Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet – 15th September 2020 Review of Shopmobility

Accountable members	Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Healthy Lifestyles		
Accountable officers	Sanjay Mistry, Modernisation Programme Manager		
Ward(s) affected	All		
Key/Significant Decision	Yes		
Executive summary	Following the 2015 Shopmobility Review, the Council has continued to provide the service in spite of a much reduced demand year on year. Many former users now have their own mobility scooters, which cost as little as £450 to buy. In addition a number of charities in Cheltenham, together with private sector providers, operate a full 7 day service.		
	An options appraisal has been undertaken to consider the future of the service. This has become more urgent due to the impact of the Covid-19 situation on the Council's finances and the need for a significant subsidy for the service as such low numbers of users mean it is no longer sustainable.		
	This extensive analysis demonstrates that the service is no longer viable especially given the role of charities and private sector.		
Recommendations	Cabinet is recommended to approve:		
	 The decision not to re-open and to decommission the Council's Shopmobility service for the reasons outlined in this report 		
	 There is a comprehensive communications plan implemented to make affected customers aware of this change and where they can get alternative support from 		
	Savings realised from this change are used to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy		

Financial implications	If a decision to stop the shop mobility service is agreed by Cabinet. Initial annual revenue savings of £57,000 will be achieved, this has the potential to rise to £97,000. Potential one-off redundancy costs of £22,000 will be incurred unless redeployment of staff is possible, the payback period of this one-off expenditure will be a maximum of 0.4 years.
	The annual revenue saving will go towards supporting the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
	Any future income or capital receipts in relation to the future use/disposal of the premises has not been included within the figures mentioned above. More detail is included within the report.
	Contact officer: Jon Whitlock, Business Partner Accountant 01242 264354

Legal implications	There is no statutory requirement for a local authority to provide/operate a Shopmobility service. Any decision however to discontinue a service, that has been previously provided, could be subject to challenge. In addition to the general need to ensure that any decision is lawfully
	(i.e. an authority has the lawful power to make the decision, the decision is reasonable and fairly made) made, an authority has a more specific duty to ensure that it complies with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
	Under the Equality Act 2010 the authority has a duty when proposing service changes to:(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this (Equality) Act (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
	Before taking a decision that may impact on persons with Protected Characteristics an authority must have 'due regard' for advancing equality which in involves: (a) removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics (b) taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people and, (c) encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
	It is necessary for an authority (and in this case Cabinet) to understand the potential effects of its activities on different people. Consultation should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity, with persons possessing a protected characteristic who may be affected and consideration should be given to any feedback from the consultation before a final decision is taken.
	Contact officer: One Legal – legal.services@tewkesbury.gov.uk
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	If the decision is made to close the Shopmobility service, this would result potentially in 3 redundancies, if redeployment opportunities are not found. HR will work closely with the Service Manager, affected members of staff & the Unions, consulting on a regular basis & following relevant processes to ensure any impact on the staff is minimised and the situation is handled sensitively.
	Contact officer: Clare Jones, HRBP
	Clare.jones@publicagroup.uk
Key risks	A Risk Assessment has been completed in Appendix 1
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Corporate and community plan Implications	A Community Impact Assessment has been completed in Appendix 2. There are private sector mobility service providers operating within the borough and charities that can provide funding to those individuals that may need financial assistance.
Environmental and climate change implications	None
Property/Asset Implications	There will be several options for the premises and the Council's Property Team can undertake an options appraisal and recommendation for Cabinet to consider via the asset management working group.
	Contact officer: Simon Hodges Simon.Hodges@cheltenham.gov.uk

1. Background:

- **1.1** Cheltenham Shopmobility provides battery powered wheelchairs and scooters, as well as manual wheelchairs. The service helps people of all ages who have mobility problems. The service includes both daily and weekly hire of equipment and provides training to all new customers using powered equipment https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/shopmobility. Shopmobility is open Monday to Saturday 9.30am to 4.30pm.
- **1.2** In September 2015, Cabinet considered a report on the future of Shopmobility, following receipt of notice to quit its then location in the Beechwood Arcade. The report included details of a consultation exercise into relocation options and the future of the service more generally. The results of the consultation exercise strongly supported continuation of a Shopmobility service in some form in the town.
- **1.3** Cabinet resolved to relocate the service to the Horse and Groom in St George's Place (undertaken in November 2015) and to commence a commissioning process in January 2016. Commissioning was considered to be the best way to secure long-term provision of the Shopmobility service.
- **1.4** A commissioning process was undertaken, commencing with workshops both internal and with the community to establish what form a commissioned Shopmobility should take. These were followed by two Early Market Engagement exercises. The first in June 2016 did not generate any interest
- **1.5** However, a second exercise in September 2016 produced a response from one interested party. A procurement exercise was undertaken following the second Market Engagement exercise, unfortunately during the process it became apparent that the interested party would be unable to deliver the required outcomes of the contract, and the procurement exercise was abandoned. The service continues to be delivered unchanged.

2. Impact from Covid-19:

2.1 The impact of Covid-19 on the Council's financial position has meant the Council has no option but to explore options of achieving further efficiencies to support its Medium-Term Financial position. This financial pressure is not unique to Cheltenham Borough Council and is affecting the whole local government sector.

3. The Current Position:

- **3.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a review of the Council's Shopmobility service and recommendation on its future.
- **3.2** The Shopmobility service costs in excess of £64,000 annually, and income is under £6,000 per annum even with an increase in fees introduced from 2019. Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, there was a significant percentage drop in the number of visitors per month, and this year the numbers are projected to fall again to less than 1200.
- **3.3** The number of regular users remains low. We have defined a regular user as someone who hires every month on more than 2 occasions which is 17 users. Of those 17 only 6 use the service more than 3 times per month (this is based on a data analysis between April 2019 and November 2019).
- **3.4** The visitor ratio of regular customers to new hires is approximately 85% regular to 15% new customers. The current equipment needs replacing. The cost of a commercial, heavy weight scooter is around £3,500 and two are required as a minimum at the earliest opportunity; if further failures occur there is no resilience available within the service.

3.5 Wheelchair and mobility scooters are now more affordable with lightweight, folding scooters available for as little as £450. This has been demonstrated by the number of previous service users that have now purchased their own vehicle and ceased using Shopmobility. There are also charities that can possibly help with funding for mobility equipment.

3.6 Service usage data:

	2019/20 ¹ (18/03/20)	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Total visitors	1085	1666	1517	1511	2154	
Av per month	90	138	126	126	180	
Av income per week	£112.73	£73.71	£84.15	£85.48	£141.13	£137.27
percentage of regulars/ new	85%/15%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Least used day	Monday					
most used day	Saturday					

1 - Fee increase and annual subscription introduced 01/04/19

A/C ref	Account(T)	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
1	Employees	47,732	46,204	44,555	42,691	41,013	40,410
2	Premises- Related Expenditure	12,685	12,424	3,866	4,265	15,528	5,236
3	Transport- Related Expenditure	-	157	-	-	-	-
4	Supplies & Services	2,289	2,530	5,879	2,490	8,205	5,648
7	Support Services	-	-	46,500	29,500	29,500	4,600
8	Depreciation and Impairment Losses	4,737	4,737	4,737	1,050	-	-
9	Income	-5,905	-3,833	-4,376	-4,445	-7,339	-7,138
Total	Shopmobility	£61,538	£62,219	£101,160	£75,551	£86,906	£48,756

3.7 Current costs and income directly associated with the service provision:

4. Summary of the Service Review – Options Appraisal:

- **4.1** As part of this review an options appraisal was undertaken and the five options considered in this report are summarised below:
 - 1. Do nothing
 - 2. Commission the service to a third party
 - 3. Service redesigned and relocated to the Municipal Offices
 - 4. Relocating to a site with higher footfall and a greater public profile
 - 5. Discontinue service

4.2 It is recommended that option 1, 2, 3 and 4 are discounted and that the Council proceeds with option 5, for the reasons outlined below:

Option 1:	Do Nothing – maintain the existing service provision as is	
Pros:	 Regular customers would continue to benefit from the service The Council's reputation with its clients would be maintained by demonstrating that it provides a 'not for profit' service to the less able members of the community 	
Cons:	 Service is currently running at a significant financial loss Demand for the service is reducing Staff resources are under utilised Significant investment in equipment is needed Valuable property asset is under performing This option does not address the falling demand for the service 	
Recommendation:	investment is needed to make it a viable service. This investment is likely to have a longer than preferred ROI. It is likely that the downward trend will continue based on historica performance.	
	The Council needs to consider very carefully its provision of discretionary services following the immediate financial pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic. Shopmobility falls into the category of discretionary, and had it been a service that was operating at zero cost, a decision to retain it may have been simpler.	
	Unfortunately the current position is that the service is not in a position to increase its income to a level that would enable sustainability. At the same time the Council is foregoing an income stream from the asset.	

Option 2:	Commission the service to a third party / Source sponsorship
Pros:	 A local business or charity could elect to take over the management and delivery of the service For an external organisation operating the service on a commissioned basis, salary costs could be considerably lower due to a few variables, i.e. service personnel may be costed differently, fewer employees may be required, lesser contributions to superannuation.
Cons:	 A comprehensive procurement exercise was carried out in 2016 and failed to secure any interest A sponsorship model may not be sustainable and could lead to a decommission of the service and staff redundancies If a procurement exercise is authorised by Cabinet and subsequently a new provider of the Shopmobility Service is

	 appointed, there will be direct TUPE implications The service is less attractive than it was back in 2016, so the chances of securing an alternative supplier is even less likely
Recommendation:	Following the previous exercise to secure a commissioned service provider, experience has shown that interest in this sector is difficult to attract. This also applies to attracting interest from the major town shopping centre and large retailer. Previous negotiations have been unsuccessful and the position is unlikely to have changed. Considering these issues, this option does not appear to warrant further investigation and therefore discounted.

Option3:	Service redesigned and relocated to the Municipal Offices
Pros:	 Move to an appointment only based service with bookings made online or by phone The customer service/business support team could manage the bookings for those customers without internet access Shopmobility officers would still manage the equipment and training but would also carry out other Council duties leading to improved utilisation Vacating the property in St George's Place would allow the asset value to be realised either through commercial letting or disposal Convenient "one stop shop" for service users to hire equipment and conduct other Council business More accessible location for people with mobility issues compared to current location at St George's Place Consider using volunteers to deliver service (recent 3 month long volunteer drive has demonstrated a lack of interest)
Cons:	 Municipal Offices is not easily accessible for people with disabilities Significant investment in equipment is needed Possible reduction of service operating hours to Monday - Friday due to Municipal Offices weekend access constraints Relocation costs – movement of equipment, updating / renovation of new location rooms / facilities This option does not address the falling demand for the service
Recommendation:	Providing a reduced service either in respect of operating times or services offered is not considered a feasible option. It would likely result in a further reduction in usage.The option of relocating to the Municipal Offices, and making the location fit for purpose, carries a significant financial risk. This further strengthens the case for this not to be a viable option.

Option 4	Relocating to a site with higher footfall and a greater public profile
Pros:	 Vacating the property in St George's Place would allow the asset value to be realised either through commercial letting or disposal Scope for service to gain greater exposure, subject to a prominent commercial location
Cons:	A more prominent position is likely to incur higher rent and

	 rates, unless it is a Council asset If moved to another Council asset there would be an opportunity cost
Recommendation:	Considering the current performance of the service and the general shift in customers becoming self-sufficient, this option does not warrant the additional revenue costs that would be associated with its delivery.

Option 5	Discontinue service
Pros:	 Demand for the service is reducing and this trend is likely to continue based on historical performance Potential annual financial savings of £57k - £97k which could be reinvested in higher priority Council services and/or support the Medium Term Financial Strategy There is alternative mobility providers in Cheltenham Vacating the property in St George's Place would allow the asset value to be realised either through commercial letting or disposal
Cons:	 Shopmobility staff cannot be redeployed and would face a redundancy scenario which carries a maximum one-off exposure of £22k Social inclusion decline if service is not relocated and St George's Place usage changes
Recommendation:	The recommended option This is based on the falling demand for the service and current financial climate the recommended decision would be to discontinue the service

5. Community Impact Assessment:

5.1 A community impact assessment has been completed and this is attached in appendix 2 of the report. There are private sector mobility equipment providers in Cheltenham and there are charities that can provide funding to individual's where needed.

6. Consultation:

6.1 Despite there being no legal requirement, as part of the businesses case, a consultation exercise was undertaken with several organisations including Cheltenham Open Door, Age UK and Cheltenham Business Improvement District. They were concerned around the reduction of direct provision provided by the Council. In response to this consultation exercise one of the recommendations is to develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan to sign post users to alternative means of support. In addition, we have also spoken to several mobility service providers in Cheltenham who are happy for Shopmobility users to be signposted to them.

7. Performance management – monitoring and review:

7.1 The permanent closure of the service would be overseen by a dedicated Programme Manager based on the Council's project management framework.

Report author	Contact officer(s):		
	Sanjay Mistrysanjay.mistry@cheltenham.gov.uk		
Appendices	1: Risk Assessment		
	2: Community Impact Assessment		
Background information	None		

Risk Assessment

The ris	The risk				l risk score Managing risk x likelihood)						
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likeli- hood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
001	Financially disadvantaged groups may be affected if unable to access Shopmobility.	Director of Planning		4	3	12	Accept	Potential to explore options to support affected groups to identify alternative provision		Helen Thomas	
002	If the likely or actual effects of proposed changes in the service on persons who share protected characteristics are detrimental, then the Council will be in potential breach of its Public Sector Equalities Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.	Chief Executive		5	2	10	Close	Undertake Community Impact Assessment		Sanjay Mistry	
003	Should the service be closed then redundancy situation would apply for those staff unless they were able to be redeployed. There may be redundancy and pension liabilities.	Clare Jones		2	2	4	Accept	Clarify position with Publica HR		Sanjay Mistry	
004	Failure to properly communicate changes could result in issues for service areas and our external customers	Director of Planning		3	1	3	Reduce	A communications plan will be developed for internal services and external customers		Sanjay Mistry	
005	Failure to properly manage the project could negatively impact upon • Customer	Director of Planning		4	3	12	Reduce	The resource requirements of the project will be quantified and suitable		Sanjay Mistry	

Appendix 1

 satisfaction leve Customer experience Reputation Staff morale 	els			provision with the appropriate capabilities will be secured			
Explanatory notes							
Impact - an assessment of t	he impact if the risk o	occurs on a scale	of 1-5 (1 bein	ig least impact and 5 being majo	or or critica	l)	
Likelihood – how likely is it t	hat the risk will occu	on a scale of 1-6	6				
(1 being almost impossible, 2	2 is very low, 3 is low	4 significant, 5	high and 6 a v	ery high probability)			
Control - Either: Reduce / A	ccept / Transfer to 3r	d party / Close					

What is a community impact assessment?

A community impact assessment is an important part of our commitment to delivering better services for our communities. The form will help us find out what impact or consequences our functions, policies, procedures and projects have on our communities, as well as employees and potential employees.

By undertaking an impact assessment, we are able to:

- Take into account the needs, experiences and circumstances of those groups of people who use (or don't / can't use) our services.
- Identify any inequalities people may experience.
- Think about the other ways in which we can deliver our services which will not lead to inequalities.
- Develop better policy-making, procedures and services.

Background

Name of service / policy / project and date	Shopmobility review – June 2020
Lead officer	Sanjay Mistry – Programme Manager (CBC)
Other people involved in completing this form	Helen Thomas – Business Support Team Manager (CBC) Clare Jones – HR Business Partner (Publica)

Step 1 - About the service / policy / project

What is the aim of the service / policy / project and what outcomes is it contributing to	 The aim of the Shopmobility service is to provide mobility equipment to help people of all ages, who for a variety of reasons have difficulty getting around the town centre area of Cheltenham. This review is aligned to the Council's Strategic Objectives and Principles as set out in the following documents: Corporate plan 2019 – 2023: We will be commercially focused where needed and become financially self-sufficient to ensure we can continue to achieve value for money for the taxpayer. Commercial Approach: We will adhere to statutory responsibilities and ensure that public money continues to be appropriately used and accounted for. Customer & Digitial Strategy: We understand that true transformation requires redesigning and reengineering our organisation on every level and includes people, processes and technology. Modernisation Workstream Initiation Document - Organisational Design: The cost of and demand for services across the Council as a whole is understood Modernisation Workstream Initiation Document - Organisational Design: Redefined job roles and new ways of working allow resources to be managed, planned and directed to where they will have the greatest impact.
Who are the primary customers of the service / policy / project and how do they / will they benefit	The primary customers of the Shopmobility service are the residents residing in the borough of Cheltenham and visitors with mobility difficulties.
How and where is the service / policy / project implemented	The service is currently delivered from 30 St Georges Place, Cheltenham. It is delivered by Cheltenham Borough Council.
What potential barriers might already exist to achieving these outcomes	Insufficient Cabinet support to consider discontinuing the service

Step 2 – What do you know already about your existing / potential customers

What existing information and data	•	Significant decline in use between 2015-16 and 2019-20.			
do you have about your existing /	•	Usage appears low compared to similar towns/cities (notably Worcester and Gloucester – anecdotal).			

potential customers e.g. Statistics, customer feedback, performance information	 Comparative costs to clients are difficult to assess because of the variety of payment methods across the various providers nationally. A number of services are free to customers. Cheltenham looks to be on the high side of the norm for services which charge. O&S Shopmobility Task Group, Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce and Cheltenham Business Improvement District want to see a continued service in the town. The service receives positive responses for customers
What does it tell you about who uses your service / policy and those that don't?	 There is a small core of regular users who are very frequent users. Primary users are people with a mobility disability, usually (but not exclusively) those without access to their own equipment. Many are late middle-age or elderly, though again, not exclusively.
What have you learnt about real barriers to your service from any consultation with customers and any stakeholder groups?	There is a preference evident through past consultations for continued provision of the service by CBC, however, a recognition that it could be provided by charities or the community.
If not, who do you have plans to consult with about the service / policy / project?	N/A

Step 3 - Assessing community impact

How does your service / policy / project impact on different groups in the community?

Group	What are you already doing to benefit this group	What are you doing that might disadvantage this group	What could you do differently to benefit this group	No impact on this group
People from black and minority ethnic groups				\checkmark
People who are male or female				\checkmark
People who are transitioning from one gender to another				\checkmark
Older people / children and young people	Older people are a majority user of the	Service closure is likely to impact on accessibility to	Help to identify alternative support agencies within	

	service.	town centre for shopping,	the town.	
People with disabilities and mental health challenges	Primary user base.	leisure and social contact. Service closure is likely to impact on accessibility to town centre for shopping, leisure and social contact.	Help to identify alternative support agencies within the town.	
People who have a particular religion or belief				\checkmark
People who are attracted to their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.				\checkmark
People who are married or in a Civil Partnership				\checkmark
People who are pregnant or who are on maternity leave	Potential user of the service, but not a major target.		Help to identify alternative support agencies within the town.	
Other groups or communities				\checkmark

Step 4 - what are the differences?

Are any groups affected in different ways to others as a result of the	Financially disadvantaged groups may be affected if unable to access Shopmobility.
service / policy / project?	Users of public transport may be disadvantaged if the Shopmobility service is discontinued or required to move away from town centre.
Does your service / policy / project either directly or indirectly discriminate?	No
If yes, what can be done to improve this?	No

Are there any other ways in which the service / project can help	Any potential synergies between the service and other organisations in the town have been considered as part of a previous commissioning process. The process was not successful in identifying an alternative service provider. In Gloucestershire, there are a number of providers for mobility devices. In Cheltenham, there other organisations who provide a wide range of mobility services. These alternative providers are briefly summarised below: 1. Assured Mobility at Katherine Court, Warden Hill, Cheltenham, which provides a range of mobility services https://www.assuredmobilityltd.co.uk/cheltenham/
support priority communities in Cheltenham?	 DC&M, at Neptune Business Centre, Tewkesbury Road, Cheltenham, which provides a range of mobility services <u>https://www.dcmglos.co.uk/mobility-products/aids-to-daily-living</u> Badham Mobility, Old Farmers Arms, Evesham Road, Bishops Cleeve, which provides a range of mobility
	 Badnam Mobility, Old Farmers Arms, Evesnam Road, Dishops Olecve, which provides a range of mobility services https://www.badham-mobility.co.uk/products There are also charities that can possible help with funding for mobility scooters which can be identified via Better Mobility - https://www.badham-mobility.co.uk/products

Step 5 – taking things forward

What are the key actions to be carried out and how will they be resourced and monitored?	The primary key action is to develop a business case to fully appraise the options available to help determine the future of Shopmobility. The action will be resourced with officers from CBC, Publica and One Legal, and monitored by CBC ELT lead Darren Knight; Executive Director People & Change.
Who will play a role in the decision- making process?	Cllr Flo Clucas and the Cabinet. CBC ELT
What are your / the project's learning and development needs?	
How will you capture these actions in your service / project planning?	