1. Why are you doing this?
The funding being made available for local authorities from Central Government is decreasing as part of national austerity measures. This is placing huge financial pressure on the Council to significantly reduce its spending. Therefore, all Council budgets are being reviewed and many are being reduced to help the Council make the necessary savings. The budget that pays for these bus services is being reduced by £2m over 3 years, from April 2014 to April 2017.

2. Can you do this?
Yes. Although it is understood that all bus services are important to the passengers that use them, these services are what we call a discretionary activity. This means the Council is not obliged to provide these services and is able to determine how much money it spends supporting public buses services. We will still spend around £5.5m a year on supporting bus services.

3. Why have you chosen the services you have?
At the moment, no final decisions regarding which services will have to change have been made. Initially, we have identified the services that may be affected because operators have indicated that they can continue to run a level of service without the Council’s money or because they operate in areas where other bus services will continue to operate on different days of the week, or at different times of the day. We have done this because we believe these changes will have less impact on passengers than if we were to remove funding for services that would stop completely and were the only means of public transport for passengers to get to work or to school etc.

4. Why are other services not included?
Bus services across the UK were privatised in 1985. Since then, the majority of bus services in Kent have been run by commercial bus companies, such as Arriva or Stagecoach. They are not paid for by the Council, therefore, including these would not save any money. The Council’s Kent Karrier (Dial-a-Ride services) is also not included in this consultation as they provide the only way for members of the scheme to travel.
5. Will services that are not included in this consultation be affected?
Not if they are paid for by KCC. At the moment, we are only considering changing the services identified in this review. There is a chance that operators will need to make minor changes to the services they provide if, for example, they use the same vehicle but that is outside of our control.

6. Are School buses affected?
No. The Council will not include journeys or services to and from school as part of this review.

7. Are bus operators involved?
Yes. KCC has a close relationship with all of its operators and has been working with them to identify opportunities to save money. This has already saved the Council around £5m over the last few years. However, the changes being proposed through this consultation are because of the Council’s funding pressures not because of anything that operators have done.

8. Do KCC control all bus services?
No. The bus network in the United Kingdom is deregulated (privatised) and the majority of services are provided by bus operators outside of any contract or control of the Council. The licensing of operators and their services is a function of the Department for Transport and KCC cannot control who does or doesn’t have a license and what services any operator runs.

9. How much does KCC spend on buses?
In the financial year 2015 / 16, KCC will have spent around £6.4m on subsidies for socially necessary bus services. This figure is set to reduce to just over £5.5m from April 2017. KCC also has to pay bus operators for accepting bus passes for elderly passengers and school children, which means the total amount the Council spends with bus operators is over £30m every year.

10. How many services do KCC look after?
KCC currently have around 150 contracts with operators to provide bus services or certain journeys. This means that less than 3% of all journeys that operate get some funding from the Council.
11. Who will make these decisions and who will decide the final range of savings measures?
Ultimately decisions will be made by the Council’s Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, which is made up of elected Members. They will be informed by senior officers from KCC’s Public Transport department who will use information gained from the public consultation, Equality Impact Assessment, bus inspections and information from bus operators to make recommendations.

12. When will services change?
Once decisions have been made, the Council has to give notice to its bus operators. This means that services will likely change in August 2016.

13. Will you provide replacements for the services affected?
The Council has been working with operators to provide replacements where possible for the services affected. In some instances journeys will continue to run even though we have reduced the funding. Where this is the case, this is reflected in the proposed changes set out in the consultation document. We will look to develop our Kent Karrier services and work with the voluntary and community sector to provide other forms of transport but we are not expecting to be able to provide replacement bus services.

14. Am I entitled to a refund on a pass bought from KCC?
Fees only apply to school travel passes (the Young Person’s Travel Pass and Kent 16+ Travel Card) so this shouldn’t be necessary. If you have bought a pass and the service that you use changes, then we will consider all refund requests on a case by case basis.

15. How can I give you my views?
The best way to influence the outcome is by responding to the consultation. By telling us how you might be impacted, you can ensure that we consider this as part of our decision making process.

16. Where do I respond to the consultation?
By visiting www.kent.gov.uk/busreview and completing the online consultation questionnaire. Alternatively, complete the consultation questionnaire in the consultation document and return to: Freepost, KENT COUNTY COUNCIL BUS FUNDING REVIEW
17. How do I complain?
If you are not happy with the outcome of the consultation, KCC has a complaints process. You may write to a Corporate Director or your locally elected Member who will take up the complaint on your behalf. If you’re still not happy and think your comments have not been dealt with properly then you can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. More details are available at; http://www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint and http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback