

# Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

## Front Sheet:

**Directorate and Service Area:**

Environment & Economy – Network & Asset Management

**What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):**

This proposal would remove the budget to support the electronic displays at bus stops which alerts the public to when buses are due. This would also impact on the provision of information to current traffic monitoring systems as well as the recently developed travel planning page, which is being rolled out as part of the Connecting Oxfordshire agenda.

There is a risk of a small drop in bus patronage due to loss of confidence in the public transport system. The council will seek increased contribution from bus companies to balance against the councils current contribution.

**Responsible owner / senior officer:**

Steve Smith

**Date of assessment:**

17<sup>th</sup> December 2015

**Summary of judgement:**

It is proposed to remove funding to the provision of real time passenger information at bus stops and online unless third party funding is forthcoming.

Whilst this will have a marginal impact on customer satisfaction, it is not considered that it will have a significant influence on customers' choice of travel mode. There are no case studies to draw upon however to evidence the actual impact that withdrawing this service may have.

The proposal is most likely to impact those on lower incomes, the disabled, older people, and schoolchildren who tend to represent a larger proportion of bus users than other groups.

## Detail of Assessment:

### Purpose of assessment:

The assessment has been undertaken to consider the impacts of a reduction in service arising from the need to meet budgetary pressures.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person’s disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

- marriage and civil partnership

### **Social Value**

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934<sup>1</sup> might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

Whilst this proposal in itself does not propose any specific service procurement, it is likely that the timeliness of this proposal will require a procurement exercise should funding be made available by third parties. The requirements of the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 will be considered as part of any procurement exercise.

### **Context / Background:**

Over many years the Council has had a transport strategy that encourages the use of public transport and has invested significantly in initiatives that encourages this approach. As a result the county has some of the higher bus patronage levels in the country and this plays a substantial part in mitigating the impacts of congestion. The economy in the county is one of the fastest growing in the country and the development of new businesses and housing demand will continue to put pressure on the county's infrastructure and its ability to meet travel demands.

There will therefore be a continued need to promote public transport however this must be balanced by the affordability of any such solutions. For many years the authority has provided real time information at many of the most used bus stops to provide passengers with an indication of likely arrival time of their bus. This has generally enabled a higher level of customer satisfaction due to better managing users' expectations. The provision of such a facility however is not a statutory duty and whilst it helps support the council's transport strategy, it is not considered that the removal of this facility alone would result in a significant shift in users travel mode.

### **Proposals:**

It is proposed to remove funding to support the provision of real time information at bus shelters. The service would disconnect and remove the displays to remove any health and safety concerns arising from the failure to maintain the displays.

It is recognised that real time information provides a benefit to local bus operators in reducing the levels of complaints and assisting customers in planning their journeys, and therefore the Council will seek to mitigate the impact of this proposal by working closely with them with a view to seeking third party funding to continue to provide this service.

<sup>11</sup> [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

**Evidence / Intelligence:**

Many other authorities do not provide this service and there are several areas of the county where real time information is neither provided nor have bus operators requested it.

There would seem to be no authority who has removed such provision in recent years however, and therefore the full impact of removal of this service on bus patronage cannot be determined.

**Alternatives considered / rejected:**

A reduction of service or staff in other areas was considered but remaining areas of the service are either linked to a defined statutory duty or are activities where further reduction in service would have a significant detrimental impact on the highway network and increase the likelihood of a more costly reactive response to a dangerous situation.

**Impact Assessment:**

We assess the impact of decisions on any relevant community, but with particular emphasis on:

- Groups that share the nine protected characteristics
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
  - religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation
  - marriage and civil partnership
- Rural communities
- Areas of deprivation

We also assess the impact on:

- Staff
- Other council services
- Other providers of council services
- Any other element which is relevant to the policy or proposed service change
- How it might improve the economic, social, and environmental of the area affected by the contract **if** the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies

**Impact on Individuals and Communities:**

The proposals above would be most likely to be discriminate against those on lower incomes, the disabled, older people, and younger people who tend to represent a higher proportion of bus users and therefore may no longer have access to this service. Bus services will still be available however and therefore it is not considered that this will have a significant impact on people's travel choices.

The proposal is likely to predominantly impact on urban areas as existing service provision is targeted at those more popular routes and therefore are more predominant on the inter-urban routes.

It is not felt it would have any adverse impact on any of the other individuals or communities.

Protected Characteristics	Risks	Mitigations
Age Disability Areas of Deprivation	There will be no information at bus stops to inform bus users as to what time a bus is due which may cause them to alter their travel choices.	<p>The service will work closely with the bus operators to seek third party funding to maintain the service as far as practicable.</p> <p>Many individual bus operators currently provide social media updates to inform of delays which will help mitigate this impact but none currently replicate the service which the council provides in providing arrival times at individual stops.</p> <p>Timetables will continue to be made available at individual stops to advise of the typical arrival times for those without access to mobile technologies.</p>

**Impact on Staff:**

Risks	Mitigations
If alternative funding from a third party was not secured and the service to cease, staffing levels would need to be reduced to reflect the revised level of	The service will work closely with the bus operators to seek third party funding to maintain the service as far as practicable.

service.	The service will continue to review staffing need as and when natural turnover occurs to mitigate potential future impacts.
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**Impact on other Council services:**

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
Staff using public transport are less likely to be aware of the length of potential delays to bus schedules and therefore services less likely to be able to take appropriate mitigating action.	<p>The service will work closely with the bus operators to seek third party funding to maintain the service as far as practicable.</p> <p>The main operators are frequent users of social media and as such it is anticipated that more users will use this forum to source pertinent information.</p>

**Impact on providers:**

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
Were the bus operators to enter into a funding agreement and subsequently withdraw in future years, the service would be required to terminate contracts with providers earlier than originally anticipated.	The council has sought to develop agreements with bus operators so that termination clauses align with those within service contracts.
The removal of funding from several public transport areas creates an unsustainable position for bus operators to support future service provision.	Discussions with the bus operators have sought to consider the full breadth of savings that the council is making in order that bus operators are able to make fully informed commercial decisions.

**Action plan:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>
Undertake tendering process to understand the cost of future service operation	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	Dariusz Seroczynski
Negotiate with Bus Operators to develop a funding agreement	31 <sup>st</sup> January 2016	Steve Smith

Implement contractual arrangements	31st January 2016	Dariusz Seroczynski
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**Monitoring and review:**

**Person responsible for assessment:**

Version	Date	Notes (e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
01	December 2015	Initial draft
02	January 2016	Review following outcome of negotiations with Bus Operators
03	April 2017	Annual review to dependent on break agreements within bus operator agreements