

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 JANUARY 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL OF COMMUNITY LINK BUS SERVICES 28 & 991		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION & STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the results of the consultation on the budget saving proposal to withdraw financial support for the operation of the Community Link bus routes, and recommends that the bus routes 28 (plus 18 and 28a) and 991 should be withdrawn from April 2018 as they do not generate enough fares revenue to cover the costs of operation.
- 1.2 Appendix A: Analysis of consultation responses  
Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 It is proposed that Reading Buses is given notice of the Council's intention to withdraw the operation of bus routes 28 (plus 18 and 28a) and 991 from April 2018.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 On 18 July 2016, Policy Committee agreed that a range of budget saving proposals be investigated and authorised Officers to undertake public consultation, including the withdrawal of the Community Link subsidy. Members of the public were invited to respond to the proposal during a month long consultation held between July and October 2017, which is summarised in Appendix A.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

The RBC funded Community Link bus consists of one vehicle operating 5 days a week from 06.55 to 19.19. Within this time period the bus provides service on route 28/28a/18 between Kentwood Hill, Tilehurst, New Lane Hill, Bath Road, Central Reading, Tesco Napier Road, Rivermead, Caversham Centre, Emmer Green, Caversham Park and Marchwood Avenue. In addition on schooldays the bus operates route 991 from Whitley Wood via Coley Park to Prospect school and via The Meadway to Denefield School.

- 4.2 The cost of the bus for the year 2017-18 is approximately £108k with fares and support amounting to £69k leaving a subsidy gap of £39k. It is expected that during the year 44,000 passenger journeys will have been made on the bus which represents a subsidy per journey made of 89p. An average of 170 journeys will be made each day on this bus.
- 4.3 A consultation exercise has been undertaken (see below) which has identified that the proposed withdrawal of the bus service will result in hardship particularly affecting elderly and disabled residents of hilly roads that are served by the route 28 bus only. These are Kentwood Hill and New Lane Hill. Further hardship will be experienced by the loss of service along Napier Road and Marchwood Avenue but the numbers of people using the bus on these roads and thus affected by the withdrawal is very low and the roads concerned are not steep hills.
- 4.4 A number of people will be adversely affected by the withdrawal of the Community Link bus which represents a convenient quick link whereas the alternative in future will be to catch two buses and take significantly longer to make the same journey. This affects commuters and primary school parents and children from Kentwood, Tilehurst and New Lane Hill/Meadway to Southcote, elderly people from Caversham Park and Emmer Green to Central Caversham and Tesco Napier Road, and secondary school children from Whitley and Coley Park to Prospect and Deneffield Schools.
- 4.5 **Recommended Option:**  
Given that neither Reading Borough Council nor Reading Buses is in a position to continue to subsidise the operation of the loss making Community Link bus, it is recommended that the financial support for the Community Link service is withdrawn.
- 4.6 **Other Options Considered:**  
Options to provide a better level of service for some of the areas that will be affected by the withdrawal of these services have been reviewed, however neither Reading Borough Council nor Reading Buses is in a position to continue to subsidise the operation of the loss making Community Link bus or to provide alternative public transport provision at this time. If the service continued it is anticipated that the subsidy requirement will increase in the future due to inflationary pressures.
- 4.7 The needs of current disabled passengers could potentially be met by using Readibus services. It is noted however that Readibus already provides a high level of services across Reading Borough for disabled residents and that spare capacity for additional trips cannot be guaranteed. Over time Readibus may be able to continue to offer increased service as it expands to meet growing demand.
- 4.8 It is proposed that a further review of bus services in the Tilehurst area is carried out once the Cow Lane bridge scheme is completed.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The need to make agreed budget savings is the driver for the proposed withdrawal of the Community Link bus services which accords with the following strategic aim:
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities.
- 5.2 The proposed withdrawal of the Community Link bus service makes the strategic aim to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all, more difficult to achieve. The effects of the withdrawal will be felt mostly by elderly and disabled residents of roads where no bus would in future operate.

- 5.3 There are likely to be negative impacts for elderly and disabled residents who are living independently and are affected by the proposed withdrawal of the Community Link bus service.

## 6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 A consultation was undertaken both online and with paper consultation forms. This ran from 10<sup>th</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The two affected schools were specifically made aware of the consultation and publicity was given via the media and via Reading Buses web site. In view of the demographic of users an RBC officer also rode many trips on the Community Link bus handing out forms and explaining the proposals. The Reading Buses' regular driver also explained the proposed changes to customers and handed out and received consultation forms.
- 6.2 The results of the consultation, which consisted of 130 responses, have been analysed and are included in Appendix A.
- 6.3 A very high proportion of responses were received from users of the current bus service and the overwhelming view was that the service was essential and should not be withdrawn.
- 6.4 The consultation did identify that those residents of the two hilly roads, Kentwood Hill and New Lane Hill, where there would in future be no bus service, would be particularly affected by the withdrawal.

## 7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, 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.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is included in Appendix B.
- 7.3 The EQIA has identified that a disproportionate impact of the proposed withdrawal will be felt by elderly and disabled residents of the hilly roads Kentwood Hill and New Lane Hill which would be left with no bus service.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Reading Borough Council as a Transport Authority has a duty to consider the implications and any hardship resulting from the withdrawal of a commercial bus service. There is however no duty on Councils to necessarily replace such a bus service although that is what Reading Borough Council has done for many years by the operation of the Community Link bus at Council expense.
- 8.2 The Community Link bus is operated under a de minimis contract which does not require a specific notice period. Reading Buses has been made aware of the intention to cease operation from April 2018. The proposed withdrawal of the Community Link bus services can be done by giving 56 days notice by the bus operator (Reading Buses) to the Traffic Commissioner who licences local bus services.

**9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There is no budget allocated for Community Link services to be operated from April 2018 providing transport budget savings in real terms of £39k per year going forwards. In addition, the withdrawal of schools service 991 will cease the current requirement for £25k support from RBC Education budget to the Transport budget.

9.2 The financial implications arising from the withdrawal of the Community Link subsidy are set out below:-

	2017/18 £000	2018/19 £000	2019/20 £000
Employee costs (see note1)			
Other running costs			
Capital financings costs			
<b>Expenditure</b>	108,000	0	0
Income from:			
Fees and charges (see note2)	44,000		
Grant funding (specify)			
Other income	25,000		
<b>Total Income</b>	69,000	0	0
<b>Net Cost(+)/saving (-)</b>	39,000	-39,000	-39,000

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Policy Committee 'Budget Proposals 2016-20 to Narrow the Budget Gap' 18 July 2016.

## Response to consultation on proposal to withdraw Community Link bus routes 28 (and 28a/18) and schools bus 991

A consultation was carried out from 10<sup>th</sup> July to 1 September 2017. However upon informing Denefield School of the start and finish date it was made apparent by the school that many schoolchildren who could be affected were already not at school by the start date and would not return until 6<sup>th</sup> September. As a result a further distribution of consultation leaflets was carried out on the 991 school bus from Denefield on 7<sup>th</sup> September, and the school also sent an e-mail to parents. There was no acknowledgement received from Prospect School but copies were distributed to pupils on the afternoon school bus on 7<sup>th</sup> September.

The consultation was available on line but due to the demographic of the passengers using the Community Link bus physical distribution of leaflets was carried out on the bus in July, picking several different trips over a number of days. Regular users were also encouraged to give leaflets to other people they knew who used the bus occasionally. Leaflets were returned by handing them to the regular driver and forwarded on from Reading Buses or returned directly by post.

The regular driver also told passengers about the consultation and handed out leaflets which had been left with him.

Given the need to involve schoolchildren and their families in the consultation the period for receipt of questionnaires was extended until 26<sup>th</sup> September.

Key questions were;

1. Do you currently use any of these bus services? Please tick one(s)

28(and 28a/18)

991

2. What would be the impact of the withdrawal of this service on you?
3. If you have any suggestions or alternative options, for how this service could be provided, please write below.
4. If you would like to make any other comment, please write below.
5. Please provide your postcode.
6. Gender question.
8. Age group question.
9. Disability question.

Analysis of responses to questions.

The Community Link bus mainly serves two distinct markets so responders to the question which route do you use clearly separates the two.

Taking daytime route 28 (and 28a/18) first.

112 responses were received concerning the daytime Community Link services. Of this number 48 responders reported that they did have a disability (43%).

Additionally answers to question 8 showed that 48 were aged over 75, (43%).

These two key results show that the proposed withdrawal of daytime services will have a disproportionate effect on disabled and the most elderly members of our community.

86 of the 112 responses were from the two most elderly age groups together (65-74 and over 75), 77% of the responders therefore being of retired age, a very high percentage.

The responses to the other questions therefore largely reflected the concerns of the elderly and often disabled with several recurring themes.

1. People were upset that they would be left isolated and unable to get to the destinations and services they needed, including essential shopping, visits to doctors, banks, dentists and other elderly friends and relatives, either by the complete withdrawal of their local bus, or by the withdrawal of a through bus avoiding the need to change buses.
2. People were upset that they would be left isolated with no bus at all and the only alternatives being a bus located a fair walk away. For two key areas served by the current bus the alternatives would involve walking up or down steep hills, making the access difficulties even more severe.
3. People felt that it was wrong that bus frequencies on nearby routes were increased to generous levels but the bus company could not provide them with even a less frequent service. This was most keenly felt where nearby routes had increased service as part of the branding of core commercial routes but previous frequent routes had become very secondary. The frequency of service of previously quite significant routes had been reduced to nothing over the course of people's time living in their present house. In other words when they moved in they had a good frequency (up to 15 minutes on Kentwood Hill and New Lane Hill, now just a few buses a day and in future proposed to be zero).

The answers to the question regarding postcode revealed that the vast majority of responders live on the route and do use it. There were significant numbers of responses from residents of the two roads most significantly affected; Kentwood Hill and New Lane Hill, and very much less from Marchwood Avenue and Napier Road. Details of geographical split for roads where the only bus service would be withdrawn are as follows;

New Lane Hill 30

Kentwood Hill 21

Marchwood Avenue 4

Napier Road 2

Additional responses from those where people would experience inconvenience due to the withdrawal of through buses are as follows;

Tilehurst 18

Caversham Park 18

Emmer Green 6

Others 7

Specific area effects/concerns/difficulties

North;

**Marchwood Avenue;** The withdrawal of route 28 would leave residents with a level walk of over 500m to the nearest alternative bus stops at Tower Close (25) or Kiln Road(23,24,25). There was a low response from users of the bus in the Marchwood Avenue area reflecting the very low usage of the bus each day. To serve Marchwood Avenue by this bus necessitates a detour of about  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of an hour from the town centre, for, on many occasions no passengers.

**Caversham Park;** This area is served by route 23 every 20 minutes, but residents identified that the 28 is the only bus that connects them directly with Caversham Centre including access to doctors' surgeries. Without the 28 residents would need to change from a 23 to a 24 at Kiln Road (same stop) en route to Caversham centre and from the 24 to 23 again on the way back. Due to the layout of Caversham Park the 28 is the only bus serving both sides in an anticlockwise direction enabling any resident to get to/from Caversham.

However whilst many people complain about the lack of a through service as was formerly provided by the previous 23/24 routes, few actually use the route 28 provision each day. Serving Caversham Park in this way is part of the  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of an hour route to Marchwood Ave and back, and is currently justified by the need to serve Marchwood Avenue.

**Emmer Green;** Residents identified that the current route of 28 should be returned to its previous routing via St Barnabas and Hemdean Road, enabling more people to catch it and giving better access to surgeries. However previous boarding and alighting surveys have shown that the 28 was used by very few people to access these surgeries and what the bus mostly did was pick up passengers who were already at a stop waiting for a 24. As the finances of all Caversham bus

services are pretty thin the poaching of passengers from a commercial bus to the RBC supported 28 is not helpful to the overall Caversham bus provision. The result of re-routing 28 via Rivermead was insufficient time to serve Hemdean Road thus improving the finances of route 24 but worsening the 28's.

Rivermead; Users of route 28 from/to Caversham complained that no-one ever gets on or off at Rivermead and diverting the bus there on each trip has lost further customers. Rivermead will from 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017 be served by a more frequent minibus BUZZ 42 which will run from Kenavon Drive through the town centre to Rivermead. If this had been available a year ago when expected the 28 would not have needed to be diverted here.

Tesco Napier Road; A very low response was received from residents reflecting the low use made of the bus. Withdrawal of 28 would leave residents with a level walk of about 950m to the Station North Interchange or about 250m to the new route BUZZ 42 on Kenavon Drive. Route 28 does carry a number of shoppers to/from Tesco but the existence of a free Tesco bus on 3 days a week has always weakened the market. Some responders from Tilehurst and Caversham stated that removal of the 28 would make shopping more difficult which would be true but recent construction of many more medium sized supermarkets and the Tesco Extra on Oxford Road, almost all of which are served by frequent bus services, makes the justification for taking route 28 to Tesco Napier Road, difficult to make.

If the current proposal for an MRT to the east of Reading comes to fruition Tesco Napier Road and the adjacent housing will in due course be served by a very frequent bus rapid transit service.

West;

New Lane Hill; Sometime previously enjoying a half hourly day time service and up to every 15 minutes at peak times, commercial services were withdrawn many years ago. For a time RBC used a Reading Buses off peak marginally costed bus (28) in replacement but in due course this was replaced with the current RBC funded 28 full all day costed facility. The current roughly 2 hourly off peak and hourly evening peak service has been altered many times to serve other identified needs such as Purley, Kentwood Hill, Caversham Park, Marchwood Avenue, Napier Road and Rivermead. This has arguably undermined the ability of the route to provide consistent service on New Lane Hill. The proposed withdrawal of all service on New Lane Hill would leave residents with a very steep walk of about 700m to Bath Road bus stops or 800m to Meadway bus stops. Residents of New Lane Hill area questioned why they could not have the occasional route 33 bus diverted or even the 1. However the geography of the area would make it very difficult to divert either of these buses within a sensible route timetable.



Some elderly residents of this area pay to use the AM peak bus at around 8.30 rather than wait for the first free bus after 10.30. A dedicated west end only off peak route 28 could arguably be better timed for the needs of the elderly population. There is no doubt that complete withdrawal of the bus from New Lane Hill would leave a number of independently living elderly and disabled people very isolated. However there is little evidence that the current PM peak service is needed for New Lane Hill as commuters have chosen not to use these services. New Lane Hill's real need for a bus service is off peak.

**Kentwood Hill;** At one time Kentwood Hill enjoyed frequent service to Oxford Road and town but as Tilehurst and Purley estates expanded routes were diverted leaving the hill with a half hourly route 18 bus to Tilehurst and Calcot and to town via Oxford Road. When this route was withdrawn as being uncommercial, RBC replaced it with an extension of the supported route 28.

The low frequency nature of the 28 and the need to serve Tilehurst en route to town via New Lane Hill has undoubtedly contributed to fewer passengers. The complete withdrawal of a bus from this hill would leave residents with a very steep walk of about 600m to a 17 stop or 750m to a 16 stop. Some residents queried why route 17 could not have an hourly 17a variant as the travel time via Oxford Road and Kentwood Hill is not very different from the 'direct' route via Norcot Road. As route 17 gets further from town the frequency becomes ever more generous for the increasingly suburban area served. Norcot Road would not in itself require a 7 minute frequency and a 24/7 service whilst Kentwood Hill does not 'deserve' to be reduced to zero service, no days a week. Unfortunately as route 17 has remained confined to its present route for over 70 years it is quite likely that a 17a variant may lead to significant passenger confusion.

The provision of service beyond Kentwood to Purley is perhaps even more generous when considering the revenue generation of Overdown Road v Kentwood Hill. An argument could be made that some route 16 buses could be run instead as 16a via Kentwood Hill and Westwood Road reconnecting Purley to Tilehurst as well as offering proper service to Kentwood Hill and connecting Tilehurst to Tilehurst Station/Waitrose. As route 16 is every 15 minutes perhaps a straight 50/50 split should be made recognising that the Kentwood Hill area is entirely in RBC and that half of Overdown Road is not. In the peak periods school extra buses would still help to enhance service on Overdown Road as now. Outbound 16a buses via Kentwood Hill and Tilehurst could be turned short at Knowsley Road, rather than serving Purley Village which again of itself does not justify a 15 minute service.

There is no doubt that complete withdrawal of the bus from Kentwood Hill would leave a number of independently living elderly and disabled people very isolated.

There is a much broader mix of people living in the area around Kentwood Hill than New Lane Hill and the absence of a reasonable (at least) 6 days a week service

makes development of a customer base difficult and leaves quite a large area of RBC with an ineffective service. The PM peak buses on 28 have not met the commuter market needs as they don't serve similar town centre stops to route 16, thus if the 28's are late (as they have been) customers have no useful alternative.

Other users of route 28;

Several regular customers use the AM peak route 28a from Tilehurst to Southcote for school and work. Without the bus starting at Denefield School after its 991 school trip this trip would not exist. Any retained provision of an off peak marginally costed route 28 would not be able to provide these customers with a service.

Route 991 schools service

Originally a schools bus was introduced in response to changes to schools allocated to RBC resident pupils, some of whom ended up crossing town to their allocated school. RBC provided a dedicated bus in response and over time this has been made more efficient by incorporating the various school trips into the one 991 route. For the past few years this route has started in Whitley and run via Coley and Coley Park to Prospect then via the Meadway to Denefield.

16 responses were received which have focused on the difficulties of some pupils who would be faced with a 2 bus trip to town and out again rather than a very quick direct 991. A further question has been the capacity of the other bus between Meadway and Denefield as there is also a number 15 bus provided commercially by Reading Buses.

Surveys have however shown that the numbers using 991 have dropped over recent years as older pupils have move on and newer pupils have not needed to travel across town to these schools.

Figures have now shown that the route 991 bus from Denefield in the afternoon carried an average of just 16 each day (from 8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> May) and the route 15 bus carried an average of 39. The total of 55 could easily be accommodated on the one double decker used on the 15.

A September analysis showed an average of 56 per day boarding the 15 and 991. Again this is well within the capacity of the route 15 bus.

Previously the 991 also carried reasonable numbers boarding at Prospect for travel to the Coley Park and Whitley areas, but from September 2017 the finish time of Prospect was advanced to 2.45pm, making the 991 calling there at 3.28pm much less relevant.

Conclusions

1. With the reduced cross town usage of route 991 as noted and the ability of route 15 to accommodate the numbers travelling to/from Denefield, the bus is currently abstracting revenue from that route which will be to the detriment of a continued school service. The movement of the school finish time at Prospect undermines the economics of 991 still further.

Whilst there will be inconvenience and longer journeys for some current users the case for continued subsidy of the 991 cannot be made.

2. Following on from the conclusion (1) above without 991 there would be no bus positioned in Tilehurst to work the AM peak trip to town.

3. For off peak services it is clear that severe hardship would result from the complete withdrawal of buses from New Lane Hill and Kentwood Hill, but difficult to make that same conclusion for anywhere else on the current route.

Stephen Wise

Senior Transport Planner 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017



Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Withdrawal of Community Link bus services 28 and 991 from April 2018.

Directorate: DENS

Service: Transport Planning

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Stephen Wise

Job Title: Senior Transport Planner

Date of assessment: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

Withdrawal of Community Link bus services 28 and 991 from April 2018 was identified as a potential budget saving proposal at Policy Committee in July 2016.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

The proposal will contribute to the overall budget saving that the Council needs to make.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The budget saving is the aim of the proposed bus service withdrawal.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

The current users of the Community Link bus services are the other stakeholders besides Reading Borough Council. Current users of the bus services want the services to continue.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

Yes

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

Yes

If the answer is Yes to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Signed (completing officer)

Stephen Wise

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date

19<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Date

### Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- Consultation
- Collection and Assessment of Data
- Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable. This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

**Consultation**

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[My Home > Info Pods > Community Involvement Pod - Inside Reading Borough Council](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
Current users of the Community Link bus services	<p>A press release was issued in advance of the consultation commencing and information was presented by Reading Buses and by RBC on their web pages.</p> <p>A survey was conducted both on line and in person by an RBC officer handing out survey forms on the bus at a variety of times.</p> <p>Reading Buses' regular driver advised bus passengers of the survey and handed out and collected forms.</p> <p>Stakeholder groups, including schools served by the 991 and the Older People's Working Group, were advised of the consultation by email.</p>	10 <sup>th</sup> July to 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2017

## Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups**

The proposal would not impact on this group of people.

Is there a negative impact? No

### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)**

The proposal would not impact on this group of people.

Is there a negative impact? No

### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**

The proposal would have a negative impact on people with reduced mobility as the Community Link bus is currently the only bus service on some roads in Reading. Roads that would be unserved in future include New Lane Hill and Kentwood Hill which would have a significant impact on the ability of people with reduced mobility to access alternative bus services on other roads. A high proportion of respondents to the consultation (43%) stated they had some form of disability. Other users of the Community Link bus would be more able to access alternative bus routes operating on other roads.

Is there a negative impact? Yes

### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**

The proposal would not impact on this group of people.

Is there a negative impact? No

### **Describe how this proposal could impact on Age**

The proposal would have a negative impact on elderly people as the Community Link bus is currently the only bus service on some roads in Reading. Roads which would be unserved in future include New Lane Hill and Kentwood Hill which have a significant number of elderly people living independently who use the bus as a vital service. Many of these people would be unable to access alternative bus services on other roads. A high proportion of respondents to the consultation (77%) were aged over 65, 43% were aged over 75. Other users of the Community Link bus would be more able to access alternative bus routes operating on other roads.

Is there a negative impact?	Yes
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Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?
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The proposal would not impact on this group of people.

Is there a negative impact?	No
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### Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Tick which applies (Please delete relevant ticks)

1. No negative impact identified      Go to sign off

2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

#### Reason

Reading Borough Council as a transport authority has a duty to consider the hardship that would result from the withdrawal of a bus service which is no longer able to operate commercially. RBC has in the past identified that there would be hardship for elderly and disabled residents of a number of roads where the commercial bus services 28 and 18 were withdrawn. The result of this consideration was that RBC undertook to operate the Community Link bus service at a cost to the transport budget over a number of years, however the Council is no longer in a position to subsidise the bus services.

3. Negative impact identified or uncertain

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale?

In view of the above statement regarding hardship, Reading Borough Council proposes to undertake a further review of bus services in the Tilehurst area once Cow Lane bridge works are complete.



How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

The Council continues to have a duty to consider any hardship that would result from the withdrawal of a bus service. This would again apply if further withdrawals of bus commercial services were proposed by a bus company.

Signed (completing officer)

Stephen Wise

Date

19<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date