

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS (EqIAA)

RE-TENDER OF SUPPORTED SCHOOL BUS SERVICES 680, 948, 963 & 967

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

This EqIAA discusses the Council's proposals relating to the re-tender of the currently financially supported local bus services 680, 948, 963 & 967. All of these bus services provide transport to school or college for non-entitled passengers (i.e. those that are not entitled to free school transport).

Background

The Council Plan and the Joint Local Transport Plan Strategy support the need for bus services to be provided to meet local needs where they are not provided without subsidy by operators.

The Council currently provides financial support to a wide range of bus services. This includes services which are entirely funded by the Council, others which are commercial services that receive top up or 'de-minimus' funding for single journeys early morning or evenings, and services that are predominately school bus routes that also provide a public service element for non-entitled pupils.

Proposal

The 680, 948, 963 & 967 bus service contracts are all due to expire within the financial year 2014/15 and this EqIAA investigates a proposal to cease these services.

The Council is investigating this action because it believes that the use of financial support for a limited number of recipients may not be an equitable use of the Council's resources.

SECTION 2 – RESEARCH & CONSULTATION

Service 680

- Runs Monday to Friday School term time only with one return journey per day.
- Route - North Corner – North Yate – Chipping Sodbury – South Yate – Coalpit Heath – UWE – Filton College.
- Usage – on average 16 passengers use this service each day all from Yate, Chipping Sodbury or Coalpit Heath to UWE, SGS Wise Campus or SGS Filton Campus.

Service 948

- Runs Monday to Friday School term time only with one return journey per day.
- Route - Pucklechurch – Emersons Green – Mangotsfield – Kings Oak Academy – Grange School – Sir Bernard Lovell School.
- Usage - On average 9 passengers use the service daily, the majority of these passengers travel from Pucklechurch. Most of the passengers are students travelling to the Grange school and Sir Bernard Lovell School. No passengers use the service for Kings Oak Academy.

Service 963

- Runs Monday to Friday School term time only with one return journey per day.
- Route - Patchway – Bradley Stoke – Stoke Gifford – Winterbourne Academy.
- Usage - On average 34 passengers travel on the bus each journey. All passengers are students going to Winterbourne Academy.

Service 967

- Runs Monday to Friday School term time only with one return journey per day.
- Route - Westerleigh – South Yate – Chipping Sodbury Secondary School – Brimsham Green School.
- Usage - On average 35 passengers travel on the bus each journey, only one passenger travels from Westerleigh, the rest of the passengers travel from South Yate. All passengers are students who travel every day. On average 7 passengers go to Chipping Sodbury Secondary and the rest go to Brimsham Green Secondary School.

The Council issued a public consultation with regard to the service; the consultation commenced on 14 February 2014 and runs to 31 March 2014 - a period of 6 weeks.

3 responses were received in respect service 680

2 responses were received in respect service 948

8 responses were received in respect service 963

21 responses were received in respect service 967

1 response was received in respect of school services generally

Consultation Results

The consultation included questions in relation to respondents:-

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnic Origin
- Disability

in order that results and feedback could be disaggregated in respect of the questions raised.

The key messages that emerged from the consultation exercise are set out below:-

Supported school bus services generally

The main concerns about school services were the lack of alternative options to get to school, a more restricted choice of schools due to a lack of accessibility and the increased car use which conflicts with the promotion of sustainable transport.

Service 680

All respondents for this service were concerned about the effect a removal of the service would have on the accessibility of SGS College. One respondent suggested changing the route and timetable of the service in order to increase passenger numbers.

Service 948

Respondents were concerned about the removal of this bus service contributing to the isolation of Pucklechurch and a lack of alternative options to access the schools. Another concern was that removing the service would increase car use. Suggestions included making the service more viable by making it accessible for the general public or combining the service with another school bus service through Pucklechurch.

Service 963

The majority of respondents stated their children were dependent on a school bus and would not be able to get to school without this service. Further concerns included the safety of children if they had to walk a long distance, an increase in congestion, and other bus services in the area possibly not matching school hours.

Service 967

The service received a large number of consultation replies with the majority of respondents stating their children would not be able to get to school without the service. The main concerns were the safety of children attempting to walk or cycle to school, in particular after dusk and without a footpath between Yate and Westerleigh, children having to change schools due to a lack of alternative transport, and an increase in congestion and car use.

Further Note

There were no comments received of an equalities nature in relation to these services.

SECTION 3 - IDENTIFICATION OF EQUALITIES ISSUES AND IMPACTS

In relation to the proposed cessation of the services, it is clear that the protected characteristic of “Age” is relevant to this proposal – in this instance younger people, as those affected are all of school age. In respect of other protected characteristics detailed by the Equality Act 2010, there is no evidence to show any negative or positive equalities impacts..

Those affected are not statutorily entitled to free school transport; accordingly the travel arrangements to and from the school remain the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

Additionally, those affected have chosen to attend the school(s) in question, however, these choices may have been made on the basis that the transport was (and would remain) available.

Therefore, in mitigation, should the services cease, the Council will work with affected parents and stakeholders to assist them to put in place alternative arrangements.

SECTION 4 - EqIAA OUTCOME

Outcome	Response	Reason(s) and Justification
Outcome 1: No major change required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 2: Adjustments to remove barriers or to better promote equality have been identified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is clear from the consultation feedback and from the surveys carried out by the Council’s Transport Operations Team that the cessation of these services will impact on the young people using them to travel to and from School. In mitigation of this impact the Council would undertake to work constructively with affected parents and stakeholders to assist them to put in place alternative arrangements.
Outcome 3: Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

SECTION 5 - ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THIS EqIAA

Devise an action plan for implementation with options for the most effective assistance which can be provided to parents and stakeholders in the development and implementation of alternative arrangements.

SECTION 6 - EVIDENCE INFORMING THIS EqIAA

- Consultation Report – April 2014
- Ongoing on bus survey programme