

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment
Date:	28 October 2021
Title:	Bus Service Improvement Plan
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out details of a proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Hampshire, as the first step towards development of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with local bus operators. The Plan has been co-developed by Hampshire County Council and local bus operators, engaging closely with neighbouring Local Transport Authorities, and represents a collective series of ambitions for how bus services in Hampshire will be improved up to 2030.

Recommendations

2. That the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment approves the Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), as detailed within and appended to this report, as the local response to “Bus Back Better”, the national bus strategy.
3. That authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment to make the necessary arrangements to formally submit the BSIP to the Government by the end of October 2021.
4. That the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment gives approval for a consultation exercise to be carried out over the coming months as part of the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership requirements, and delegates authority to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment to finalise the arrangements and carry out the consultation in line with Enhanced Partnership guidance issued by the Department for Transport.

Executive Summary

5. This report sets out the details of Hampshire County Council’s proposed approach to the local delivery of the Government’s National Bus Strategy through a BSIP for Hampshire. The consistent policy themes running through

the National Bus Strategy are a green recovery from the pandemic, decarbonisation of transport, and levelling up the economy.

6. The Government has announced that £3billion will be made available for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to bid for towards delivery of local measures. In order to be eligible to bid, LTAs in England are required to publish a local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The Plan must align with the ten National Bus Strategy requirements and be agreed by 31 October 2021.
7. The Hampshire BSIP (Appendix 1) sets out a number of commitments relating to:
 - future plans for provision of new bus priority measures within our main urban areas to enable buses to avoid delay at congestion hotspots;
 - targets for reduced bus journey times, improved reliability, passenger growth and passenger satisfaction;
 - plans to make buses zero emission;
 - dealing with the under or over supply of buses on the network;
 - plans for fares and multi-operator ticketing;
 - addressing local air quality issues;
 - improving roadside bus infrastructure;
 - plans for expansion of BRT networks;
 - steps being taken to produce a Bus Passenger Charter;
 - network development plans (e.g., Key Corridors or Bus Rapid Transit or Mass Rapid Transit networks); and
 - plans for 'socially necessary' and new 'economically necessary' services.
8. The BSIP also includes a series of targets (a requirement of the Department for Transport (DfT)), to aid the measurement of future progress made in improving local bus services.
9. The BSIP has been prepared following extensive engagement with bus operators and neighbouring LTAs.
10. The BSIP is aligned with the current Local Transport Plan 3, and with the guiding principles of the emerging Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4, as well as with Hampshire County Council's policy objectives of decarbonisation of transport, levelling up the economy, and assisting the economic recovery from the Covid pandemic.
11. Achieving the full ambition and many of the commitments set out in the BSIP is conditional on securing additional funding from the DfT's Bus Back Better £3billion funding stream. The £3billion of funding is a provisional amount for the whole of England for the period to 2024/25. It is subject to the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, due in October 2021. BSIPs run until 2030, although there has been no indication of the levels of funding that might be made available from 2025/26 until 2030. The amount of funding that is secured for Hampshire will be dependent on how the BSIP is scored when it is submitted to the DfT at the end of October.

12. An update report on the Council's Savings Programme to 2023 (SP23) was presented at Decision Day on 23 September 2021.
13. The County Council recognises the importance of developing SP23 and BSIP proposals which complement rather than contradict each other. For this reason, the SP23 proposals are primarily focused on income and cost recovery proposals. Likewise, the BSIP is focused on enhancing commercial operations which do not require local authority support and in making less viable routes more efficient through measures such as speeding up bus journey times.
14. Following the submission of the BSIP, the government requires the County Council to engage with stakeholders on both a formal and informal basis to inform the outcome of the EP.
15. It is proposed that should approval be granted, the process for the informal consultation be designed and rolled out immediately to ensure that Hampshire's EP includes the views of as many stakeholders as possible.
16. Following the informal consultation, the next stage will be a formal consultation on the draft EP. The EP cannot be progressed without the formal agreement of the bus operators.

Contextual information

17. On 15 March 2021 the Government published England's first National Bus Strategy. It set out a vision for the future of bus services outside London. It required LTAs to confirm if they would deliver the national strategy locally through either formal "Enhanced Partnership" arrangements between local transport authorities and bus operators, or through franchising. Failure to engage and confirm the preferred way forward would result in the Government cutting local bus grants. On 17 June 2021 the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment confirmed it was the County Council's intention to enter into an Enhanced Partnership.
18. The National Bus Strategy, and additional funding flowing from it, would contribute significantly to Hampshire County Council's policy objectives of decarbonisation of transport and improving air quality and achieving carbon neutrality, which would be aided by a shift to greener public transport. A single journey on public transport has approximately half the carbon impact of a car journey. In addition, the Strategy contributes to the Council's policy objectives of levelling up the economy and assisting the economic recovery from the Covid pandemic.
19. The strategy represents an opportunity for the County Council to extend its productive partnership working arrangements with bus operators and neighbouring local transport authorities, in order to enhance the quality and attractiveness of the bus network. The National Bus Strategy indicates that the level of funding to be received by LTAs will reflect the level of local ambition demonstrated by the LTAs and their bus operators.
20. The strategy also set out the conditions which LTAs should adhere to, not only to access the national funding for enhancements, but also to secure ongoing financial support for bus operations in their area. The key milestones are:

- 30 June 2021: commit to establishing Enhanced Partnerships under the Bus Services Act;
 - 31 October 2021: publish a local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in line with the strategy requirements; and
 - April 2022: have an Enhanced Partnership (EP) in place or be following the Franchising process.
21. At his Decision Day on 17 June 2021, the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment approved that a Statutory Notice should be issued stating the County Council's intention to enter into Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators, so attention therefore turns to the need to publish a BSIP by 31 October 2021.
22. There are two parts to an Enhanced Partnership:
- an EP Plan, which is a clear vision of the improvements to bus services that the EP is aiming to deliver, mirroring the BSIP; and
 - EP schemes – an accompanying document setting out the improvements that will be made by the LTA and bus operators to deliver the improvements set out in the EP Plan.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

23. The BSIP sets out a high-level vision for improving local bus services and key interventions to deliver it, with the Enhanced Partnership plan containing the detail of how these key interventions will be delivered. The BSIP itself is an important milestone towards preparation of Hampshire's EP with local bus operators.
24. DfT guidance for LTAs on preparation of BSIPs was published in May 2021. This states that within their BSIPs, LTAs need to cover the areas listed in paragraph 7 above.
25. The BSIP attached as Appendix 1 to this report, sets out the County Council's and bus operators' shared high-level vision for Hampshire's bus network, including journey time and reliability targets, and the plans to deliver them. It follows a template structure provided by the DfT.
26. Section 2 of the BSIP summarises how the current bus network in Hampshire compares to the ten ambitions outlined in the DfT's May 2021 BSIP guidance. It describes the current levels of bus use, gives details of which services receive support, locations of existing bus priority measures, and the main destinations bus passengers travel to. It outlines how buses are used and the key issues affecting bus services across the County and in each of the six main urban areas.
27. Section 3 sets out a series of targets (both countywide and for the six main urban areas) for reducing average bus journey times and for the percentage of bus services running on time. There are also countywide targets for passenger growth and customer satisfaction. The headline countywide targets are to:
- reduce average bus journey times by an average of 9% (5-10% depending on area) across Hampshire by 2024/25;

- improve bus journey time reliability with 90% of services operating on time (between 1 minute early and 5 minutes late) by 2024/25;
 - Return bus passenger numbers to pre-Covid 19 levels by September 2022, then increase it by 8% each year for the following 2 years; and
 - increase bus passenger satisfaction by 5% by 2026/27 from a 2021/22 base.
28. Section 4 sets out a high-level vision and a series of ten long-term commitments for how the County Council and bus operators will work to improve the quality of local bus services in Hampshire up to 2030.
29. The long-term commitments have been designed to complement the SP23 Programme and focus on capital investment to boost commercial services, rather than committing to ongoing County Council revenue subsidy support.

Bus Service Improvement Plan High-level Vision

30. The BSIP sets out the following vision for improving bus services:

“Within Hampshire, the County Council and bus operators recognise that the bus has huge untapped potential to cater for a larger share of everyday journeys. Through a programme of co-ordinated and sustained investment, over the next decade we will deliver a renaissance in bus passenger travel, which will see the number of journeys made by bus increase year-on-year. This BSIP will be a catalyst for bus passenger growth across the whole of Hampshire by creating the conditions to achieve a virtuous circle of investment and passenger growth. This will be a process of positive, sustained change. Growing bus use will contribute to a wide range of other policy objectives, such as de-carbonising travel, reducing inequalities and using road-space much more efficiently.”

31. There is a strong economic case for supporting the development of a stronger local bus network. Investment by the public sector in infrastructure measures to improve bus services levers in additional private sector investment from the bus industry. This joint approach to investment has been successful in Hampshire for a number of years.
32. The measures outlined in the BSIP will help to tackle issues of social inequality. This is further explored with the Consultation and Equalities section of this report.

Consultation

33. In line with guidance issued by the Department for Transport, it is proposed that the County Council undertakes a consultation exercise to gain the views of stakeholders both on the existing bus network and potential improvements that could be made through the Enhanced Partnership (EP).
34. This process will include the opportunity for people to attend online face to face events and provide written feedback. Organisations with an interest in passenger transport will be invited to share their views on bus services in Hampshire to feed into the EP.

35. Following this process, in line with DfT guidance, it is proposed that a formal consultation be held with Hampshire's bus operators to gain their agreement to the proposed EP.

Finance

36. To date, the County Council has been successful in securing Local Transport Authority Bus Capacity Funding allocation from DfT, which is being used towards costs relating to the preparation of the BSIP and EP.
37. Achieving the full ambition and many of the commitments set out in the BSIP is conditional on securing additional funding from the DfT's Bus Back Better £3billion funding stream. The £3billion of funding is a provisional amount for the whole of England for the period to 2024/25, subject to the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. There has been no indication of the levels of funding that might be made available from 2025/26 until 2030. The amount of funding that is secured for Hampshire will be dependent on how the BSIP is scored when it is submitted to the DfT at the end of October.
38. The DfT has stated that ambition in BSIPs will be rewarded. The commitments detailed in paragraph 7 above have been crafted to demonstrate this high level of ambition, so it is considered that there is a strong likelihood that Hampshire will perform well in securing a good share of this new funding to enable delivery of the measures set out in the BSIP.
39. Part of this funding is anticipated to be awarded by formula linked to population and part through competitive bidding
40. However, if the amount of funding secured is limited, then this will in turn limit the scale of improvements, and in turn dictate the level of increase in bus passenger journeys that the County Council and local bus operators can achieve over the period to 2024/25.

Consultation and Equalities

41. Initial engagement on the emerging Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) was undertaken in January and February 2021, with a wide a group of interested parties to help formulate a new transport strategy and plan for Hampshire. Stakeholders and members of the public that responded were clear that public transport and buses should be a focus for the County Council's strategies, supporting the principle of "reducing dependence on the private car". The views, expertise and local knowledge provided through the LTP4 consultation has equally proved invaluable in helping to shape and influence the vision and ambitions contained in the BSIP.
42. As well as this county level engagement, the County Council has worked closely with Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and Isle of Wight Council to engage with a wide range of stakeholders as part of developing successful bids to the DfT's Transforming Cities Fund. This helped to secure over £112million for bus priority and active travel measures on a series of cross-boundary corridors. A range of stakeholders, including umbrella business groups, large employers, lower-tier authorities, and universities expressed strong support for measures to speed up end-to-end bus journey times and improve journey time reliability.

43. During recent public consultations in Basingstoke, 64% of Basingstoke residents surveyed stated that if public transport was good enough, they would travel to the town centre without using a car. Similarly, a consultation as part of the Winchester Movement Strategy found that 63% of respondents wanted to see new bus priority measures introduced. This indicates public support in principle for bus priority within two of the urban areas in Hampshire.
44. Between May and August 2021, a series of meetings and workshops have been held with local bus operators to inform and shape the BSIP. Regular meetings with neighbouring LTAs have also been held to agree a common and aligned approach to improving bus services that operate across LTA boundaries.
45. A workshop with bus operators and neighbouring LTAs was held on 21 July to identify common ground and agree an appropriate level of ambition. Attendees agreed that central to being able to deliver the kind of year-on-year growth in bus passenger numbers that the DfT are seeking, is being able to offer bus passengers a quicker and more reliable bus service. Within the main towns and urban areas in Hampshire, operators indicated that this would best be achieved through the delivery of widespread bus priority measures that are needed to improve bus journey times, punctuality, and reliability. This has therefore been included as a key priority in the Hampshire BSIP.
46. Another key piece of feedback given by all the bus operators who attended the workshop was that in order for bus services to attract more passengers, it is very important to secure early political buy-in and support from Members for the principle of reallocating road space from general traffic to buses in locations on the highway network where traffic congestion is occurring, so that buses do not experience the same delays as other traffic. Speeding up journey times by bus would reduce operating costs and generate more revenue which in turn would allow operators to invest in more frequent services and new vehicles.
47. In terms of equality impacts, there is a higher reliance on buses for commuting amongst particular sectors of the population: females, younger age groups (16–19-year-olds), part-time workers, those in manual occupations, and those on low incomes. 18.9% of households in Hampshire have no access to a car or van. In light of this, there is a need to support the most socially excluded residents who are disproportionately represented as bus passengers. Around one in three bus journeys in Hampshire are made by concessionary pass holders.
48. The BSIP commitments to work towards more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, and better co-ordinated bus services would enable people to access essential services and lead independent lives for longer within their own communities and will therefore have a particularly positive outcome for younger and older people, women, and those from other protected groups who are more likely to be regular bus users.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

49. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by

2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

50. The climate change tools will be fully utilised for the EP where detailed delivery information will be available.

Carbon Mitigation

51. By increasing the modal share of journeys made by bus, and decreasing the share made by private car, the BSIP would support a reduction in carbon emissions from transport. Buses also make more efficient use of road space – a double decker bus can take up to 75 cars off the road. Bus operators will continue to invest in their bus fleets, which already perform well in terms of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter emissions. On average, each journey made by bus generates a 50% reduction in carbon emissions over a journey made by private car. Bus operators, in partnership with the County Council will seek funding from the Government towards zero carbon buses, which could be either electric or hydrogen buses. This will see the number of diesel buses progressively reduced over time.

Conclusions and Next Steps

52. The approach to the Hampshire BSIP set out within this report would contribute significantly to Hampshire County Council's policy objectives of decarbonisation of transport, levelling up the economy, and assisting the economic recovery from the Covid pandemic.
53. Delivery of the approach set out within the BSIP would enable the Council to begin the work needed to meet the objectives set out within the Government's Bus Back Better Strategy and maximise the likelihood of securing additional funding to deliver the proposed improvements. This work would build upon the already positive working relationship the Council has with its bus operators and enable the best outcomes for bus users in Hampshire.
54. Local Transport Authorities who are planning to follow the Enhanced Partnership model are expected to be working under Enhanced Partnership arrangements from April 2022. Therefore, prior to April 2022 a further report will be brought to the Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment, to consider the outcome of the consultation exercise and to consider a detailed Enhanced Partnership for approval.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	no
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy. Report to Executive Lead Member for Economy, Transport and Environment, 17th June 2021.

Location

<https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s74499/Report.pdf>

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

In terms of equality impacts, there is a higher reliance on buses for commuting amongst particular sectors of the population: females, younger age groups (16–19-year-olds), part-time workers, those in manual occupations, and those on low incomes. 18.9% of households in Hampshire have no access to a car or van. In light of this, there is a need to support the most socially excluded residents who are disproportionately represented as bus passengers. Around one in three bus journeys in Hampshire are made by concessionary pass holders.

The BSIP commitments to work towards more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, and better co-ordinated bus services would enable people to access essential services and lead independent lives for longer within their own communities and will therefore have a particularly positive outcome for younger and older people, women, and those from other protected groups who are more likely to be regular bus users.