

Swindon Borough Council Diversity Impact Assessment for Review of Bus Services and Local Bus Strategy 2016

1 What's it about?

Refer to equality duties

What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve?

In February 2016 the Council agreed to reduce a number of budgets due to budget pressures facing the Council. This has meant the existing strategy for financially supporting bus services revised in 2013 is to be reviewed to take account of these new challenges and pressures. This review includes dial a ride and community transport services.

The revenue support budget of £267k for local bus services is expected to be phased out leaving only commercially viable services alongside those services supported by local communities, which would mean a number of local bus services as shown in Appendix 1 will cease to operate from October 2016 onwards. The Dial a Ride and Community Transport revenue support budget of £313.5k is also being reduced.

The majority of bus services (95%) in the Borough are provided on a commercial basis, meaning that the bus operator's service running costs are covered by the fares collected from passengers using that service.

The bus operator decides which type of vehicle to provide, which route to follow and which stops to serve, how frequently the service will run and how much to charge in fares: The Council has no direct influence on these services. The bus operator does not need to seek authority from the Council to start, alter or withdraw part or all of such services, nor is there any obligation for operators to run services which they believe to be unprofitable.

Where there are gaps in the provision of services because operators are not prepared to operate services commercially (usually because the costs of operating the service would not be covered by passenger fares), the Council can decide to fund the provision of services through contracts with bus operators in accordance with the Transport Acts 1985 and 2000.

In deciding to provide such services Councils normally have agreed criteria or a bus service support strategy. Usually services are supported where they are deemed to be "socially necessary" but can also be based on strategies to reduce congestion and pollution or support economic activity.

The majority of supported services are provided to ensure continuity following the withdrawal of a previously commercial service. The Council's commitment to the continued provision of these services cannot be considered as open-ended. If a service fails to meet the needs of the community it serves (as evidenced by lack of use) or the Council's wider policy objectives, or the cost of provision is disproportionately high, then the Council is reasonable in reviewing its continuation.

The existing criteria for support are to be reviewed in view of the funding pressures facing the Council in order to see whether they are still appropriate and meet the Council's wider strategic aims.

As part of the review process the Council strategy provides for bus hubs to link with the commercial network ensuring that provision in the interim can be maintained. The review facilitates the transition of the support of these bus hub services to local communities, should there be a requirement locally to continue with a service that is otherwise not commercially viable. The current bus service contracts funded by revenue budgets are shown in Appendix 1.

The Council also provides a Dial a Ride and Community Transport Service through a contract with Swindon Dial a Ride. It provides transport services for any individual within the Swindon Borough Council area unable to use conventional public transport due to disability. All users must be pre-registered. All users must qualify based upon disability. All services must be pre booked. They use vehicles that are adapted to the needs of the clients with drivers that are trained to attend to the needs of the client group.

Swindon Dial a Ride also provide the Retail Runner service which brings passengers into Swindon from a number of villages and serves the town centre and a number of shopping centres locally based around the Borough.

Who's it for?

Everyone living in the Borough can benefit from using supported local bus services and those individuals who choose to visit Swindon.

Beyond the diversity data on the general Swindon population there is limited information on the users of bus services generally and on supported services in particular. There is data on the holders of concessionary bus passes.

There is data on the level of patronage for each supported service and subsidy per passenger, please see Appendix 1.

How will this proposal meet the equality duties?

The equality groups likely to benefit most are those that have less access to private cars than the general population.

- Age – elderly people who have never held drivers licences or have given them up in older age or who have given up car ownership due to economic or health reasons
- Age - young people who do not have drivers licences or unable to financially afford a car
- Economic – those who cannot afford to own and run a car
- Disability – those who are unable to drive for medical reasons
- Gender – older females are more likely to not drive than males – often widows have previously relied on husbands to drive and have never learnt to drive themselves in earlier life.

The ability for the bus hubs to operate commercially as well as the Council facilitating a transition to local community funding for non-commercially viable services allows options for the continued provision of the service to the community as well as the local determination and provision against need.

What are the barriers to meeting this potential?

Beyond the diversity data on the general Swindon population there is limited information on the users of bus services generally and on supported services in particular. There is data on the holders of concessionary bus passes.

There is data on the level of patronage for each supported service and subsidy per passenger, please see Appendix 1.

The main barrier is change not being accepted by for example car users and the opportunity to maintain an improved bus service for everyone living in the community is lost. Time is also important as it takes time to change the travel habits of an individual so you must have confidence in the service you are providing. Loss of that confidence can become a barrier to further investment in the bus network if there is no evidence of service improvements being successful.

Informing everyone and reaching out to everyone can be both a challenge and a barrier as no success in this area will make future investment more difficult to approve.

Affordability and the impact of the national economy on the local market may provide a barrier to potential passengers accessing our services as bus patronage suffered setbacks generally due to the downturn in the national economy from 2008/09 onwards.

2 Who is using it?

Refer to equality groups

What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?

The revised Local Bus Strategy criteria was approved following a Borough wide consultation exercise in December 2012/January 2013 which accepted comments from individuals, community groups and bus operators for example. This enabled the Council to understand that its priorities lay in supporting the core bus network by focusing funding on evening and Sunday services with a focus on enabling people to access work and have the opportunity for leisure use in the evenings and on Sundays. Rural areas were a less priority but where there was a proven need for a service it would be maintained within the funding available.

The emphasis will now be placed upon those in areas of social need, rural areas and limited accessibility being able to use bus/community bus services for access to work, education and hospital.

How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?

We will work with parish and town councils and other community organisations and work with bus operators to develop services and undertake customer feedback. This will enable us to listen to the real needs and respond accordingly instead of relying upon our own perception.

Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data? (pause DIA if necessary)

We are not aware of any gaps as the previous consultation exercise enabled us to gather a lot of useful information from individuals and groups which has been beneficial so far.

3 Impact

Refer to dimensions of equality and equality groups

Show consideration of: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation and if appropriate: financial economic status, homelessness, political view

Using the information in parts 1 & 2:

a) Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals? Is it clear what this is? How can this be mitigated or justified?

The proposal is likely to limit accessibility in some areas of the Borough during the evening and

daytime on Sundays. Those who are unable to access conventional public transport will potentially have less flexibility if the dial a ride and community transport facilities are reduced or withdrawn completely.

What can be done to change this impact?

We will work with parish/town councils and other organisations to provide LinkBus services to designated transport hubs which will enable passengers to access work, education, shopping and hospital.

b) Does the proposal create benefit for a particular group? Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?

It is anticipated all social groups in parish/town council areas will receive benefits but the main emphasis it is hoped will help young people, those in employment and those seeking employment.

Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?

Continued liaison with local representatives such as parish, town councils and other organisations will be maintained and monitored to ensure there is no demand that has not been covered or at least attempted to be covered.

There will be further passenger surveys to ensure that the proposals are being justified and they will be reviewed each year.

4 So what?

[Link to business planning process](#)

What changes have you made in the course of this DIA?

We will be reducing bus services and dial a ride/community transport provision in the Borough but we know by revising our bus strategy we can make the best of resources available by working with parish/town and other community organisations to mitigate the impact.

If bus services are withdrawn following loss of funding we have given consideration to the loss of service and ensured that there are suitable alternatives in place either nearby or within walking distance.

What will you do now and what will be included in future planning?

- We will take our proposals to Council for approval.
- We will listen to anyone affected by the changes and make adjustments if sustainable.
- We will review services annually to measure that the strategy for local bus services is still guiding us in what we should focus our expenditure on in terms of types of bus service

When will this be reviewed?

We will review any new service provision annually to ensure this the best use of our expenditure.

How will success be measured?

We will monitor success by measuring annual growth in passenger journeys across the Borough compared to previous years.

For the record	
Name of person leading this DIA Nigel Hale	Date completed 24 th May 2016
Names of people involved in consideration of impact	
Name of manager signing DIA Jason Humm	Date signed 25th May 2016

Diversity Impact Assessment – an inclusive business planning tool

1. What's it about? refer to equality duties

- What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve
- Who's it for?
- How will this proposal meet the equality duties?
- What are the barriers to meeting this potential?

2. Who's using it? consider all equality groups

- What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected? (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?
- How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?
- Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data?

3. Impact consider dimensions and equality groups

Using information in parts 1 & 2:

- a) Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals? How can this be mitigated or justified?
> What can be done to change this impact?
- b) Does the proposal create benefit for particular groups or individuals. Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?
 - Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?

4. So what?

- What changes have made in the course of this DIA?
- What will you do now and what will be included in future planning?
- When will this be reviewed?
- How will success be measured?

Considerations

Our equality duties

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations

Equality groups

For the following equality groups: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation.

Extended by SBC policy to include: financial economic status, homelessness, political view.

Dimensions of equality

How will the proposal affect Human Rights and life chances of different groups? Consider how the proposal affects

1. Longevity.
2. Physical security.
3. Health.
4. Education.
5. Standard of living.
6. Productive and valued activities.
7. Individual, family and social life.
8. Participation, influence and voice.
9. Identity, expression and self-respect.
10. Legal security.