

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

Budget Savings 2026-27 - Review of Bus Services

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1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

A strategic review of all bus services including supported routes, school transport and partnership work involving external grants. The review will include a critical evaluation of the current market conditions recognising contracts that are due to be tendered and also the need to stimulate the market through new interventions.

During screening 9 of 12 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 5 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing
- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty
- Health Inequalities
- Sustainability and Climate Change
- Town Centres First

In total there are 3 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 21 negative impacts, of these negative impacts, 0 have been mitigated and 24 cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.

A detailed action plan with 4 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by ewan.wallace@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	Yes
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and / or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	Yes
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy impact on inequality of outcome?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy relate to budget proposals?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy impact on consumers of Council services?	No

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Climate Change and Sustainability	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Health Inequalities	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Town Centre's First	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated

4. Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

4.1. Wellbeing Indicators

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Safe		Yes		
Healthy			Yes	
Achieving		Yes		
Nurtured		Yes		
Active	Yes		Yes	
Respected		Yes		
Responsible		Yes		
Included		Yes		

4.2. Rights Indicators

UNCRC Indicators upheld by this activity / proposal / policy	Article 3 - Best interests of the child Article 12 - Respect for the views of the child Article 15 - Freedom of association Article 23 - Children with disabilities Article 31 - Leisure, play and culture
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4.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Active	The withdrawal of bus services could potentially result in some children walking or cycling more.

4.4. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Active	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will mean some children may have reduced access to play, leisure/recreation or after-school activities especially if alternative transport is not available or walking is not an option.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without appropriate budget, the Council cannot mitigate against the effects of bus service / journey withdrawals.</p>
Healthy	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could mean that some families are unable to access affordable healthy food.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without appropriate budget, the Council cannot mitigate against the effects of bus service / journey withdrawals.</p>

4.5. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Consultation	Aberdeenshire Council Survey of Children / Young People in the Ready2Go Around Inverurie area	The Ready2Go service which operated from Aug 2021 until 1 April 2023 was used by Young People for the following reasons ranked in order of popularity: visit or meet up with friends or family, to go to a leisure or sports activity, to go shopping, to go to/from school, to go to/from after-school activities, to go to organised activities or clubs, to go to medical appointments, and for various other reasons, e.g. to attend mass.	It is likely that children / young people use timetabled bus services for similar reasons.
Internal Data	ETM data from supported bus network: 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025,	The breakdown of bus journeys on supported bus services, during a one-year period, by ticket type is: Adult payers = 24.6%, Older people (60+) = 27.32%, Disabled people = 11.38%, Child payers = 0.74%, Child free (up to age 15 years) = 20.33%, Young people (aged 16-21) = 15.62%.	Between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025, over a third of recorded passenger journeys on the Council supported bus network were made by children/young people under the age of 15 years. Some of these journeys would have been made by pupils travelling to/from school on fare-paying buses.
External Data	Urban Transport Group report The Cross-Sector Benefits of Backing the Bus March 2019	For most young people, the bus is public transport and is vital for connecting them to valuable opportunities both in and out of school. The experience of independent bus travel in itself develops life skills.	The withdrawal of bus services will disadvantage young people.
External Data	'Comprehensive Travel Study' October 2023 (Aecom), commissioned by Nestrans	Telephone surveys were conducted with 1,001 North East residents including 541 from Aberdeenshire and 460 from Aberdeen. 40% of young people (aged 16-21) said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 18% of all residents.	Based on the responses to the survey of 1,001 Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen residents, younger people use the bus more often than the general population of North-East Scotland.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Other Evidence	The Scottish Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee – report on 'Addressing Child Poverty Through Parental Employment'	In both the Best Start, Bright Futures (tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026) and the National Transport Strategy, the Scottish Government recognises that adequate and affordable transport provision is vital to address inequalities and contribute to reducing child poverty. In the call for views on addressing child poverty respondents said that affordability on its own is not a solution to transport needs. There is little benefit in working parents being able to afford bus and rail fares if services do not provide the routes, frequencies and length of operating day necessary to fulfil their transport needs.	The withdrawal of bus services can have a detrimental effect on child poverty by reducing access to parental employment.
External Data	Aberdeenshire Rural Youth Strategy Report 2024 commissioned by Local Action Groups (LAG)	Consultation was held in March/April 2024 involving 222 young people of which 48% were aged 10-14 years and 52% aged 15+. 62% like to spend their free time being with friends, 40% like to be outdoors, 36% take part in sports and 31% like going out. The thing that young people liked least about their community was the 'unreliability and lack of cleanliness of public transport'. 'Lack of access to free or affordable transport that is clean, safe and reliable' was identified as the main barrier to their participation in opportunities. Access to transport is one of the top three priorities for young people.	The withdrawal of bus services/journeys will affect the ability of young people to socialise and take part in activities and opportunities.

4.6. Accounting for the Views of Children and Young People

Due to the confidential nature of the budget-setting process there has been no engagement on the withdrawal of bus services and the views of children / young people have not been taken into

account in this regard.

4.7. Promoting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People

The withdrawal of bus services does not help safeguard, support or promote the wellbeing of children or young people.

4.8. Upholding Children and Young People's Rights

The withdrawal of bus services does not uphold the rights of children or young people.

4.9. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

If bus service/journey withdrawals need to be implemented on a large scale to make budget savings they will affect many children/families.

The potential large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2025-26.

5. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

5.1. Protected Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Age (Younger)			Yes	
Age (Older)			Yes	
Disability			Yes	
Race			Yes	
Religion or Belief		Yes		
Sex			Yes	
Pregnancy and Maternity		Yes		
Sexual Orientation		Yes		
Gender Reassignment		Yes		
Marriage or Civil Partnership		Yes		

5.2. Socio-economic Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Low income			Yes	
Low wealth			Yes	
Material deprivation			Yes	
Area deprivation			Yes	
Socioeconomic background		Yes		

5.3. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Age (Older)	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will result in many people having no or reduced options for travel to access work, higher education, health facilities, shopping, and other services/facilities/activities.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many older people. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Age (Younger)	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will result in many people having no or reduced options for travel to access work, higher education, health facilities, shopping, and other services/facilities/activities.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many young people. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27.</p>
Disability	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will result in many people having no or reduced options for travel to access work, higher education, health facilities, shopping, and other services/facilities/activities.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many disabled people. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27</p>
Race	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will result in some people having no or reduced options for travel to access work, higher education, health facilities, shopping, and other services/facilities/activities.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many people including people from different ethnic backgrounds. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Sex</p>	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will result in many people, particularly women, having no or reduced options for travel to access work, higher education, health facilities, shopping, and other services/facilities/activities.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many people including many women. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27.</p>
<p>Area deprivation</p>	<p>The withdrawal of a large number of bus services is likely to have a significant negative impact for people if the cost of essential travel is more expensive, e.g. if some people need to pay for taxis or buy a car.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many areas, likely including more deprived areas. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27</p>
<p>Low income</p>	<p>The withdrawal of a large number of bus services is likely to have a significant negative impact for people if the cost of essential travel is more expensive, e.g. if some people need to pay for taxis or buy a car.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many people of different backgrounds. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Low wealth</p>	<p>The withdrawal of a large number of bus services is likely to have a significant negative impact for people if the cost of essential travel is more expensive, e.g. if some people need to pay for taxis or buy a car.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many people of different backgrounds. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27</p>
<p>Material deprivation</p>	<p>The withdrawal of a large number of bus services is likely to have a significant negative impact for people if the cost of essential travel is more expensive, e.g. if some people need to pay for taxis or buy a car.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many people of different backgrounds. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27</p>

5.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
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Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	Scottish Household Survey 2020, Transport & Travel in Scotland	<p>Those on the highest incomes were more likely to work from home than those with the lowest incomes. 42% of those who earned up to £20,000 worked from home, compared to 62% of those with incomes above £50,000. Car access increased with household income, as did the number of cars available per household. 50% of households with an annual income up to £10,000 had access to one or more cars, compared to 98% of households with an annual income of more than £50,000. 80.1% of men had a driving licence compared to 72.4% of women.</p>	<p>People with lower income are more likely to rely on bus services. Women are more likely to rely on buses than men.</p>
External Data	NatCen Social Research report on Transport and inequality: An evidence review for the Department for Transport, 2019	<p>The relationship between transport and inequality is influenced by three key factors including how accessible the transport system is in terms of cost, geographic accessibility and the time and reliability of different transport options. Transport is an important facilitator of social inclusion and wellbeing. Different socio-economic groups have differing levels of access to transport options. People who depend more on the bus network for work tend to be lower paid. The impacts of transport poverty are worst for poor people in rural areas. Transport can be integral to improving equality by increasing access to jobs, education and services.</p>	<p>The withdrawal of bus services can adversely affect people on lower income or of lower wealth, especially those living outside towns.</p>

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	ETM data from supported bus network: 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025,	Adult payers = 24.6%, Older people (60+) = 27.32%, Disabled people = 11.38%, Child payers = 0.74%, Child free (up to age 15 years) = 20.33%, Young people (aged 16-21) = 15.62%. Between 1 Jul 2023 and 30 June 2024, over a third of recorded passenger journeys on the Council supported bus network were made by children/young people under the age of 15 years. Some of these journeys would have been made by pupils travelling to/from school on fare-paying buses.	People from the protected groups of older, younger and disabled make up 75.4% of passenger journeys on the supported bus service network.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	Urban Transport Group report <i>The Cross-Sector Benefits of Backing the Bus</i> March 2019	<p>For most young people, the bus is public transport and is vital for connecting them to valuable opportunities both in and out of school. The experience of independent bus travel in itself develops life skills. The bus acts as a conduit to enable people to reach their potential, particularly those most at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>The majority of jobseekers in British cities outside London do not have regular access to their own vehicle and primarily rely on the bus to access job opportunities.</p> <p>The bus is the most commonly used form of public transport among disabled people and is vital in expanding access to employment. Accessible bus services and free off-peak travel for older and disabled people help to support independence and reduce the need for care. The bus also has an important role to play in tackling loneliness and isolation.</p>	The withdrawal of bus services will disadvantage young people, people with low income (jobseekers), older people and disabled people.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	'Comprehensive Travel Study' October 2023 (Aecom), commissioned by Nestrans	<p>Telephone surveys were conducted with 1,001 North East residents including 541 from Aberdeenshire and 460 from Aberdeen.</p> <p>40% of young people (aged 16-21) said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 18% of all residents.</p> <p>26% of older people (aged 60+) said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 18% of all residents.</p> <p>33% of people who had a health limitation or disability said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 15% who did not.</p> <p>21% of females said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 15% of men.</p> <p>25% of people from minority ethnic backgrounds said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 17% of White British.</p> <p>24% of people living in an area of highest deprivation said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 17% living in areas with least deprivation.</p> <p>10% of people living in accessible rural areas and 5% of people living in remote rural areas said they used a bus at least once a week compared to 18% of all residents.</p> <p>92% of Aberdeenshire respondents have access to a car.</p>	<p>The following can be inferred from the responses to the survey of 1,001 Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen residents. People with the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender and race tend to travel more often by bus than the general population. People living in areas of highest deprivation travel by bus more often than average whereas people living in areas with least deprivation travel by bus less often. People who live in rural areas travel by bus less often than average, especially those living in remote rural areas.</p>

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	Research entitled 'Rural Challenges of Aberdeenshire Transport: Local and national strategies, surveys, and local voices (May to December 2023)'	There is a strong sense from people that they are being forgotten, left behind, and isolated and that strategies and policies relating to transport do not reflect their circumstances.	People already struggle to use public transport to travel due to reduced services. It may be that the services only serve one or two people in a village or small town but cumulatively this has an economic impact on many to access services, work, training, childcare, healthcare and education, as you have also highlighted.
External Data	Transport for the North report 'Transport-related social exclusion in the North of England' (2022)	The combination of poverty and inequalities alongside car-dominated environments with fragmented, infrequent and unreliable public transport services leads to social exclusion. There can be a large gap in access to opportunities, key services and community life between those with unconstrained car use and those relying on public transport. Poor public transport can cause stress and anxiety for key journeys, the cost of travel can cause significant financial hardship and the time spent travelling reduces time for leisure and recreation.	Large-scale bus service/ journey cuts can increase social exclusion and reduce inequalities.
External Data	Transport Scotland report, 'Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme – Year 1 Evaluation' Nov 2023	Free bus travel is enabling young people to have increased access to services, education, employment opportunities and social/ leisure activities. There is an increased awareness of the bus as a viable travel option. Some journeys that would have been made by car are made by bus.	The withdrawal of bus services will reduce the opportunity of young people to access services, education, employment opportunities and social/ leisure activities.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	Public Health Scotland 2024 briefing 'Transport poverty – a public health issue'	Transport poverty, which includes the lack of or unaffordability of public transport, can affect health, e.g. by reducing access to health and care services, and can contribute to poor health outcomes for dependants of transport users and the broader community.	The availability and affordability of public transport can positively impact the health and wellbeing of residents particularly those with low income.
External Data	KPMG (report for Greener Journeys) 'A study of the value of local bus services to society' 2016	There are a wide range of social benefits from the provision of bus services including impacts on poverty, health, social inclusion and wellbeing. For every £1 spent on bus services the economic, environmental and social benefits amount to £3.62. This includes £2.15 social benefits for the user and £0.80 wider societal benefits. A 10% improvement in connectivity by local bus services is associated with a 3.6% improvement in economic, social and environment deprivation. https://www.cptuk.org/media/yqsda4iu/greener-journeys-value-of-bus-to-society-fnal-1.pdf	Places with bus services are less deprived than places without bus services.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	The Institute for Public Policy Research - Who gets a good deal – revealing public attitudes to transport in Great Britain – March 2024	A fifth of people (20%) involved in the study were worried about being able to afford the transport they need to get around. Seven in 10 people (71%) changed how they travelled to reduce transport costs in the two years prior to the study. Those who live in rural areas or on low incomes are seen as getting the worst deal from transport (a net score of -28% in both cases) compared to those on high incomes who are seen as getting the best deal (a net positive score of 44%). Almost six in 10 (58%) believed cars were essential for a full life, rising to almost three quarters (72%) of people in rural areas.	The affordability of transport is a key issue. Providing public transport services as a replacement for the car is harder in rural areas.
Internal Data	Feedback on the withdrawal of bus services in 2023.	Comments received from individuals included: need to give up their job, no longer have a reliable service suitable for their wheelchair, difficult to get child to school, difficult to get shopping or to social events, difficult to get to hospital appointments, no longer able to work. The withdrawals affected people of all ages including people with disabilities.	Large-scale withdrawals of bus services or journeys will have a similar, but larger, impact on people from protected groups and low-income.

5.5. Engagement with affected groups

Due to the confidential nature of the budget setting process, no consultation on the withdrawal of bus services has taken place with customers.

5.6. Ensuring engagement with protected groups

N/A

5.7. Evidence of engagement

The likely negative impacts are understood and explained in this assessment. The withdrawal of bus services in June 2023 resulted in a significant amount of negative feedback from some of the communities affected.

5.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many people from protected and socio-economic groups as people from these groups form the majority of those using bus services. Only a very small number of people affected might have an alternative bus/dial-a-bus or community transport service.

The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27

5.9. Improving Relations

The withdrawal of bus services does not promote good relations between groups/areas and potentially could reduce good relations given that bus services carry people of all types and operate between different areas.

5.10. Opportunities of Equality

The withdrawal of bus services is likely to have a detrimental impact on aims to advance equality of opportunity given that people of low income are more likely to use bus services than people of higher income who are more likely to travel by car or train (where available). In addition, people from the protected groups of older, younger and disabled make up approximately 75% of passenger journeys on the supported bus service network.

6. Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

6.1. Health Behaviours

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Healthy eating			Yes	
Exercise and physical activity	Yes		Yes	
Substance use – tobacco		Yes		
Substance use – alcohol		Yes		
Substance use – drugs		Yes		
Mental health			Yes	

6.2. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Exercise and physical activity	The withdrawal of bus services will result in some people switching to walking or cycling for some journeys.

6.3. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Exercise and physical activity	<p>The withdrawal of bus services will result in some people switching from using public transport, which involves some walking, to travelling by car. Some people might find it harder to access sports facilities.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without available budget it is not possible to mitigate against people using the car for essential travel.</p>
Healthy eating	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could result in some people being unable to access healthy food.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without available budget it is not possible to mitigate against people being unable to eat healthily due to a lack of transport. Only in a very small number of cases might people have alternative opportunities to travel by public transport or community transport.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Mental health	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could result in poorer mental health for people unable to access health and social care activities or for people experiencing loneliness and isolation due to lack of transport.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without available budget it is not possible to mitigate against people's mental health being affected by a lack of transport – either because they cannot access healthcare, or other services/facilities, or because they feel isolated.</p>

6.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	Healthy Eating Acting Living 2022 community engagement report (Aberdeenshire Council and H&SCP)	Barriers for healthy eating are primarily cost and lack of choice (for example, not enough healthy options). Mental health and motivation are also important, linked often to isolation and a lack of support. Time and transport are also significant barriers as are a need for more information around food labelling, healthy eating and cooking skills	Lack of suitable transport can make it more difficult for some people to eat healthily.
External Data	Urban Transport Group report The Cross-Sector Benefits of Backing the Bus March 2019	Walking to and from the bus stop provides the chance for easy, everyday physical activity. The bus also brings other health benefits, including better air quality, improved mental wellbeing and access to healthcare facilities and health promoting activities. Accessible bus services and free off-peak travel for older and disabled people help to support independence and reduce the need for care. The bus also has an important role to play in tackling loneliness and isolation.	The withdrawal of bus services will have a detrimental effect on health inequalities.

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	Public Health Scotland 2024 briefing 'Transport poverty – a public health issue'	Transport poverty, which includes the lack of or unaffordability of public transport, can affect health, e.g. by reducing access to health and care services, and can contribute to poor health outcomes for dependants of transport users and the broader community.	The availability and affordability of public transport can positively impact the health and wellbeing of residents particularly those with low income.

6.5. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

Large-scale bus service cuts will affect many people who use the bus to access health and social care facilities and healthy food. The ability to travel and access services/facilities is also beneficial to good mental health. Bus journey withdrawals will have a detrimental health effect through the increased social isolation that many people will experience. Bus travel involves more exercise than the door-to-door journeys provided by private car or taxi. Without adequate budget for supporting bus services the negative impacts cannot be effectively mitigated. Only a very small number of people affected might have an alternative bus/dial-a-bus or community transport service.

The potential large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27

7. Sustainability and Climate Change Impact Assessment

7.1. Emissions and Resources

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Consumption of energy	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Energy efficiency		Yes		
Energy source		Yes		
Low carbon transition		Yes	Yes	
Consumption of physical resources		Yes		
Waste and circularity		Yes		
Circular economy transition		Yes		
Economic and social transition		Yes		

7.2. Biodiversity and Resilience

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Quality of environment		Yes		
Quantity of environment		Yes		
Wildlife and biodiversity		Yes		
Infrastructure resilience		Yes		
Council resilience		Yes		
Community resilience		Yes	Yes	
Adaptation		Yes		

7.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Consumption of energy	The withdrawal of bus journeys will result in bus operators using less fuel.

7.4. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
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Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Community resilience	<p>Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many areas. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Large-scale cuts to bus service will affect many areas. Only a very small number of bus users are likely to have alternative public transport opportunities. The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget pressure requests cannot be accommodated. The Council requires to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026/27.</p>
Consumption of energy	<p>Total fuel consumption may increase if bus journeys are replaced by travel by private transport/taxis and/or home shopping deliveries.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification If people need to travel but there is no shared transport available and walking/cycling is not suitable, there is no way of mitigating against increased fuel consumption.</p>
Low carbon transition	<p>A lack of good bus services makes it harder to encourage the public to change modes from private to public transport. The withdrawal of bus services can result in people switching from public to private transport.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification If there is a lack of Council funding to support bus services there can be no mitigation. The Council only funds bus services that are not commercially viable so no private bus operator will step in to replace withdrawn services.</p>

7.5. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
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Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	Calculated based on contract specification routes and timetables	Bus service mileage data can be calculated for contracted journeys based on routes and number of journeys in the timetable. The mileage varies over time as/when services vary.	It is possible to calculate the reduction in bus miles resulting from the withdrawal of bus services but it is not possible to estimate the increase in car/taxi miles for additional journeys made by individuals and therefore any robust estimate of carbon emissions.
External Data	Urban Transport Group report The Cross-Sector Benefits of Backing the Bus March 2019	Improvements in vehicle technology, together with the bus' ability to cut congestion, help to protect the environment by improving air quality and mitigating climate change. Buses also offer a means to access the natural environment whilst reducing congestion around beauty spots.	The withdrawal of bus services can have a detrimental effect on the environment and climate change.

7.6. Information Gaps

It is not possible to estimate the net increase in fuel that will be consumed due to individuals switching from bus services to private transport or taxis.

7.7. Measures to fill Information Gaps

Measure	Timescale
Should bus services require to be withdrawn the reduction in supported bus miles could be calculated after the budget is approved and any bus services/journeys required to be withdrawn are identified. It is not possible to identify the impact on alternative methods of transport, e.g. increases in car usage.	April to June 2026

7.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

Large-scale bus service cuts would affect many people who travel by bus for various reasons including work, education, health and other personal appointments, shopping, child-minding, socialising and accessing various facilities. Many essential bus trips would switch to private car or taxi. Some shopping trips may be replaced by home delivery. Without budget the negative impacts cannot be mitigated.

The large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget savings are required for the Council to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026-27

8. Town Centre's First Impact Assessment

8.1. Local Factors

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Town centre assets		Yes		
Footfall			Yes	
Changes to road layouts		Yes		
Parking			Yes	
Infrastructure changes		Yes		
Aesthetics of the town centre		Yes		
Tourism		Yes		
Public safety		Yes		
Town centre business			Yes	
Cultural heritage and identity		Yes		
Social and cultural aspects			Yes	

8.2. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Footfall	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could result in fewer people travelling into town centres or people travelling less often into town centres. All Town Centre towns could be affected, depending on how many bus services/journeys are withdrawn.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification No mitigations are available for the vast majority of people affected by the withdrawal of bus services/journeys. It may be possible that any remaining A2B dial-a-bus service could change their eligibility criteria to allow the general public to travel but this might only help a very small number of people and would not noticeably affect any downturn in footfall.</p>
Parking	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could result in more journeys being made by car and this could lead to increased demand for parking. All Town Centre towns could be affected, depending on how many bus services/journeys are withdrawn.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without appropriate budget, no mitigations are available to avoid the possible increase in demand for parking spaces.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Social and cultural aspects	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could reduce opportunities for people to visit town centres for social and cultural reasons, particularly in the evening and weekend.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification No mitigations are available to the Council. If buses are not available people will need to arrange their own transport, either by car or taxi, or reduce their attendance.</p>
Town centre business	<p>The withdrawal of bus services could affect town centre business, e.g. if people do not have transport to access services or work. All Town Centre towns could be affected, depending on how many bus services/journeys would require to be withdrawn.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Without appropriate budget, the Council cannot mitigate against the possible downturn in town centre business caused by the withdrawal of bus services.</p>

8.3. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	Outcome of Performance Management Framework analysis	The indicative list of bus services/journeys that are likely to be withdrawn if budget pressures are not approved includes services to Aberdeenshire "Towns First" towns.	A shortfall in budget requiring large-scale withdrawals of bus journeys is likely to have some effect on footfall, parking levels and business.

8.4. Information Gaps

This IIA includes an indicative list of bus services/journeys for withdrawal if required for budget savings, thus identifying towns that may be affected. The final list of services is not available as this will be undertaken with more up-to-date passenger data.

8.5. Measures to fill Information Gaps

Measure	Timescale
Further analysis will be undertaken using more up-to-date bus patronage to inform the decision of which bus services/journeys to withdraw.	April 2026

8.6. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

Large-scale bus service cuts will affect many people who travel into town centres by bus for various reasons including work, education, health and other personal appointments, shopping, socialising and accessing various facilities. Some essential bus trips into town will likely switch to private car or taxi but some shopping trips may be replaced by home delivery and in other

cases people will use more local services, travel by car to 'out of town' retail locations and/or will stay at home.

The potential large-scale withdrawal of bus services is not recommended but may be required if budget pressure requests cannot be accommodated. The Council requires to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget in financial year 2026/27

9. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details	
<p>If considered appropriate, forward bus service/journey requests received from individuals to Stagecoach to consider whether they might introduce bus journeys on a commercial basis.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome</p>	<p>Susan Watt No Tuesday March 31, 2026 Sunday May 31, 2026 It is unlikely that Stagecoach will be able to help other than perhaps in a very small number of instances if they can alter existing bus services and it is commercially viable to do so. Using existing resources.</p>
<p>Upon receipt of requests from individuals for help with transport, identify whether there are any alternative public or community transport journeys and provide advice accordingly.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome</p>	<p>Heather Dey No Monday April 27, 2026 Friday May 29, 2026 It may be possible to identify transport opportunities for a small number of individuals. Using existing staff.</p>
<p>Monitor the impact of the review of bus service contracts on the commercial bus service network.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome</p>	<p>Susan Watt No Monday March 30, 2026 Friday May 29, 2026 If the review results in services to be withdrawn then any commercial bus journeys planned to be withdrawn by Stagecoach would rank higher than supported services/ journeys in the PTU's Performance Management Framework model, withdraw the poorest performing Council-supported journeys and arrange for emergency replacement of journeys being withdrawn by Stagecoach. This would result in further disruption to the bus network and negative impacts on affected bus users but provides an opportunity to maintain better performing journeys. Within existing staff and available budget resources.</p>

Planned Action	Details	
<p>Agree communication plan with Communications Team including how to inform/engage with bus passengers and communities.</p>	<p>Lead Officer Repeating Activity Planned Start Planned Finish Expected Outcome Resource Implications</p>	<p>Susan Watt No Monday March 02, 2026 Monday March 09, 2026 Passengers and the wider public are informed about which bus services/ journeys are being withdrawn and when. Using existing staff.</p>