

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

11 October 2016

Subject: Passenger Transport Review

Cabinet Member: Councillor Philip Whitehead - Highways and Transport

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary

Faced with increasing demands for services against its limited resources, the Council has reviewed discretionary expenditure in the passenger transport service. The main aim of the service is to provide transport for education, access to rural areas that are not served by the commercial bus network, and access to employment. This paper proposes changes to the Wiltshire Council supported bus services as a result of the recent consultation.

Extensive stakeholder and public consultation was undertaken from mid-2015 to April 2016 to help determine the impact of any reduction to Wiltshire Council supported bus services, particularly on individuals. The results of the consultation were reported to Cabinet on 14 June 2016. A total of 11,093 responses were received to the public consultation, making this the second largest response to any Wiltshire Council consultation.

It was highlighted in the consultation questionnaire that the consultation was focused on Wiltshire Council supported bus services and not commercial bus services. It was also highlighted that the consultation was not a detailed consultation on particular routes, timetables or destinations, and as there would be many combinations of possible supported bus service changes, the Council had not yet determined what these changes might be; however, information on bus services 'at risk' was provided. Instead, it was made clear that responses to the consultation would improve the Council's knowledge and understanding and would help guide the Council's subsequent decisions on any supported bus service changes.

The consultation findings show that supported public transport is not simply about getting from A to B, but that its output underpins core priorities for individuals, communities and business as detailed in the Council's Business Plan. For instance, it contributes by providing access to essential services, such as medical facilities, shops and social activities, improving the health and quality of life by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air quality pollutants, as well as enhancing the economic prosperity of Wiltshire and the wider region.

This report will consider the outcome of the consultation and the implications that any change to its public transport policy may have on the residents and communities in Wiltshire.

There is no magic answer to funding and maintaining subsidised local bus services in rural areas and the consultation did not produce any such magic answer. Fundamentally, subsidised bus services in rural areas need to be supported if they are going to exist in the future. However, this comprehensive review and consultation did not reveal an easy solution for protecting services in the current challenging financial environment.

Wiltshire Council explored the potential to increase Community Bus provision and will continue to support community schemes and expand these where possible but these schemes are often limited to the community that they serve and that also provide the volunteer drivers and organisers.

In addition, we have considered proposals put forward by Option 24/7 and will continue to work collaboratively in the future but none of the proposals are available in the immediate future and meanwhile Wiltshire Council needs to continue to provide sustainable services.

However, the consultation has provided Wiltshire Council with valuable information which will allow savings to be made across subsidised services with minimal reduction on the ability to travel by bus. The report recommends looking at bus services with subsidies above those approved in the Local Transport Plan, where significant savings can be achieved by removing less than 1% of total available services. Again, on these services, assuming passengers use alternative services, it is expected that over 97% of the journeys will continue to be provided.

This level of service protection has not been achieved by most other rural counties where we have seen significant reductions of service this year.

Finally, Wiltshire Council believes that further efficiencies are achievable through increased collaboration and integration with the Health Authority and SEND transport. Future savings in these areas would help protect the overall services available to public in Wiltshire.

Proposal(s)

It is recommended that:

- (i) Review all passenger trip subsidies above the thresholds set out in the Local Transport Plan and together with other measures described in this report achieve £500,000 savings in the passenger transport budget. Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is given delegation to make final decision following consultation of specific services which fall under this criteria.
- (ii) Wiltshire Council works more closely with the Health Authority to the mutual benefit of both organisations, particularly around the integration of NEPTS with SEND and Social Care transport and the development of the Public Transport Strategy.

Reason for Proposal(s)

In order for Wiltshire Council to meet future budget pressures and ensure that a sustainable, long-term solution to passenger transport in Wiltshire is maintained.

Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. For Cabinet to agree a sustainable approach to supported bus service provision in Wiltshire.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Wiltshire LTP Public Transport Strategy is relevant to all the Business Plan's outcomes:

Outcome 1: Wiltshire has a thriving and growing local economy

The public transport strategy can:

- Support the local economy by making it easy for workers, shoppers and visitors to access local centres and facilitate development growth by helping to facilitate the planned housing and employment growth set out in the Wiltshire Core Strategy.
- Improve journey time reliability for road users by removing some car trips from the highway network and therefore reducing congestion and delays.

Outcome 2: People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them

The public transport strategy can:

- Enable local groups to operate community and voluntary transport schemes particularly to provide local access and safety net transport services to meet needs that cannot be effectively provided by other means such as the Link schemes.
- Help support community rail partnerships to improve stations and train services.

Outcome 3: Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment

The public transport strategy can:

- Enhance the built and natural environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air quality pollutants.

Outcome 4: Wiltshire has inclusive communities where everyone can achieve their potential

The public transport strategy can:

- Provide access to key services and facilities for Protected Characteristics groups as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. Faced with increasing demands for services against its limited resources, the Council has reviewed discretionary expenditure in the passenger transport service. The main aim of the service is to provide transport for education, access to rural areas that are not served by the commercial bus network, and access to employment.
4. Extensive stakeholder and public consultation was undertaken from mid-2015 to April 2016 to help determine the impact of any reduction to Wiltshire Council supported bus services, particularly on individuals. The results of the consultation were reported to Cabinet on 14 June 2016. A total of 11,093 responses were received to the public consultation, making this the second largest response to any Wiltshire Council consultation.
5. It was highlighted in the consultation questionnaire that the consultation was focused on Wiltshire Council supported bus services and not commercial bus services. It was also highlighted that the consultation was not a detailed consultation on particular routes, timetables or destinations, and as there would be many combinations of possible supported bus service changes, the Council had not yet determined what these changes might be; however, information on bus services 'at risk' was provided. Instead, it was made clear that responses to the consultation would improve the Council's knowledge and understanding and would help guide the Council's subsequent decisions on any supported bus service changes.
6. The consultation findings show that supported public transport is not simply about getting from A to B, but that its output underpins the core priorities for individuals, communities and business as detailed in the Council's Business Plan. For instance, it contributes by providing access to essential services, such as medical facilities, shops and social activities, improving the health and quality of life by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air quality pollutants, as well as enhancing the economic prosperity of Wiltshire and the wider region.
7. Of these 11,093 questionnaires, around 3,000 were completed from a stock that was issued "on bus" by officers and bus drivers, and confirms that the consultation results are representative of bus users in Wiltshire.

The following table represents the ranked percentage by service type that respondents to the questionnaire felt were either "very important" or "important"

Option 2 - holiday	Withdraw funding for all supported Sunday and public services	48%
Option 1 -	Withdraw funding for all supported evening services	56%
Option 5 -	Reduce town bus services to 2-3 buses a day. Existing buses used by pupils within Warminster, Devizes, Bradford on Avon and Melksham would be retained	83%
Option 3 - hourly	Reduce the hourly services Monday - Friday to a two service on the strategic bus network	91%
Option 4 - routes that	Reduce rural bus services to 2-3 buses a day on regular and withdraw most of the infrequent services except those are the only service to a group of villages	92%

8. The consultation questionnaire had facility for free text comments. There were 6,755 free text comments received. From these free text comments, 21,436 issues were raised. A selection of the most commonly mentioned issues are as follows:

Vulnerable People – 3,272 comments were made on how any reduction to public transport would adversely impact on this demographic. This supports comments made as part of the pre consultation exercise and is also drawn out elsewhere in the consultation.

Concessionary Fares – 1,111 comments were made about the use of the concessionary fare pass, ranging from means testing to making a contribution. Under the current legislation it is not possible to make a charge for the concessionary pass. However, through devolution bids in other parts of the country it has been suggested that a nominal payment for the concessionary pass may be considered by Government.

Access to Essential Services – 2,392 comments were received stating that a reduction in public transport would restrict in many cases completely deny, them access to essential services such as shopping and medical appointments. They also suggested that a lack of public transport would have an adverse effect upon the economy.

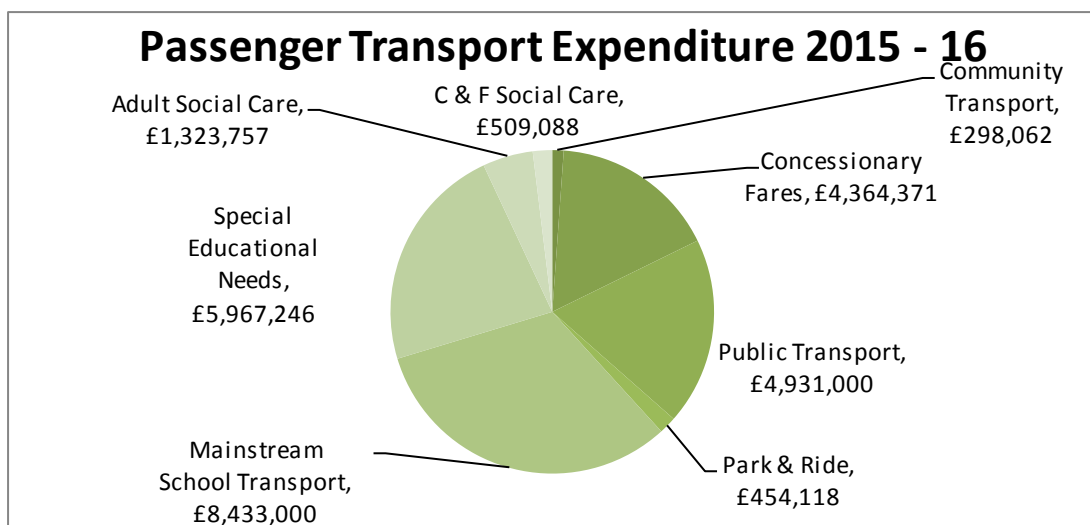
Quality of Life – Linked to vulnerability, there were a further 2,820 comments made around a reduction to peoples quality of life, due to a lack of independence, but most notably there were 852 comments referring to social isolation.

Service Type – There were 5,164 comments made about the type of service whether it is to be retained, or reduce a particular type of service. Of these 5,164 comments, 1,824 suggested the retention of rural services was very important to them, which reaffirms the results of the questionnaire.

Environmental – 1,413 comments were received stating that a reduction in public transport would adversely affect the environment. Reference to car usage was predominant, although the resultant impact on congestion and pollution was also a consideration to the respondents.

9. There is good evidence in the Equality Evidence Analysis Document (EEAD) **Appendix 1**, that public transport, outside London, is generally used and relied upon by the less wealthy and more vulnerable members of society. To significantly reduce public transport for these, and other 'protected characteristics' groups, may result in additional expenditure to other service areas.
10. **Appendix 2** represents further analysis taken from the data gathered at the public consultation stage. It is evident that the more vulnerable members of society in Wiltshire would be adversely impacted should there be significant reductions to supported bus services across Wiltshire.
11. Considering the outcome of the consultation and overall impact of reducing bus subsidies, Cabinet may consider not progressing any of the options under consideration. Pending the outcome of financial settlement from government, Cabinet may then have to revisit the implementation of some or all the options included in the public consultation. In doing so consideration will be given to the priorities given to various bus services by the respondents.
12. As an alternative to the options put forward as part of the public consultation, the Council could look at subsidised services which exceed maximum subsidy per passenger, as set out by existing policies in the Local Transport Plan. In this instance the Council has a maximum subsidy guideline for most types of service of £3.50 per passenger trip. It is estimated that expenditure could be reduced by £500k if services exceeding the £3.50 subsidy are reviewed within existing policies and by applying the following changes:
 - Ensuring that, where services cross county boundaries, appropriate funding is received from partner authorities
 - Changing the way a bus service operates, i.e. moving from a traditional fixed route timetable, to a more Demand Responsive Transport service (DRT) and vice versa, but maintaining a similar geographical coverage
 - Through the merging and combining of existing services
 - By working with suppliers to secure more commercial services and reducing, or eliminating all of the subsidy
 - By considering the reclassification of some services

13. As some Wiltshire residents will be affected by bus service changes as a result of the above criteria, it is important to seek their view on the changes. Therefore, it is proposed that a more “service specific” consultation takes place. Wiltshire Council has used this methodology before, for example when tendering services in the north of Wiltshire in 2014. By adopting this approach, Wiltshire Council was still able to make the financial savings, but was able to accommodate many suggestions from the public and therefore mitigate the impacts.
14. The review of the LTP Public Transport Strategy was part of a wider review of all areas of Wiltshire Council’s passenger transport remit. The wider review will continue to include the re-examining of policy and spending in home-to-school and college transport, SEND transport and social care client transport to make sure that service provision is aligned to priorities and to identify any scope for further savings. Work on this wider review is proceeding and if it results in any proposals for changes to policies, they will also be subject to consultation, where applicable, before implementation.
15. Relationships with the Health Authority are being further developed to determine how our two organisations can work together more effectively around transport. This will be achieved through the Health & Well Being Board and primarily considering options around the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) to the acute hospitals. Through effective integration of these services, there is potential to reduce costs for both organisations. There is also potential to understand better, how public transport is serving health facilities throughout Wiltshire and public transports overall benefit to the health of the Wiltshire populace, which should be considered as part of the wider LTP agenda.
16. The chart below represents expenditure against passenger transport for 2015/16. Whilst much of the spend is statutory, there is a significant discretionary element which is being continued.



Option 247 Proposal

17. Option 247 is a community interest group who made representation to the Council during the consultation, details of the group can be found at the following link:
<http://option247.uk/index.html>
18. In essence, the group's proposal is to franchise bus services in Wiltshire, by using revenue generated from the commercial, profitable bus services (not subsidised or managed by Wiltshire Council), to cross subsidise the bus services which Wiltshire Council funds. Powers to implement this approach already exist in current legislation, but to date no other local authority in the country, including the large metropolitans, where bus usage and profitability are significantly higher than in Wiltshire, have successfully achieved this.
19. New legislation in the form of the Buses Bill is expected to receive royal ascent in spring/summer 2017, which will make it clearer what franchising and enhanced partnership working with bus suppliers and other key stakeholders might look like. Unfortunately, this does not tie in with the timescales for this review, which are to achieve financial savings in the early part of the 2017/18 financial year.
20. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport has written to the 247 group, outlining the Council's position on franchising and the associated risks. Some of the more significant risk are set out as follows:
 - A lack of clarity remains around the justification criteria that would definitely be applied for an authority without a mayor that wishes to pursue franchising.
 - The local Authority would hold all of the risk - both financial and reputational. There will need to be a real commitment to providing bus services, over a long period of time, as simply reducing (or cutting) them after a year if the funding does not stack up, will not be acceptable.
 - There is no evidence that in Wiltshire, this would save money whilst improving services.
 - More staff would be required by Wiltshire Council to manage the contracts and monitor and publicise the services.
 - The issue of financial compensation to current operators of commercial services has still to be clarified (and may require a lengthy court case to determine).
21. Given the risks involved, Wiltshire Council will not be pursuing the franchising option at this stage, but would be prepared to consider it at a later date when there is sufficient experience of its introduction from other Local Authorities.

22. However, the Option 247 proposal should not be discounted and officers welcome the groups input and will work with its representatives to develop the concept at the appropriate time.

Community Transport

23. It has been suggested that Community Transport (CT) could fill the gap left behind, should Wiltshire Council withdraw significant financial support to its supported bus services network. Wiltshire Council works closely with [Community First](#) who delivers, on behalf of Wiltshire Council, its CT strategy, which includes oversight of Link Schemes, Dial A Ride services and Wheels to Work scheme, as well as the administration of government grant funds to local transport related charities.
24. Community First and its members were heavily involved in the pre consultation exercise. There was a workshop dedicated for CT suppliers to ascertain their view as to what degree they might be able to supply public transport in Wiltshire.
25. The view of Community First and the CT providers is that whilst CT can have a really important intervention role to play in mitigating against bus service reductions, there is only so much the CT sector can do to replace local bus services.
26. Whilst CT groups might be able to provide some network coverage in response to bus service reductions, they certainly will not be able to provide like for like service replacements in many cases, or to anywhere near the frequency required.
27. This is very much an opinion that is held nationally and by the current government. Examples of this can be found in **Appendix 3**.
28. Wiltshire Council recognises this and will continue to work with Community First and the wider Wiltshire CT sector, to deliver on the following:
- (i) To work with existing Community Minibus and Link schemes to encourage and assist them in implementing new services where supported bus services are reduced, or withdrawn;
 - (ii) To offer support to local communities affected by bus service changes to link up with existing CT groups / set up their own CT scheme as appropriate;
 - (iii) To develop a CT pilot scheme in the Malmesbury Community Area designed to help plug gaps that are already in existence within the current public transport network. Such a scheme would serve as a blueprint for other areas if successful.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

29. Councillors Peter Evans (Chair), Mollie Groom, Jacqui Lay, Magnus Macdonald and Graham Wright on the Passenger Transport Review Task Group have been able to scrutinise the review at various stages through

meetings held on 10 June 2015, 9 July 2015, 16 September 2015, 3 December 2015, 20 April 2016, 27 May and 2 September 2016. Task Group members also attended meetings organised as part of the pre-consultation exercise. In addition, Councillor Peter Evans attended meetings of the Passenger Transport Review Project Board as a representative of the Task Group (the Project Board is chaired by Councillor Philip Whitehead (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) and is made up of Councillor Horace Prickett (Portfolio Holder for Passenger Transport), external key partner representatives and senior Wiltshire Council officers).

30. The Cabinet paper presented to Cabinet on 14 June 2016, outlining the results of the consultation, was also presented to the Environmental Select Committee on 7 June 2016. At the time of compiling this report, it is planned to share the report with the Task Group and any comments will be reported to cabinet on 11 October 2016.

Safeguarding Implications

31. There are no safeguarding implications as a direct result of this proposal. The pre-consultation exercise included discussions with children's services and adult social care teams in Wiltshire Council. An Equality Evidence Analysis Document formed part of the suite of supporting documents to the public consultation and this has been reviewed as part of this report.

Public Health Implications

32. The pre-consultation exercise included discussions with public health teams in Wiltshire Council. In addition, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which includes topics on 'population', 'healthy communities', 'inclusive communities' and 'transport' formed part of the suite of supporting documents to the public consultation (see section on Environmental and Climate Change Considerations below).

Corporate Procurement Implications

33. There will be some procurement activity required in order to achieve the proposed savings. Wiltshire Council's Strategic Procurement Hub (SPH) has been engaged and will support the procurement exercise in accordance with the statutory procurement guidelines.
34. There has been no real procurement activity of public transport for three years now, whilst a decision on future provision was reached. SPH has considered the model that is typically used to procure this type of transport, the value of the contracts and it is satisfied it meets the needs of this procurement exercise.
35. During the consultation process and for a period of time before that, the tendering cycle of school and public transport contracts was suspended, whilst a long-term solution could be established. As a result, the majority of contracts have been extended until January 2018, the value of which is

around £10 million per annum. Options for the future procurement of these contracts have already begun and SPH is fully engaged with that process.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

36. An Equality Evidence Analysis Document (EEAD) formed part of the suite of supporting documents to the public consultation. This has been reviewed as part of this report to Cabinet.
37. The following protected characteristics have been identified in the EEAD:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Low Incomes
 - Rurality
 - People with no access to private transport
 - Military status
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
 - Race
 - Religion and Belief
 - Sex
 - Shift / Part-time workers
 - Carers
38. Based upon the consultation responses, all of these protected characteristics would be affected by any reduction to supported public transport. However, the first six are likely to be impacted greater than the rest.
39. The following is a short summary for each of these six protected characteristics, which are expanded upon in the EEAD.

Age - Younger and older people are more reliant on bus services and less likely to have access to a car. Also, fewer young people now hold driving licences and we live in an increasingly 'ageing society'. Younger people need affordable bus services to enable them to take up opportunities in education and work, and to increase their independence. Research has shown that many older people place particular value on 'local' and 'daytime' travel and predominantly travel for shopping, to access key services (notably healthcare) or to visit family and friends. Both groups also benefit from the health benefits of using public transport through encouraging outside activity and mobility.

Disability - People with disabilities are less likely to drive and therefore could become marginalized from the wider community and more reliant on support services without independent travel options such as supported bus services to provide them access to employment opportunities and essential services or to visit friends and family. Disabled people are also likely to need more trips to GPs and hospitals for regular medical checkups to help manage their health.

Low incomes - People on low incomes are particularly reliant on local public transport services and a lack of available and adequate services can be a significant barrier to accessing employment opportunities and essential services. Public transport can also provide health benefits (as people walk more and drive less) which can be particularly beneficial for people from socio-economically deprived areas which typically have lower levels of health.

Rurality - In rural areas, settlements are dispersed and homes, jobs and services are scattered – access to everyday opportunities and services can therefore be challenging. Rural bus services can help combat social exclusion by enabling non-drivers to access shops, education, training and essential services. They are also important for the local economy; small businesses in rural areas need good accessibility for their employees and rural buses can encourage visitors and tourists.

People with no access to private transport - are particularly reliant on local public transport services and a lack of available and adequate bus services can be a significant barrier to accessing employment opportunities and essential services.

Military Status - Military personnel and their families are often located in camps in (semi) rural locations. Therefore, withdrawn or reduced supported bus services will reduce travel options to access essential services or visit friends and family. There is also an increased risk of social isolation.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

40. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) formed part of the suite of supporting documents to the public consultation.
41. The SEA includes consideration of a number of relevant topics (see table below). The main purpose of an SEA is to evaluate whether a plan or strategy will result in any significant environmental effects, both positive and negative. In this case, the SEA was based on an evaluation of Option 6 in the public consultation (i.e. the full withdrawal of all Wiltshire Council supported bus services).

SEA Topic	Significance of the effect
Biodiversity	Minor negative effect
Land, soil and water resources	Minor negative effect
Air quality and environmental pollution	Minor negative effect
Climatic factors	Minor negative effect
Historic environment	Minor negative effect
Landscapes (and townscapes)	Minor negative effect
Population	Significant negative effect
Healthy communities	Minor negative effect

SEA Topic	Significance of the effect
Inclusive communities	Significant negative effect
Transport	Significant negative effect
Economy and enterprise	Minor negative effect

42. Given that the above evaluation was based on Option 6, it is considered that for the recommended option in this report, the above minor negative effects would be reduced to 'No significant effect', and the above significant negative effects would be reduced to 'Minor negative effect'.
43. In terms of the HRA, the Council's senior ecologist stated that "...I do not consider that any further assessment under the Habitats Regulations is required in respect of the review of the Public Transport Strategy".

Risk Assessment

44. This section highlights the key risks and proposed management of those risks associated with the proposals in this report.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

45. Wiltshire Council may have difficulty in meeting its financial responsibility in light of significant financial pressures.
46. There is a risk to the relationship between the council and current bus services suppliers if the uncertainty about continued subsidy is prolonged.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

47. Many of the service proposals require a procurement exercise. The savings identified are based upon known, current market trends and prices, but there is a risk that the estimated savings are not achieved once procured. Officers are however aware of current market prices and trends and have had initial discussions with some suppliers around proposals and therefore the savings targets are based on a measured approach.
48. Whilst the impact of the recommended option is considered minimal overall, unfortunately some current bus service users will be adversely affected by the service proposals, as they may not be able to make the same journeys they can currently. Through a further "service specific" consultation Wiltshire Council will aim to mitigate this risk by understanding specific impacts (further details on this are set out under the section Options Considered).
49. Whilst minimal in overall scope, some supported bus services will cease altogether. Whilst very regrettable, these services cannot continue to be supported under the current LTP criteria. This risk to service delivery and reputation will have to be tolerated if the recommended option is accepted. Where this occurs, information will be made available to passengers on the limited alternatives there are through on-bus information.

50. There is a risk to the relationship between the council and current bus service suppliers. Providing certainty to bus suppliers is very important in the current financial climate. Setting out the procurement timetable and four year financial commitment will help to stabilise the existing supplier base and potentially encourage new investment and new suppliers to the market.
51. There is an increased risk of some negativity towards the proposed service changes resulting in potential damage to the council's reputation. A clear communications message through the local media may need to be established in order to mitigate this criticism.

Financial Implications

52. The recommendations in this report to review all passenger trip subsidies above the thresholds set out in the Local Transport Plan together with other measures described in this report is forecast to achieve £500,00 savings in the Passenger Transport Budget in 2017/2018.
53. As detailed in the Risk section the actual saving will be dependent on the market as many will require a procurement exercise. The £500k is based on a full year saving so if approved changes would be introduced at earliest opportunity

Legal Implications

54. As outlined in the Cabinet Paper presented on the 14 June 2016, the purpose of the PTU review was in part, to consider the current LTP Public Transport Strategy, in order to introduce any of the six proposed service changes consulted upon. Should Cabinet decide not to implement any of the options laid out in the consultation, a wholesale review of the current Public Transport Strategy is not now considered necessary and all service changes will be conducted using the existing LTP Public Transport Strategy.

Options Considered

55. The consultation gave consideration to six broad options:
 - *Option 1* - Withdraw funding for all supported evening services
 - *Option 2* - Withdraw funding for all supported Sunday and public holiday services
 - *Option 3* - Reduce the hourly services Mon-Fri to a two hourly service on the strategic bus network
 - *Option 4* - Reduce rural bus services to 2-3 buses a day on regular routes and withdraw most of the infrequent services except those that are the only service to a group of villages
 - *Option 5* - Reduce town bus services to 2-3 buses a day. Existing buses used by pupils within Warminster, Devizes, Bradford on Avon and Melksham would be retained
 - *Option 6* Withdraw all funding for all Council subsidised services

56. As an alternative to the options put forward as part of the public consultation, the Council could look at subsidised services which exceed maximum subsidy per passenger, as set out by existing policies in the Local Transport Plan. This option is explained in detail in paragraph 11 above.
57. It is recognised that further implementing the existing LTP criteria approach is not one of the options that was consulted upon, but its recommendation reflects that Wiltshire Council has considered the outcome of the consultation and proposes an approach that will achieve adequate savings and a significantly reduced impact on the Wiltshire populace.

Recommended Options

58. It is recommended that:
- (i) Review all passenger trip subsidies above the thresholds set out in the Local Transport Plan and together with other measures described in this report achieve £500,000 savings in the passenger transport budget. Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is given delegation to make final decision following consultation of specific services which fall under this criteria.
 - (ii) Wiltshire Council works more closely with the Health Authority to the mutual benefit of both organisations, particularly around the integration of NEPTS with SEND and Social Care transport and the development of the Public Transport Strategy.

Conclusions

59. The consultation gave consideration to six broad options:
- *Option 1* - Withdraw funding for all supported evening services
 - *Option 2* - Withdraw funding for all supported Sunday and public holiday services
 - *Option 3* - Reduce the hourly services Mon-Fri to a two hourly service on the strategic bus network
 - *Option 4* - Reduce rural bus services to 2-3 buses a day on regular routes and withdraw most of the infrequent services except those that are the only service to a group of villages
 - *Option 5* - Reduce town bus services to 2-3 buses a day. Existing buses used by pupils within Warminster, Devizes, Bradford on Avon and Melksham would be retained
 - *Option 6* Withdraw all funding for all Council subsidised services
60. A total of 11,093 consultation questionnaires were received to the public consultation, making this the second largest response to any Wiltshire Council consultation. The consultation concluded that there would be significant impacts to people's lives, should there be a reduction in supported public transport, most notably around access to education, employment and other essential services, such as health and shopping.

61. The consultation findings inform the Council that supported public transport is not simply about getting from A to B, but that its output underpins many of the essential, core priorities for individuals and business, which are detailed in the Council's Business Plan.
62. There is good evidence in the EEAD (**Appendix 1**) that public transport, outside London, is generally used and relied upon by the less wealthy and more vulnerable members of society. To significantly reduce public transport for these groups may result in additional expenditure to other service areas.
63. There are some synergies between Wiltshire Council's passenger transport requirements and that of the Health Authority. Discussions between the two organisations are at an early stage, but there appears to be a case to consider joint procurement of services in some way, particularly around SEND and Social Care transport with the Health Authorities NEPTS.
64. Through continuing to work with Community First and the Community Transport (CT) sector, Wiltshire Council will establish, as best it can, appropriate future public transport options by:
 - Working with existing Community Minibus and Link schemes to encourage and assist them in implementing new services where supported bus services are reduced, or withdrawn;
 - Supporting local communities affected by bus service changes to link up with existing CT groups / set up their own CT scheme as appropriate;
 - Developing a CT scheme in the Malmesbury Community Area designed to help plug gaps that are already in existence within the current public transport network. Such a scheme would serve as a blueprint for other areas if successful.
65. In order for Wiltshire Council to meet future budget pressures and ensure that a sustainable, long-term solution to passenger transport in Wiltshire is maintained, Cabinet is advised to approve the recommended options.

Parvis Khansari

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Date 19 September 2016

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Equality Evidence Analysis Document (EEAD)

Appendix 2 – Further analysis on impact of elderly and vulnerable people

Appendix 3 – Community Transport Evidence