

Medium Term Financial Plan Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal in 2024/25

Where 'Yes/No' options please 'bold appropriate answer

Service area: Place, Passenger Transport
Budget reference: SPCT02
Budget proposal in 2024/25 (£): £55,000
Assistant Director/Director: Gemma Dando
EIA review due date: January 2024

Budget Ref.	Budget Proposal	Budget Reduction £			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
PD18	Review the delivery model for community transport	£55,000	£55,000	£0	£0

Equality Impacts

Please make High, Medium or Low 'bold' as appropriate

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

1. The Proposal

1.1 Background to proposal

Historical national research identifies community transport as one of many factors that help reduce social isolation and promote the ability to live independently longer.

The provision and support of community transport is not a statutory service. It provides a discretionary service for those that typically are unable to access the traditional public transport network. In North Somerset it is run by limited company transport operators who have a charitable or trust related foundation using volunteers or paid staff.

There are several small community transport providers that operate within North Somerset with no formal council funding, we consider and award small grants (typically up to £500 per annum) upon application through Quartet. These discretionary grants will continue to be funded within the annual budget.

The Council has commissioned 2 contracts for the north and south of the district for the provision of scheduled weekly shopper services, with some potential impact on 'Dial a Ride' services, which is the provision of single trip car journeys (included within the '2' contracts). The annual value of these contracts is £110,000 per annum.

Service users must be a member of the organisation to access the service, usually for a small annual membership fee, and they are expected to contribute towards the cost of the specific journeys, which are then in part subsidised by the council, along with any other funding that the organisation musters towards the running of the service.

There are separate NHS commissioned schemes in North Somerset run by various foundation trusts providing access to health services, however the current contracts do provide an overlap service to local healthcare facilities and regional hospitals. Members of the community transport providers schemes often use the service to access health services based on price and service levels.

It should be noted that North Somerset Council is not the sole funder of community transport activities.

1.2 Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers

The providers of 2 community transport contracts have been advised re the changes to funding. The contractors have stated that a review of service levels to customers will need to be undertaken, this ranges from the costs charged to use the service, through to the number of journeys made, to ensure they are sustainable in the short and long term.

During discussions relating to contract changes the council have made the contractors aware of other statutory related contract work such as Home to School Transport which could provide supplementary income and mitigate the impacts of requiring grant income.

There are other community transport organisations within North Somerset Council that operate annually using the Quartett small grants schemes (up to £500 per annum) this funding will continue.

There are also grant opportunities via the Westlocal Bus service Improvement Package.

Section 2 – What Do We Know?

2.1 Customer/staff profile details – what data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be, affected?

The council does not hold personal details of who uses the services or data on the nature of the journeys, only the destination and overall patronage data per trip, it is not therefore possible to identify any specific impacts on equality groups.

North of district contract passenger volumes by route year to date ;

Service	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
4200 - Dial-A-Ride	64	88	64	83	47	39	62	84	74
4001 - Clevedon	47	50	65	63	73	60	49	68	56
4002 - Nailsea	55	73	48	46	69	49	60	49	40
4003 - Long-Ashton	14	21	17	19	22	30	38	30	29
4004 - Backwell	15	20	16	20	23	25	27	32	26
4008 - Felton	18	27	20	19	22	21	22	26	16
4010 - Portishead	67	82	98	87	83	95	93	87	98
4012 - Pill	21	25	27	23	26	27	27	24	22
Total	301	386	355	360	365	346	378	400	361

South of district contract passenger volumes by route;

Not available

However, the Community Transport Association's survey of members in England (CTA, 2014) shows that the great majority of community transport users are older people (98%) and people with disabilities or restricted mobility

(85%), while more than half (55%) are geographically excluded. This aligns with an evidence review from 2020 (Department for Transport, 2020) which found DRT, including dial-a-ride services, to be particularly important for two cohorts:

- Those who don't drive or own a car, particularly older people, those with limited mobility and low incomes; and
- Those living in rural areas with low population density, where there is low demand for public transport and limited fixed route public transport services

We have used this information to inform our equality impact assessment.

2.2 What does the data or evidence tell us about the potential impact on diverse groups, and how is this supported by historic experience/data?

As above.

2.3 Are there any gaps in the data, for example across protected characteristics where information is limited or not available?

Whilst we do not directly hold information about the service users, we have reviewed research (ref 2.1) that suggests that:

- older people
- those with limited mobility
- those on low incomes
- those in rural areas

are most likely to be impacted by these proposed changes.

The known demographic of users are older typically vulnerable residents. We will need to engage with the users and contract providers to determine the full impacts and any potential mitigations.

2.4 How have we involved or considered the views of the people that could be affected?

In the recent consultation on the council's corporate plan, there were no significant issues raised on transport related matters.

In January 2024 this EIA was shared with Equality Stakeholders, they made the following observations, comments:

Comment	Response
More information re the routes and nature of the trips needs to be added to the EIA to provide more context for the proposed changes.	Details of data we hold has been added to section 2.1
Limited information about the demographics of the patronage of the service is a concern.	Noted. The contracts do not enable Data sharing at this level.

<p>It is assumed that there is greater usage in rural areas, the impact is likely to be greater in these areas as this change combined with generally less public transport</p>	<p>The majority of trips demands appear to be focuses in or between our larger villages and towns.</p>
<p>Several anecdotal accounts of how important transport is to daily life, specifically for older and disabled people. Community transport is likely to be used for social and connectivity purposes as well as accessing essential shopping and health services. The reduction in this service could result in increased social isolation for those groups.</p>	<p>This information helps us to understand the importance of community transport and provides information for us to consider in our ongoing plans.</p>
<p>Acknowledging that conversations have already started; it was considered that further discussions could take place with a broad range of community transport providers to ensure they are aware of collaboration opportunities.</p>	<p>Further meetings are being arranged with contractors to discuss contract opportunities for the new financial year, and groups have been directed towards Westlocal funding opportunities.</p>
<p>The lack of confidence some disabled people have in using public transport was raised.</p>	<p>This is duly observed, and NSC will endeavour to engage with bus operators and disabilities groups to improve access and consumer confidence.</p>
<p>Any information (including new public transport timetable information) about public transport must be provided in accessible formats including EasyRead.</p>	<p>Noted. New timetable and route promotion campaigns are being worked up for delivery in the spring of 2024 and beyond, this will include network maps to all households.</p>
<p>Is the provision of more accessible vehicles within current public transport routes being considered</p>	<p>The council are working with operators to implement the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations standards which improve access and information on registered bus services.</p>
<p>Concerns re the inequality of impact on the 'north' and 'south' of the district with Weston super Mare already well served by a transport network and community transport providers are already diversifying</p>	<p>This potential inequality is acknowledged. The council have made extensive efforts to advise operators of the reducing resources available to fund operations. The council specifically advised our</p>

their offer to ensure access to community transport can continue.	contractors in April 2023 that we had no identified funding beyond March 2024 and to assume there would be no further financial assistance in future years.
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2.5 What has this told us?

Please see above for consultation responses.

The limited passenger trip data has identified there is a low level of demand for occasional transport across the north of the district.

2.6 Are there any gaps in our consultation, what are our plans for the future?

The council commissions an annual survey by the Passenger Focus group, there were no issues raised with the access or utilisation of community transport services in the annual survey return.

Transport recognised as a specific rural isolation issue for those with no access to public or personal transportation.

The local transport plan makes direct reference to The Bus Service Improvement plan and associated Assesswest study, which outlines the ambition and necessity to provide sustainable alternatives to fixed line timetabled bus routes which are unsustainable in areas with low population density.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups? Please describe the nature of the impact in 'Summary of Impact' column. You should describe both negative and positive impacts.

Assessment of impact should include the consideration of Public Sector Equality Duties as listed in [section 149 of The Equality Act 2010](#), specifically:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Please indicate the impact level and impact type with an 'X' for each of the groups listed below.

Impact Level

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None

Impact Type

+ = Positive, = = Neutral, - = Negative

Impact Level

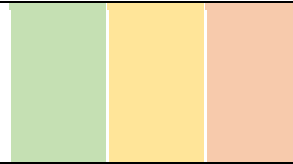
Impact Type

Summary of Impact

	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		X					X	Higher proportion of the existing users are understood to be disabled people therefore any changes to Community Transport will have an impact on this group.
People from different ethnic groups				X				No data available, it is not anticipated that there will be an impact based on ethnicity.
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)			X					No identifying data available, although it is anticipated that more women will use public transport than men.
People who are LGBTQ+				X				No data available, it is not anticipated that there will be an impact based on sexual orientation.
People on a low income	X						X	A reduction in funding will result in higher costs for the service, this will affect those with less income available.
People in particular age groups		X					X	No specific data available, although we know national trend is for older residents to use community transport services.
People in particular faith groups				X				No data available, it is not anticipated that there will be an impact based on faith groups
People who are married or in a civil partnership				X				No data available, it is not anticipated that there will be an impact based on marriage or civil partnership

People who are undergoing
gender reassignment

X



No data available, it is not anticipated that
there will be an impact based on gender
reassignment.

Impact Level					Impact Type			Summary of Impact
	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
<p>Other specific impacts, for example: carers, parents, Armed Forces Community, impact on health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Please specify: Those who live in rural areas of North Somerset.</p>			X				X	Patronage data in the North of the areas shows that most trips are being taken between towns/urban areas.

Section 5 - Action Plan

Where you have listed that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

If negative impacts remain after the above actions have been taken, please provide an explanation below.

Action taken/to be taken	How will it be monitored?
Re-focus of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Activity for those with no access to the public bus network	Through the DRT platform, and project board
The improvement of the bus network coverage across North Somerset	Regular reviews of patronage and service performance through the BSIP program.
The council provides opportunities to Community Transport (CT) operators through the commissioning of statutory home to school contracts to help spread operating costs over a diverse portfolio of work should they wish too.	Tender opportunities are routinely advertised to operators via our procurement channels.
The council will continue to provide small annual discretionary grants (limited to £500 per annum) per organisation to fund small incidental costs to all CT operators.	The budget is monitored, and grants approved as required/justified.
CT operators have been advised to consider and bid for the Westlocal BSIP package to provide new and innovative registered bus services	Bids are being evaluated for compliance and suitability, potential to deliver services differently going forward to meet some community needs.
The Equality Stakeholder Group asked for the return of printed timetable booklets, to improve awareness of improved bus network	The council is producing and distributing timetable books in the spring of 2024.
The Equality Stakeholder Group requested that work is done with Bus Companies to improve the confidence to travel for residents with disabilities.	This is noted and will be worked in the BSIP program this year under the passenger experience workstream.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with your service users.

The council's current contracts are for 12 months and are due to end on the 31st March 2023. The communications plan will centre around the end of the contracts and the limited budgets to renew them going forward, people will be signposted to the enhanced bus network and Demand Responsive Transport services.

It is expected that Community Transport operators will continue to run, and efforts will be made to publicise their services going forward.