



Budget Reduction Proposals Equalities Impact Assessment

SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES

Proposal 39b

Reduction in the budget for supported bus services

July 2011

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Summary of Impacts

- i. This impact assessment report on MTFP Proposal 39b (reduction in the budget for supported bus services) is arranged in the chronological order in which the assessment was carried out. As a result, impacts are set out as part of an overall dialogue at various places in the main body of the report, mainly within sections 6, 8 and 10. For ease of reading, therefore the impacts are summarised below.
 - a. It is important to remember that the majority of bus services are provided commercially and will not be affected by proposal 39b, which relates only to the bus services that the Council pays for through supported bus contracts to satisfy unmet travel needs.
 - b. The protected characteristics potentially impacted by proposal 39b are Age (both older people and children and younger people) and Disability; the assessment methodology also identified potential impacts on unemployed or low income people, carers and people with mental ill health.
 - c. The main effects of lack of access to affordable transport on people's lives could include loss of social interaction, isolation and loneliness; disposable income and affordability through increased transport costs; access to services and facilities; and health and mental wellbeing; these effects are clearly interconnected and have the potential to be mutually reinforcing.
 - d. In a sample survey of users of supported bus services, disabled people were more likely than non-disabled to give up their bus journey if the bus service was not available. The proportion of disabled people using evening services compared to early morning and daytime services was slightly higher than the proportion of non-disabled. The proposal to maintain morning and daytime services whilst reducing evening and Sunday services could impact disproportionately on disabled people.
 - e. However the specific impacts arising from the detailed proposals for supported bus services identified in the assessment are limited to the following.
 - i. The withdrawal of evening services on route 26 (Rise Carr) could affect people attending the Deaf Association Club on Eldon Street, reducing their social interaction with the attendant effects on wellbeing and confidence, and/or increasing the cost of transport through having to use taxis

- ii. The withdrawal of evening service on route 6a/6b (Glebe Road/Salters Lane & Whinfield) could have a similar impact on users of the Gateway Club, although it has proved difficult to arrange to meet with members to discuss this.
 - iii. Withdrawal of Sunday services to West Park Hospital could impact on the health and wellbeing of people with mental ill health who are patients at the hospital, if visits by family and friends are restricted.
 - iv. The withdrawal of evening and Sunday services to Middleton St George and Neasham, and of evening services with reduced Sunday services to Hurworth could impact on wheelchair users who live at Rockcliffe Court and in Neasham, and who are reported to use the services.
- f. It is difficult to measure the likely scale and seriousness of these specific impacts of proposal 39b, but they are limited in scale compared with the much more serious challenges that disabled people have to contend with in using public transport generally. These challenges and issues were highlighted in the impact assessment engagement, and are anyway well known through ongoing discussions with Darlington Association on Disability. They relate to cultural, attitudinal and operational barriers to use of both buses and taxis for disabled people, and particularly wheelchair users.
- g. For many disabled people these issues are overriding, and the question of the potential impacts of proposal 39b hardly arises, because people are not able to access buses to start with. For these people, the impact is likely to be in terms of the opportunity cost of the loss of services in the eventuality that the barriers to bus use were to be tackled successfully.
- h. Multiple impacts, arising from other budget reduction proposals, the 2010 in-year budget savings, and changes in the wider environment could combine with proposal 39b to impact on affordability of transport, particularly for older people who have a bus pass, and to reduce the range of travel options available. The change to concessionary fares to withdraw entitlement to free travel before 9.30am, withdrawal of Taxi Vouchers and termination of funding for the Ring-a-Ride service all contribute to these multiple impacts.
- i. The anticipated multiple impacts for children and young people arising from the combined effects of proposal 39b and proposed changes to free school transport have been avoided by the cancellation of those changes, and by the prioritisation of early morning and daytime services under proposal 39b.

Section 1: Introduction

- 1) Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 significant reductions in local government funding were announced. The Council faces its most significant financial challenge since becoming a Unitary Council in 1997 due to reductions in Government funding.
- 2) Budget reductions in 2011/12 require the Council to manage a reduction of 12.1% in its non-schools government grant in 2011/12 with a further 4.7% in 2012/13. There is no certainty about grant funding beyond 2012/13 as the Government proposes a fundamental review of how local government is funded. However, based on the Comprehensive Spending Review figures the Council estimates a reduction of 24.4% of its non-schools grant funding by 2014/15.
- 3) Initial budget proposals were published for consultation with the public in November 2010. The confirmation by Government that nearly half of the required budget reductions over the four years must be made in 2011/12 allows very little scope to vary from the published savings figures. This further reinforces the importance of the impact assessment process to ensure that senior officers and Members are made fully aware of the implications of the proposals on the whole population.
- 4) The Sustainable Community Strategy – *One Darlington, Perfectly Placed* provided the overarching framework within which savings options were assessed, with the specific objective of seeking to minimise impact on vulnerable people. The development of the suite of proposals incorporated all areas of the Council's business; leisure and culture, environmental services and highways, services for children, young people and families and adult social care.
- 5) The budget reduction proposals for the next four years were published in the Town Crier in November 2010. The process of gathering the views of residents and of developing assessments of the potential impacts of the proposals began straight after publication.
- 6) An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) methodology was developed across all the proposals and carried out from November 2010, starting with a high level whole population appraisal of potential areas of impact and then moving into increasingly detailed assessment of impacts through engagement with the people who could be affected. The approach utilised the Council's established tools for carrying out EIA of individual proposals. However, having regard to the concurrent consideration of a large number of proposals, the approach was designed to allow also a view of potential multiple impacts across the full suite.

Section 2: The Legal Context

- 7) The public sector equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 replaces the previous separate race, disability and gender equality duties. The general duty on public sector bodies is to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
 - Foster good relations between different groups
- 8) The Equalities and Human Rights Commission has issued guidance for decision-makers on making fair financial decisions. This is available at:
http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/EqualityAct/PSED/making_fair_financial_decisions.pdf
- 9) The law requires the Council and other public authorities to have 'due regard' to the public sector general duty when making decisions. Decision-makers must have 'enough information' available to enable the authority to demonstrate that it has had due regard to any potential impacts, both adverse and beneficial, on people with 'protected characteristics'¹ arising from proposal(s) before making their decision(s).
- 10) Recent case law² underlines the importance of decision makers having available to them information on the potential impact of their decisions at the time they make those decisions, and that such information should be obtained by asking people with protected characteristics what the impacts of the proposal(s) could be. Whilst this is good practice in relation to all the protected characteristics, it does have statutory force in relation to disabled people: impacts on disabled people cannot be assessed properly without involving disabled people.
- 11) The Council's approach to EIA was developed under the separate statutes relating to race, gender and disability that pre-dated the Equalities Act, and the budget proposals were published before the Equalities Act came into force on 6th April 2011. The Council has continued to use the proven tools of a 'multi-strand' equality impact assessment and a separate Disability Equality Impact

¹ The protected characteristics are Age, Disability, Race, Religion or Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sex, Sexual Orientation, and Pregnancy and Maternity. Marriage and Civil Partnerships is a protected characteristic only in terms of preventing unlawful discrimination.

² Namely the judgement of The Honourable Mr Justice Walker in the case of four families of disabled people v Birmingham City Council published 19th May 2011:
<http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/7852C851-129F-4DFB-89C1-C495BD08DCBC/0/birminghamcitycouncil19052011.pdf>

Assessment, developed within the previous legal framework in partnership with disabled and other groups, to assess these proposals.

Section 3: Proposal 39b

- 12) The proposal covered by this Equality Impact Assessment was included in the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as reference number 39b - reduction in the budget for supported bus services. This budget enables the Council to enter into contracts with public transport operators for the provision of bus services that would not otherwise be provided on a commercial basis, but which the Council considers to be socially desirable. These non-commercial services provided through a Council contract are termed Supported Bus Services.
- 13) It is important to emphasise that the majority of bus services are provided commercially at the bus operator's risk. Commercial services are not subsidised or controlled by the Council and are not affected by this budget proposal.
- 14) The proposal, published in November 2010 for public consultation, is to reduce the budget by £100,000 for the lifetime of the 2011/15 MTFP. This would leave a maximum operational budget for 2011/12 of £381,000.
- 15) The findings of Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out between November 2010 and February 2011, outlined in this report, informed the decision of Council in March 2011 to confirm the overall savings figure as the basis for the development of detailed implementation proposals.
- 16) Further EIA has been carried out and has helped to shape the detailed proposals. The complete EIA process and its findings are documented in this report. Its purpose is to enable Members making a decision on those detailed proposals to be aware of their potential impact on individuals and groups of people in Darlington.

Section 4: Supported Buses in Darlington

- 17) The current bus service network is the product of a widespread review of routes in 2008. Most bus services are operated commercially by Arriva North East with the entire network radiating out from the hub of the town centre. The Council currently chooses to pay for additional journeys, either for complete services or for additional journeys on otherwise commercial routes, where it perceives that there is unmet travel need.
- 18) The Council currently has 34 contracts in place, with an intended expiry date of 2014. The service providers under these contracts are Arriva North East and

Scarlet Band. The cost of these contracts is approximately £363,000 per annum, and the Council additionally pays towards the cost of 6 cross-boundary contracts issued by Durham and North Yorkshire County Councils. The budget also funds the fees charged by the Traveline public transport information service and timetable information at bus stops.

Section 5: Overview of Equalities Impact Assessment Process

- 19) The EIA approach was framed by a 'funnel' analogy. At the mouth of the funnel initial work focused on high-level assessment of the suite of budget reduction proposals at a whole population level. Going down the funnel the approach involved increasingly detailed assessment of the impact of individual proposals on specific groups of people.
- 20) The self assessment spreadsheet (Appendix 1) and the 'Talking Together' events and workshops for older people, disabled people and children and young people were the main components of the high level 'mouth of the funnel' assessment. In terms of proposal 39b these early components tended to identify quantitative or 'logistical' impacts on people's travel patterns and access to facilities. The later and more targeted engagement work has sought to identify qualitative impacts on people's lives.
- 21) Engagement and discussion with people who could be affected by the proposal, between November 2010 and March 2011, addressed only the in-principle proposal of reducing the budget by £100,000 or approximately 23% of the 2010/11 budget. At this stage there were no detailed proposals. In the Council's view it would not have been appropriate to engage people in impact assessment with a ready-made set of proposals.
- 22) Instead, the purpose of the first period of engagement was to inform the Council decision in March 2011 of whether the in-principle proposal should go forward for development of detailed proposals and, if it did proceed, to contribute to the establishment of criteria for shaping detailed proposals.
- 23) The key components of the initial engagement programme were:
 - a. Two Talking Together events on 8th and 16th November for the general public examining all of the budget reduction proposals
 - b. Three workshops, one with disabled people, one with Parish Councils and Meetings representatives, and one with older people in November 2010
 - c. A workshop with children and younger people in January 2011

- d. Survey of bus use by residents of Sadberge carried out by Sadberge Parish Council to contribute to impact assessment of the proposal
 - e. Consultation with bus service operators to invite their comments and ideas
 - f. Two phases of public consultation carried out in November 2010 and January 2011
- 24) The Equalities Impact Assessment Group, made up of Council officers who are equalities champions within their service areas, carried out an initial impact appraisal of all proposals across the full range of protected characteristics and other criteria. A spreadsheet tool was developed for the exercise. The completed spreadsheet is attached as Appendix 1. The individual appraisal of the Supported Buses proposal using the spreadsheet is attached as Appendix 2.
- 25) An initial appraisal of potential disability impacts, utilising the Council's disability equality impact assessment methodology, was carried out in January 2011 utilising information from the above engagement sources and from a range of survey and other information, documented in the appraisal. This is attached as Appendix 3
- 26) Cabinet received a report on the draft Medium Term Financial Plan on 22nd February 2011. The report included details and documentation on all budget savings proposals, including all the documents referred to above, as well as records of the Talking Together sessions and targeted workshops (events 22a, b, c and f in the above list. Appendix 4 lists the comments relating to proposal 39b raised at these events).
- 27) Cabinet recommended the draft MTFP to Council, which decided at its meeting on 3rd March 2011 to approve the in-principle proposal for further impact assessment and development of detailed proposals.
- 28) The next steps following this decision were:
- a. An on-bus survey of 484 users of supported bus services, which identified disabled users and questioned people on the options available to them if the service was not available in future
 - b. Self-completion forms available on supported bus services for users to take and complete – over 300 were returned to the Council
 - c. Engagement workshops with disabled people at Dimensions, the Deaf Forum and Deaf Association Club, and the Blind Association, including self completion of a travel diary questionnaire and impact discussions
 - d. A follow-up survey of bus users by Sadberge Parish Council
 - e. Web and Facebook consultation pages

- 29) The engagement work outlined above helped to establish criteria for the development of proposals for a revised supported bus network. The proposals are set out in the covering report to Cabinet, which recommends them to Members as the optimum way of implementing budget savings proposal 39b. This Equalities Impact Assessment is provided to assist Members in understanding the impacts of those proposals and to ensure that they have due regard to those impacts on disabled people and on people with other protected characteristics in making their decision.

Section 6: Initial Impact Assessment Findings

- 30) The officer self assessment (Appendix 1) identified three key groups of people who are more likely to experience adverse impacts from the proposal:
- o children and young people
 - o older people
 - o disabled people (including people with mental ill health)

The report to Cabinet on 22nd February highlighted that these three groups were the most likely to experience adverse impacts across many of the budget savings proposals, and older and disabled people are also affected by the in-year transport related reductions implemented during 2010/11. Multiple impacts are addressed later in this report, and a separate Multiple Impacts Risk Appraisal has been prepared.

- 31) The main issues relating to impact on protected characteristics of proposal 39b raised engagement and consultation between November 2010 and February 2011 (prior to the formulation of specific proposals) are summarised below.
- o Social isolation – depending on which services are reduced, some older, disabled and children and younger people could be more isolated, particularly those living in rural areas
 - o Social activities - linked to the above evening services can be as important as daytime services for older and disabled people for going to work or to social activities like the Gateway Club and Deaf Club
 - o Mental health – loss of services to West Park Hospital could impact on people with mental illness by restricting visitors
 - o Health and well-being – linked to the above, people’s confidence, mental health and well-being could be affected if they are less able to get out; and people may be less able to access health services and medical appointments
 - o Travel to college and to employment is important for younger people

- Alternative travel options – these are limited for older and disabled people, with insufficient provision of accessible taxis and affordability of taxis an issue for many.
 - Mobility services - the loss of the Ring-a-Ride service removes a travel option for people who are less able to use scheduled services.
 - Multiple impacts – these are set out in more detail later in this report, but the initial appraisal reported to Cabinet in February that the combined effects of the 2010 in-year changes to the concessionary fares scheme restrict early morning access to work, volunteering, day services and medical appointments, compounded by overcrowding on buses at 9.30am with people and especially wheelchair users not being allowed onto full buses and having to wait for later services; the Adult Social Care proposals, combined with the loss of Ring-a-Ride and removal of Taxi Vouchers, could reduce the affordability and availability of alternative transport options.
- 32) The initial appraisal (Appendix 3) also gave an indication of the difficulty in assessing the potential impacts of proposal 39b, because of the significant under-representation of disabled people in the existing pattern of bus patronage. There is unsatisfied travel demand amongst disabled people, as reported by Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) and disabled people themselves, because of the barriers experienced when trying to use buses. These are primarily cultural, attitudinal and operational (drivers and other passengers) with less emphasis on infrastructural. These barriers are also experienced in relation to taxis, and the primary need for disabled people is for these barriers to be tackled and reduced.
- 33) The EIA engagement work generated feedback that reinforced this picture. People are experiencing significant transport-related problems (buses and taxis) with detrimental impacts on their quality of life but, with notable exceptions raised in sections 7 and 8 of this report, these problems and impacts are not specifically related to supported bus services or to proposal 39b.
- 34) The superficial view could be that, as disabled people are under-represented in bus patronage, the impact of proposal 39b on disabled people could not be disproportional, relative to the population as a whole. However, the argument of proportionality – that the proposal would be unlikely to affect disabled people to a greater extent than the population as a whole – is perhaps misplaced because it overlooks the lack of access to alternative modes of transport (walking, cycling, driving) for disabled and some older people. It would also sidestep the duty of seeking to advance or improve conditions for disabled people rather than simply making sure negative impacts are not affecting disabled people disproportionately. The loss of services through proposal 39b

could be an opportunity cost to disabled people if the overall barriers to bus use can be tackled and reduced.

Section 7: Criteria and Detailed Proposals

- 35) Based on the feedback from all of the engagement and public consultation (not only that linked to EIA) detailed proposals have been developed around the criteria of seeking to retain early morning and daytime supported bus services, with reductions mainly affecting evening and Sunday services.
- 36) The proposals give priority to safeguarding early morning access to employment and daytime access to shops, medical and other facilities. The proposals retain evening and Sunday services along radial routes, though with a reduced frequency on most routes.
- 37) In these proposals there would be no evening services into the West End between Woodland Road and Coniscliffe Road; to Rise Carr, Drinkfield and Harrowgate Farm; Glebe Road and Northwood Park; Albert Hill and Cleveland Street; Hundens Lane; and Middleton St George and Hurworth. There would be no evening services in Whinfield on Mondays to Thursdays. There would be reduced evening services to Springfield/Salters Lane, Firthmoor/Lascelles, and Skerne Park. The evening services to the north western part of the town – Hopetown, Pierremont, Branksome, Cockerton, High Grange and West Park – are commercial would not be affected.
- 38) Sunday services would be withdrawn totally from the West End; Pierremont, High Grange and West Park; Glebe Road and Northwood Park; Albert Hill and Cleveland Street; Hundens Lane; and Middleton St George and Neasham. Sunday services would be reduced to Branksome; Rise Carr, Drinkfield and Harrowgate Farm; Firthmoor and Lascelles; Skerne Park; Hurworth and Croft; and along North Road, Yarm Road and Grange Road. The commercial services along Woodland Road, to Hopeton and Cockerton, and to Springfield/Salters Lane, Haughton and Whinfield would not be affected.
- 39) It is important to emphasise that commercial services will not be affected and the majority of supported services will be retained. For most residents there will continue to be access to bus services within convenient walking distance. However, this may not be the case for some older and disabled people with impaired mobility. The engagement work carried out since the February report to Cabinet provides further evidence of potential impacts.

Section 8: Further Impact Assessment Findings

- 40) The on-bus survey of users of supported bus services found that:
- Older people between the ages of 55 and 64 are the largest single age category of users.
 - Of 484 people interviewed in total, 41 (8.5%) considered themselves to be disabled.
 - Of these 41, 14 people said they would give up their journey if the bus service was not available – all 14 were over 55 and 11 had a bus pass; their journey purposes were for leisure (8), shopping (3), visiting friends (2), and going to work. (1)
 - The 14 who would give up their journey constituted 34% of the people surveyed who said they were disabled, whilst of non-disabled service users interviewed, 35 (8%) said they would give up their journey if the bus service was not available.
 - Of the other 27 disabled people interviewed on bus, 8 would walk if the service was not available, 6 would travel at a different time, 2 would go to a different place served by bus, 4 would use a taxi, and 7 offered no response.
 - 7 of the 41 disabled service users were travelling on early morning journeys before 8am, with only 1 of these having a concessionary fare pass on the grounds of disability; 13 disabled service users were using daytime services, with no one holding a concessionary fares pass on the grounds of disability; and 21 were using evening services, with 10 holding a concessionary pass.
- 41) A full survey report is available setting out the findings, but the above extracts highlight two key points:
- Whilst the survey found only a small sample of people stating they were disabled, it suggests a disproportionate effect in terms of the percentage of disabled people who said they would give up their journey compared to non-disabled people if the service was not available.
 - The proposal to prioritise early morning and daytime services in favour of the needs of the wider population could have a disproportionate effect on disabled people, to the extent that more disabled people identified in the survey were using evening services than morning and daytime services.
- 42) Parish Council representatives attended a workshop in November 2010, and were concerned about the potential effects of loss of rural bus services on access to shops, schools and medical services, increasing isolation for older

people in particular and eroding people's social life and mental well-being. Sadberge Parish Council followed this up with its own survey of bus use by Sadberge residents, highlighting the importance of the bus for people attending medical appointments. The findings are summarised in Appendix 3, and a survey report is available.

- 43) The detailed proposals for implementing proposal 39b would not result in loss of bus service to Sadberge, and therefore the impacts identified in the Parish Council's survey work would not arise. However, the proposals would result in loss of evening services to Middleton St George, Neasham and Hurworth, and of Sunday services to Middleton St George and Neasham, with a reduced service to Hurworth. At the parish council workshop the use of buses by wheelchair users living at Rockliffe Court, Hurworth and at Neasham was highlighted, and there could be impacts on their travel for social and leisure purposes.
- 44) A self-administered travel diary was completed by a small sample of 11 people attending Dimensions, the Deaf Forum and the Blind Association. Covering a period of one week, the participants recorded 106 trips, of which 17 were on supported services, the remainder being commercially operated. The majority of journeys were on daytime routes 16 and 19, with four journeys being on the evening service 26 (Rise Carr/Harrowgate Farm). The daytime routes are not affected by the proposals, whilst the evening service would be terminated under the current proposals. Six of the 17 trips on supported buses may not happen if the services were withdrawn. Trip purposes were shopping, visiting friends and attending the Blind Club. Two of these six trips were on evening service 26.
- 45) However, members of the Deaf Association Club, which is on the service 26 route, did not keep travel diaries but participated in a Tuesday evening EIA discussion. Whilst no one had used the bus to attend the event, it was stated that members used the bus service to come to the club for social purposes at the weekend. The loss of service 26 would have an effect on the social use of the club. If that resulted in a loss of income through the bar, the financial viability of the club could be affected.
- 46) Officers also attempted on several occasions to arrange an EIA session with the Gateway Club on Salters Lane, but were unable to do so. It is assumed, however, that the proposal to withdraw evening service from route 6a/6b to North Road, Salters Lane and Whinfield could have a similar impact as for the Deaf Association Club on evening social access. Alternative services along North Road are in closer proximity than for the Deaf Association Club, but the potential impact on Gateway Club Members should be taken into account.

- 47) The on-bus survey and the travel diaries, together with the Talking Together and other earlier events, provided quantitative or practical data on the impact of proposal 39b on people's travel habits, but they tended to lack qualitative information on the consequential impact on people's lives. The on-bus survey was limited by journey length on the time that could be spent with each person interviewed and therefore restricting in-depth exploration of potential impacts, and without facilitation people did not generally provide qualitative impact statements in their travel diaries.
- 48) Engagement sessions were therefore arranged with disabled groups to explore the importance of transport to people's quality of life. Sessions were held at Dimensions, the Deaf Forum and the Deaf Association Club. A fuller picture would be provided if the Gateway Club could be included, and officers will continue to seek to engage with the club. Some members of Dimensions prepared written statements about impacts.
- 49) The potential impacts anticipated early in the process on evening and Sunday visitors to West Park Hospital and on evening and Sunday services to Middleton St George and Neasham have not been confirmed through the research. The survey of supported bus users found only one person using the service to visit the hospital and no concerns were raised in relation to the village services. The anticipated concern was particularly about services for disabled residents of Rockliffe Court in Hurworth, who will not be affected by the proposals.
- 50) This approach has its limitations as impact assessment, as the discussions were with disabled people who may occasionally be users of supported bus services, rather than with service users who could be affected directly by the proposals. The feedback provided by participants tended to relate to transport in general rather than supported bus services in particular.
- 51) The impact statements made by people via these engagement events are summarised below:
- i) Dimensions, 29th June 2011
 - o I feel I've lost independence because of the lack of transport options
 - o My carer has to help me get around and that's a waste of her time when she could be doing something more worthwhile for me
 - o Bus drivers have an attitude problem towards wheelchair users
 - o Drivers lack the people skills which are vital to the job
 - o I never use the bus due to driver attitude and vehicle design (powered wheelchairs are too heavy for the manual ramps on most buses) so we spend more time travelling which uses up carer time
 - o Loss of Ring-a-Ride and taxi vouchers have already affected us and the social services payment proposals will affect us again – users pay for

buses and taxis, so cost will become more of a problem if we have less money available

- We often can't get on the bus, with buggies taking up the wheelchair space – drivers often ask people to move pushchairs, but never for disabled people
- I was refused access to the bus because of a pushchair – I feel like a second class citizen, I didn't ask for this condition, but I'm made to feel humiliated and frustrated. I'm angry and very upset, I'm still angry
- It's getting so that I'm too scared to go out – if I manage to get into town I don't know if I will be able to get back
- I was wrongly accused of not paying the fare – I felt guilty and small
- Where I live, it's really horrendous getting into town for shopping, I feel really isolated
- It can be scary on buses – there's lots of anti-social behaviour and little or no protection

ii) Written statements from Dimensions users:

- Some of the points made above in the discussion were also included in written statements and are not repeated here
- I used to go shopping by bus and back home by taxi, but fares have gone up so I have to rely on my personal assistant (carer) to take me
- There is a lack of consideration for mobility impaired / elderly customers on buses. Drivers can be heavy footed, brake sharply and don't approach speed bumps at reasonable speed. I have been thrown around when I had to stand when I couldn't get a seat. This caused me pain and discomfort. I have stopped using buses due to the negative impact on my health.
- Drivers don't want you on the buses if you use a powerchair and sometimes won't lower the ramp. Some are unhelpful, rude and ignorant.
- Why are there accessible buses but we can't get on because the ramp is secured or locked down. Why take the taxi tokens from us to give us a bus pass when you can't get on a bus?
- Several written statements relate to taxis only are not directly related to this impact assessment. Issues raised include taxi fares, loss of taxi vouchers, lack of accessible vehicles, unhelpful attitudes of drivers and controllers and taxis either not turning up or being very late. One statement highlights the excellent service provided by the operator who takes people to Dimensions, as the standard that should be available generally.

iii) Deaf Association Club, 26th July 2011 (the club has monthly Tuesday evening business or discussion meetings, daytime courses and weekend social/bar evenings):

- I would have to go to the expense of getting a taxi home after the club (1 person, service 30a/31a to Clifton Road)
- I'd go mad if I couldn't get to the club, I'd be stuck at home
- Some people can't phone for a taxi (i.e. hearing impairment prevents use of phone)
- I would have to cut the number of times I visit my son near the hospital, I could walk home but I'd be shattered (uses services 1, 19, and 30a/31a, evenings and Sundays)
- We wouldn't be able to go on club trips, because we wouldn't be able to get home from the club drop-off after the trip (various evening services)
- I would have to walk home after work (works in town centre nightclub, lives in Springfield)
- Around 5 people use the bus to get home after weekend social evenings
- I couldn't afford to come to the club so often if there were no evening buses.
- Participants also raised a number of issues about problems in using buses – again these covered driver attitudes, the use of coach type stepped vehicles on the X66 service that are difficult to enter, lack of powered ramps, buses not turning up, lack of powered ramps, and loss of concessionary travel before 9.30am.

52) Once again the issues raised are primarily about transport in general rather than proposal 39b in particular.

Section 9: Multiple Impacts

- 53) The previous section focuses on the impact of Proposal 39b. However the disadvantage experienced by individuals or groups of people may be compounded by other recent or concurrent proposals. Decision makers should take the risk of multiple impacts into account in considering the individual proposal.
- 54) Given the range of proposals being considered concurrently, and also taking account of the 2010/11 in-year budget savings and changes in the wider environment, a separate Multiple Impacts appraisal has been prepared to back-up the individual Equalities Impact Assessments of individual proposals. This is attached as Appendix 5.
- 55) The Multiple Impacts Appraisal is not in itself an Equalities Impact Assessment. The report is a risk assessment carried out by officers and reflecting what individuals have said about the impact of individual proposals.

- 56) The Multiple Impacts report concludes that the groups most at risk of multiple impacts are children and young people, older people and disabled³ people. Unemployed and low income people are also at risk, though to a lesser extent. The risk is much lower, and even negligible, in relation to other protected characteristics.
- 57) The impact assessment of Proposal 39b and the multiple impacts risk appraisal therefore produce a consistent picture of risk across the age and disability protected characteristics. Engagement within these groups has identified four interdependent themes or aspects of life that are most likely to be impacted by proposals. These are:
- o Disposable income and affordability
 - o Transport and accessibility to services and facilities
 - o Social inclusion and interaction, or isolation and loneliness
 - o Health and mental well-being
- 58) The Multiple Impacts Risk Appraisal gives a fuller picture of risks across the full range of proposals. In relation to the detailed proposals put forward for implementing proposal 39b, the following points can be highlighted:
- a. The 2010/11 in-year changes to the concessionary fares scheme, restricting concessionary travel to after 9.30am could be compounded by the loss of evening services in the West End, Rise Carr/Harrowgate Farm, Albert Hill, Hundens Lane, Middleton St. George, Hurworth and Whinfield (Monday to Thursday), with reduced evening services on radial routes. For older or disabled people with limited mobility who are unable to walk to the nearest retained service, bus use could be limited to daytime hours only.
 - b. This combination of impacts will have been further compounded by the withdrawal of funding from the Ring-a-Ride service in the 2010/11 in-year savings. Whilst only small numbers of people used this service, the change is a loss of a travel option for older and disabled people.
 - c. Taxis provide a travel option for people who have difficulties using buses. However there is a lack of wheelchair accessible vehicles and affordability of taxis has been reduced by the withdrawal of taxi vouchers during 2010/11. The Adult Social care savings proposal relating to Severe

³ In the Multiple Impacts Appraisal disabled includes people with mental ill health. This is in line with the legal definition of the disabled protected characteristic. However, the spreadsheet appraisal of all proposals (Appendix??) identified people with mental ill health as a separate category, which was assessed as being at a similar level of risk across all the proposals as older and disabled people.

Disability Premium, combined with benefits changes, could reduce disposal income for some disabled and older people, further eroding affordability.

- d. The impact of reducing evening travel options on people's social interaction could be compounded by future proposals for arts provision, and particularly for the future of the Arts Centre as an accessible venue for social life. However, options for arts provision have not yet been finalised.
- 59) The proposals published in November 2010 included a proposal to raise the residential distance limit for free travel from home to school from two miles to three miles. In the early stages of the process this was seen as a potential compounding effect on loss of supported bus services for children and young people. However, the combination of the number of local schools seeking Academy status and anticipated government policy changes has led to the proposal being deleted from the current suite of MTFP proposals.
- 60) In any event, because of the focus on maintaining morning and daytime services in the detailed implementation proposals, this compound impact would not arise in terms of transport options not being available. There could, however, be an impact on overall affordability of transport for some young people if they were paying for school transport and, perhaps, using taxis for evening social/leisure transport.

Section 10: Analysis of Impacts

- 61) In most cases budget proposals relate to a clearly defined Council service and group of service users, and the impact on users of changes to the service can be boxed-off and quantified. Proposal 39b is less straightforward.
- 62) It is impractical to identify and engage with every actual or potential user of supported bus services and the range of impacts and responses – even within a single protected characteristic like disabled or older people – will vary from person to person. For some the loss of a supported service will be a minor inconvenience to be resolved by using other modes of transport or other bus services. For others engagement indicates it could be the difference between a life worth living and loneliness and social isolation.
- 63) The impact assessment does provide a picture of the effectiveness of current transport provision for people with protected characteristics. In practice the issues relate to older and disabled people and to a lesser extent children and younger people. The impact assessment of proposal 39b has highlighted general transport-related issues for people with these protected characteristics

more than the direct impacts of the proposal. This broader picture needs to be taken into account if the proposal is to be assessed realistically.

- 64) The findings from impact assessment of proposal 39b can be condensed into three overall areas of concern.
- a) Disabled people are under-represented in bus patronage figures, in proportion to the number of disabled people in the population. For many people the primary concern is that current public transport provision places barriers in the way of people's mobility, particularly for wheelchair users. This overriding issue is presented more fully in the initial appraisal included in the report to Cabinet in February (Appendix 3), and relates to both buses and taxis. Cultural, attitudinal and detailed operational issues are as important as problems of infrastructure. The loss of some supported services is less of an issue for people who find difficulties in using services at all, but there could be an opportunity cost if barriers to use can be dismantled.
 - b) Affordability of transport is an issue for older people, children and young people and disabled people. Last year's concessionary fares changes mean that people with bus passes must pay for travel before 9.30am, whilst the withdrawal of taxi vouchers and of the Ring-a-Ride service have reduced transport options. The proposal relating to Severe Disability Premium could reduce disposable income for some disabled and older people and further erode affordability of transport.
 - c) Specific impacts arising from the detailed proposals set out in this report have been identified as follows:
 - (a) The proposed prioritisation of early morning and daytime services is intended to provide the best fit with the majority of users' needs but the potentially disproportionate impact on disabled people has been highlighted in paragraph 41 – in our survey, of the people who stated they were disabled, more were using evening services than morning and daytime. In principle this could be detrimental to the social life of disabled people, but this impact is difficult to quantify.
 - (b) More specific effects on evening social trips were identified in relation to the Deaf Association Club on Eldon Street – if evening service 26 was withdrawn from the route up neighbouring Westmoreland Street, the nearest bus service would be along North Road. This might not be an issue for some members of the club who

have hearing impairments only, but the membership who attended the EIA discussion included several people with impaired mobility.

- (c) Similar concerns are assumed in relation to the Gateway Club on Salters Lane, if the evening 6a/6b service was withdrawn. It has not been possible to date to confirm this through discussion with Gateway members. The nearest bus services would be along North Road and, again, this could present a barrier to access for some club members.

Section 11: Responding to the Impact Assessment

- 65) The purpose of this report is to assist you as Cabinet Members in making a fair decision on proposal 39b by providing information on the likely impacts of the decision on the groups of people with protected characteristics under equalities legislation. Section 2 of the report sets out the legal context: Decision makers must have enough information available to enable you to have due regard to the Equality Duty in making the decision.
- 66) Whilst the report is lengthy, officers consider that all of the information contained in it is relevant to the decision to be made on proposal 39b. It is not for the impact assessment to make a recommendation on the proposal. It simply provides information to help you decide whether to approve, reject or modify the proposal.
- 67) If you decide to approve the proposal, you may wish to consider whether measures should be taken to mitigate the negative impacts of the decision. Potential mitigating measures are outlined below.
- 68) It is difficult to weigh impacts or to define the extent to which people's lives will be impacted by the proposals, especially as this will vary with individuals' circumstances. The evidence does suggest, however, that the potential impact on protected characteristics of the proposals outlined in section 7 of this report would be relatively minor compared to the challenges faced by disabled people in particular in simply accessing public transport provision.
- 69) A number of strands of work are in progress or planned to improve access to buses for disabled people. The recent Local Sustainable Transport Fund grant settlement will help to progress some of these work strands.
- 70) Work is also ongoing to improve taxi provision for disabled people. The grant settlement includes funding provision for a project to provide a community run

accessible taxi. The Taxi Licensing Policy is also being amended to promote commercial provision of accessible vehicles, and to increase disability awareness amongst taxi drivers. A proposal is also being considered to give the Council more influence over the fares charged for private hire vehicles. These are currently unregulated and wheelchair users report discrimination in the fares they are charged.

- 71) If proposals to withdraw evening services 26 and 6a/6b providing access to the Deaf Association Club and the Gateway Club are approved, it is recommended that officers work with the clubs to ensure that members are fully aware of the range of bus services and other transport options that will continue to be available to them.
- 72) The potential impacts from the loss of evening and Sunday services to West Park Hospital and to Middleton St George and Neasham have not been confirmed in the research, and no responding measures are suggested
- 73) As part of the impact assessment of the budget proposals a 'positive appreciation' exercise was carried out, examining all of the non-statutory services that the Council would continue to provide if all the budget proposals were implemented. This showed that retained services would be significantly weighted towards provision for older people, children and young people, and disabled people, the same protected characteristics most at risk of multiple impacts.
- 74) If Members are minded to approve proposal 39b as well as other proposals that place older, younger and disabled people at risk of multiple impacts, it will be important to ensure that retained services do indeed provide for and safeguard these groups. It is also important that future service planning recognises and prioritises the needs of these groups.

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