

Title of meeting: Cabinet Meeting

Date of meeting: 22 June 2021

Subject: National Bus Strategy - Enhanced Partnership for Portsmouth

Report by: Tristan Samuels - Director of Regeneration

Wards affected: All Wards

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

This report seeks approval for Portsmouth City Council to establish an Enhanced Partnership, in accordance with the requirements set out in the government's National Bus Strategy - Bus Back Better.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves for Portsmouth City Council to establish an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators for Portsmouth and authorises the publication of the requisite statutory notice of the Council's intent in that regard;**
- 2.2 Notes that the detailed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) required for submission by 31 October 2021 will be the subject of a further decision report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The National Bus Strategy (NBS) was published on 15th March 2021 and sets out a new approach for the provision of bus transport in England outside of London. While there are not changes to primary legislation, it does include changes to regulations under the Bus Services Act 2017.**
- 3.2 The key objectives of the NBS are:**



- More frequent: Turn up and go services, where passengers don't need a timetable, should be provided on major urban routes.
- Faster and more reliable: Buses must have greater priority on urban roads. LTAs will be given new powers to enforce traffic regulations.
- Cheaper: more low, flat, fares in towns and cities, lower point-to-point fares elsewhere, and more daily price capping everywhere.
- More comprehensive: ...More services should operate in the evenings, weekends, and at night.
- Easier to understand: ...everything passengers need to know at their fingertips
- Easier to use: Common tickets, passes and daily capping should be available on all services irrespective of operator, at little or no premium to single-operator fares.
- Better to ride in: Comfortable, high-specification, modern buses
- Better integrated: with each other and, over time, other modes
- Greener: deliver 4,000 more zero emission buses.
- Accessible and inclusive by design: buses, stops, on-board information
- Innovative: harnessing the entrepreneurial skills of the best operators
- Seen as a safe mode of transport: end to end support of personal safety

3.3 The NBS places new responsibilities on Local Transport Authorities to enter into an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with bus operators and to set ambitious and measured targets to deliver improvements to bus services and to the city by means of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

3.4 The full published DfT guidance can be found here: [Bus service improvement plans: guidance to local authorities and bus operators \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/parent-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators)

4. Enhanced Partnerships

4.1 Enhanced Partnerships are a fundamental part of the National Bus Strategy designed to increase bus use and deliver a wide range of economic, health and social objectives. Significant new funding is being made available, which is contingent upon the establishment of an ambitious Enhanced Partnership. Failure to establish an Enhanced Partnership (EP) means that current and future Government funding would be reduced or not made available.

4.2 An EP is a statutory arrangement under the Bus Services Act 2017 in which the LTA can specify, for example, timetables and multi-operator ticketing. Under an EP the LTA works closely with bus companies collaboratively, drawing on their operating knowledge and marketing skills. Revised EP guidance is expected to be published shortly.



- 4.4 The agreement to, and delivery of, an ambitious EP will determine existing and future bus funding from Government and also whether bids for Government funding of non-bus transport investment such as highway, cycle and traffic schemes will be successful.

5. Bus Service Improvement Plans

- 5.1 LTAs and bus operators will need to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) collaboratively with residents and user groups, key stakeholders including health and social care, local businesses, and other transport operators, by 31 October 2021.
- 5.2 The BSIPs will set out how the LTA and operators will use their EP to deliver 'an ambitious vision for travel by bus'. They will cover all routes included within the LTA area and focus on delivering the services that the LTA, in collaboration with operators and consultation with stakeholders, want to see. BSIPs should be updated annually, and six-monthly progress reports will be required.
- 5.3 Each BSIP will influence the share of the £3bn each LTA receives.

A BSIP should:

- Set targets for journey time and reliability improvements for the LTA as a whole
- The LTA with bus operators to set daytime, evening and Sunday service levels, possibly using DRT integrated with conventional bus - a role is seen for employers to help with funding
- Identify where priority measures are needed, including consideration of Bus Rapid Transit routes, as part of a wider, significant and rapid increase in priority provision
- Set out pressures on the road network, air quality issues and carbon reduction targets that improved services could address, and actions working with operators to transform the local bus fleet to zero-emission
- Set out plans and costs for fares, ticketing and in time multi-modal integration
- Set targets for passenger growth and customer satisfaction
- Consider the impact of roadside infrastructure
- Consider how a coherent and integrated network should serve key travel generators
- Consider the views of local people
- Commit to a Bus Passenger Charter
- Set up a Bus Advisory Board or similar forum to ensure standards and redress



- 5.5 Each BSIP will need to identify and explain how current services meet or fall short of expectations; how improvements will be delivered; financial support that the LTA provides for subsidised services; how traffic management and investment is used to prioritise buses. BSIP offers a great opportunity to deliver on the ambitions of the LTP 4, particularly the public transport objective which was supported positively though the consultation. BSIP can also be a means to support the Imagine Portsmouth objectives of a green city with excellent air quality and easy travel.
- 5.6 Portsmouth bus patronage in 2019/20 was over 12 million trips, and was approaching a 20 year high for the area. Due to the island geography of Portsmouth, it should be noted that many of the 2.5 million trips on the Gosport Ferry would be bus journeys in other cities. Nonetheless, to ensure that Portsmouth residents are getting the best possible public transport service it is important that the Council considers and benchmarks against other authorities.
- 5.7 An indication of bus patronage trips and ticket prices are outlined in tables 1 and 2 below, however this will be explored further as part of the BSIP to understand affordability and value for money. Please note that direct comparison between other cities is difficult due to bus network coverage.

Table 1 - Bus patronage comparison with other authorities

City/town	Annual Bus trips total ¹	Population	Annual trips per head ²
Portsmouth	12m	238,137	50.4
Bournemouth	18.5m	183,491	78.1
Brighton & Hove	48.6m	229,700	167.2
Plymouth	18.8m	256,384	68.1
Southampton	20.3m	253,651	80.5

Table 2 - Bus pricing comparisons with other authorities

City/town	Day Ticket ³	Weekly ³
Portsmouth SolentGo	£5	£20
First Portsmouth	£4.50	£18
Stagecoach	£4.30	£16.90
Bournemouth	£4.40	£19
Brighton & Hove	£5.20	£21.60
Plymouth	£4.70	£15
Southampton SolentGo	£5	£20
Bluestar	£3.40	£15.50



City Red (First Southampton)	£3.50	£9
Brighton & Hove Bus 60 minute ticket	£2.60 (60 minute ticket)	

1. *Populations: 2011 Census*
2. *Passenger figures from Department for Transport tables BUS0109/0110 or bus operators*
3. *Ticket prices are generally cash fares from operators' websites as at 15.06.21 SolentGo is an all operator ticket, the others are company specific.*

6. Timescales

- 6.1 Local authorities and bus operators are required to meet tight timescale if the funding is to be secured.
- 6.1.1. 30 June 2021 - all Local Transport Areas (LTAs) are expected to commit to establishing Enhanced Partnerships across their entire areas, and all operators to co-operate with the LTA throughout the process. (Some LTAs may wish this to be a first step towards franchising.) LTAs may also join together to produce joint plans and partnership or franchising arrangements and should look to do so where local economies and travel to work areas overlap significantly.
- Portsmouth's geography, population density and demography with over 60% of bus trips staying within the city would suit a city-only EP with a separate agreement for cross boundary services.
- 6.1.2. 31 October 2021 - all LTAs must publish a local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which sets out how they will use their Enhanced Partnership or franchising scheme to deliver an ambitious vision for travel by bus, meeting the goals and expectations in this strategy and driven by what passengers and would-be passengers want in their area.
- 6.1.3 April 2022 - delivery of Enhanced Partnerships commences.

7. Reasons for recommendations

- 7.1 Buses are recognised as the easiest, cheapest and quickest way to improve transport, reduce pollution and deliver zero carbon, make more efficient use of the limited road space available and support improvements across a range of health, community and economic goals.
- 7.2 Buses must offer a better customer proposition if passengers and potential passengers are to be attracted on to the bus, as Covid-19 measures are relaxed, and if our roads are not to be congested through even greater reliance on the private car. The NBS looks at fares, services frequencies, evening and



Sunday timetables and delays to services. Importantly it is about what buses can deliver across the range of Council and community priorities.

- 7.3 The City Council is well-placed to take advantage of the new funding with a well-established partnership and developing South East Hampshire Bus Rapid Transit (SEHRT) scheme which shares the priorities of the NBS. NBS states that Bus Service Improvement Plans should include co-design through engagement with community stakeholders and local businesses. The Residents' Consortium and SEHRT Customer Panel put us in a good place for this but much work must be done in a limited timescale as outlined in section 4 of this report.
- 7.4 The £1bn of public funding has been provide to bus operators by government, since Covid-19 began. The further funding required and the traffic management improvements that operators have asked for to beat congestion, will only be delivered if operators work in partnership with local authorities to deliver the policies in the NBS.
- 7.5 The Enhanced Partnership will set out how the National Bus Strategy will be delivered with measurable targets and six monthly reports. Performance against agreed targets will affect future funding for NBS and other transport schemes.
- 7.6 Statutory traffic management guidance will be updated to make promoting bus reliability an integral part of highway authorities' Network Management Duty.
- 7.7 The remaining elements of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 – which allow local authorities to enforce moving traffic offences – will be commenced this year.
- 7.8 Local Transport Authorities are given new powers but also new responsibilities and are required to agree and deliver on targets which affect the award of NBS and other transport scheme funding.
- 7.9 The £3bn includes current discretionary funding such as the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) which will only continue to be paid after 30 June 2021 if the LTA and operators have committed to an Enhanced Partnership, apart from exceptional circumstances.
- 7.10 The £3bn transformation funding will cover existing Covid-19 bus service support until April 2022, not concessionary fares, a separate fund for 4,000 new zero emission buses and revenue or capital support for approved BSIPs after April 2022.

8. Integrated impact assessment

An Integrated Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.



9. Legal implications

- 9.1 The report describes the current national strategic policy background in relation to bus services and in particular the legislative framework for enhanced bus service partnership plans and schemes.
- 9.2 The statutory basis and requirements in relation to enhanced partnership plans and schemes are set out in Sections 138A to 138S of the Transport Act 2000 (inserted by Section 9 of the Bus Services Act 2017) and regulations made under those sections.
- 9.3 Under Section 138R of the Transport Act 2000 the Council, in exercising its functions as a Local transport Authority in relation to enhanced partnerships and schemes, has a statutory duty to have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9.4 By the end of June 2021, to be eligible for continued access to COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) the Council must have published a statutory notice that it intends to prepare an enhanced partnership plan and schemes. Such notice may be in accordance with the DfT model at Appendix A and must be published in accordance with the requirements of Section 138F(1)(a) of the Transport Act 2000.
- 9.5 Section 138F(1)(a) of the Transport Act 2000 provides that the Council must give notice of their intention to prepare a plan and scheme "*in such manner as they consider appropriate for bringing it to the attention of persons in their area*".

10. Director of Finance's comments

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report to the Council's current budgets.
- 10.2 The Department of Transport has awarded Portsmouth City Council a revenue grant of £100k to support the development of local bus proposals as outlined in the National Bus Strategy and in particular to help the development of the Enhanced Partnership Schemes.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Department for Transport Enhanced Partnership Template:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Bus Back Better - National Bus Strategy	Bus back better - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Bus Service Improvement Plan: guidance to local authorities and bus operators	Bus service improvement plans: guidance to local authorities and bus operators (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

Appendix A: Department for Transport Enhanced Partnership Template:

MODEL EP NOTICE

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes [Date]

At its meeting on [date], [Name of LTA] gave approval to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership.

The commencement of this is confirmed through this notice of the intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and accompanying Enhanced Partnership Schemes, as required and set out in section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.