

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Executive Decision Record

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment
<b>Date:</b>	17 June 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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### 1. The decision:

- 1.1. That the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment agrees the proposed approach to Bus Back Better, the national bus strategy, as detailed within the report.
- 1.2. That the Executive Lead Member gives approval for Hampshire County Council to initiate work to enter into Enhanced Partnership Schemes (EPS) under the Government's new "Bus Back Better" initiative and in line with DfT guidance and timescales.
- 1.3. That authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport, and Environment to make the necessary arrangements, including preparation of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), to be reported back to the Executive Lead Member in due course.

### 2. Reasons for the decision:

- 2.1. A new national bus strategy called "Bus Back Better" has been issued. It is strongly supportive of local bus services being improved and in helping the sector recover from the impact of reduced travel during the pandemic. Whilst the strategy promises future increases in funding for bus measures it also includes some ultimatums. In order for Hampshire County Council and the bus operators providing services within the County to be eligible for continued COVID support funding (CBSSG), or any new sources of bus funding from the Government's £3billion allocated to implementing the National Bus Strategy from 1 July 2021 onwards, the County Council and operators must declare their intentions to enter into Enhanced Partnership Schemes by the end of June 2021. Further to this, the DfT intends to reform the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) scheme and only services operated under an EPS will be eligible for this reformed Bus Service Operators Grant. The County Council currently receives £1.2 million per annum in BSOG funding which is used to provide local bus services.

2.2. Collectively, the decisions detailed in this report put the County Council in a position to access future national funding for improving bus services in Hampshire. The recommendations, in association with the report, indicate how the County Council will need to enhance its activity in supporting bus services (e.g., by enforcing bus priority provisions), and in developing partnerships with bus operators (through a new more contractual relationship), and with neighbouring authorities (through enhanced collaboration on cross boundary issues).

### **3. Other options considered and rejected:**

3.1. To enter into a franchising agreement rather than an EPS. This was rejected as it was considered that an EPS, building on the already positive partnership Hampshire County Council has with its bus operators, would result in better outcomes for Hampshire. In addition, establishing bus franchising requires permission from the Secretary of State and new secondary legislation for all Local Transport Authorities who are not Mayoral Combined Authorities. Lastly, the resource implications of this option for the County Council would be significant and prohibitively expensive.

3.2. Not to pursue the establishment of an EPS. As detailed in 2.1, local authorities and operators who are not signed up to an EPS will not be eligible for any further CBSSG, reformed BSOG, nor any future funding opportunities which may arise. In practice this would result in a significant deterioration of rural bus services that would leave large parts of rural Hampshire unserved by public transport.

3.3. Not to further the partnership working approach with Hampshire's neighbouring authorities. This was rejected as Hampshire has many cross-boundary operators and services, and therefore working in isolation would not provide the best outcome for passengers using bus services in and around Hampshire. In addition, this would have a negative impact on potential for economies of scale.

### **4. Conflicts of interest:**

4.1. Conflicts of interest declared by the decision-maker:

4.2. Conflicts of interest declared by other Executive Members consulted:

**5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel: none.**

**6. Reason(s) for the matter being dealt with if urgent: not applicable.**

**7. Statement from the Decision Maker:**

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

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**17 June 2021**

**Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and  
Environment  
Councillor Rob Humby**