passenger and wider resident engagement

Who will you involved consulted and engaged with?

The following parties will be engaged through the public consultation process;

- Bus operators
- Bus Service Users
- Bus Users
- Parish Councils
- Specialist Groups (Aged UK, Kent Association for the Blind, Mobility and Access Groups etc.)
- Wider Public (through local consultation)
- KCC elected members

Analysis

Initial screening (03/01/2018):

Initial screening has identified that of all protected groups, those falling within the following groups; Age, Disability and those with Carer responsibilities are likely to be more reliant on public transport and have been identified as being user groups of one or more of the services included for potential reduction or withdrawal. As such there is the potential for a clear and adverse impact on these groups in the event that the proposal to make the changes identified progresses.

Whilst it is likely that other users will also fall within other protected groups, these are not considered to be more adversely impacted by these changes than any other bus user.

The full extent of the impact on the effected groups and of anyn impact on any other protected groups will be further informed by the outcome of public consultaion and will be used to inform final decisions.

Final findings: (to be informed by inspections, public engagement and consultation)

Adverse Impact,

Initial screening (13/03/2018):

At this stage, it is possible to identify that there will be adverse impact on three protected groups namely; Elderly Persons, Disabled persons and persons with Carer responsibilities all of whom have also been identified as user groups on one or more of the services identified. However, the precise extent of this impact will remain unknown until completion of the local consultation and following more detailed analysis of the services and users.

Final findings: (to be informed by inspections, public engagement and consultation)

Positive Impact:

Ultimately there will be no positive impact for users of services / journeys subject to reduction or withdrawal.

JUDGEMENT

Continue the policy

Although every effort will be made to mitigate the impact of decisions, as identified through the action plan (as in section 3), ultimately, the Council is needing to materialise savings against current levels of spend on Socially Necessary Public Bus Services and this is not achievable without reductions or withdrawal to services which will have an adverse impact on some protected groups.

Three protected groups have been identified as being more reliant on public transport than other bus users and also being represented on one or more of the services identified for potential subsidy withdrawal. Understanding of the full impact on these groups and of any unique impacts on others protected groups will be informed through the public consultation process. This will be used to update the EQIA which in turn will feature as part of the final decision making process.

However, short of deferring the entire saving, it is implausible to consider that there can be changes or mitigation developed through the action plan that can completely remove any impact on protected EQIA groups any more than there can be for any other user of the service. For this reason, a continuation of the 'policy' to materialise savings is identified as the judgement but with a commitment to develop an action plan and mitigation to limit impacts wherever possible.

Part 3 - Action Plan

Protected Characteristic	Issues identified	Action to be taken	Expected outcomes	Owner	Timescale	Cost implications
Age – older persons	Greater reliance on bus services heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group.	Approach identified will seek to work with bus bus operators to develop their proposals to mitigate impact and / or reduce the value of savings required.	To, where possible, protect services carrying this user group.	Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager	Decisions to be made for implementation in the April 2019	£0.45m per annum if not materialising the savings required.
Disabled	Greater reliance on bus services heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group. Access to information about	Approach identified will seek to work with bus bus operators to develop their proposals to mitigate impact and / or reduce the value of savings required.	To, where possible, protect services carrying this user group.	Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager	Decisions to be made for implementation in the April 2019	£0.45m per annum if not materialising the measures required.

	the consultation and any subsequent service changes which could be compromised by disability, most notably visual impairment.					
Carer	Greater reliance on bus services heightens the impact of any service withdrawal or reduction on this user group.	Approach identified will seek to work with bus operators to develop their proposals to mitigate impact and / or reduce the value of savings required.	To, where possible, protect services carrying this user group.	Steve Pay, Public Transport Planning and Operations Manager	Decisions to be made for implementation in April 2019	£0.45m per annum if not materialising the measures required.

Have the actions been included in your business/ service plan?

Individual actions identified and will be monitored through HT&W's Divisional and Service Level Business Plan bi-monthly review meetings.