

Title of meeting: Cabinet Meeting

Date of meeting: 26 October 2021

Subject: National Bus Strategy - Bus Service Improvement Plan

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 submit the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), 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 the Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), for submission to the Department for Transport by 31 October 2021;**
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation in consultation with the Director of Regeneration and the Section 151 Officer to agree any minor amendments to the Bus Service Improvement Plan that may be required to take account of future funding changes and policy announcements;**
- 2.3 Notes that the Bus Service Improvement Plan will be monitored through the Enhanced Partnership Executive Board.**

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 (LTA) 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) which sets out the detail.

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/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90421/bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators.pdf)

4. Enhanced Partnerships

4.1 Cabinet agreed on 22 June 2021 to establish an Enhanced Partnership for Portsmouth. The Cabinet Report can be found here: <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s31068/National%20Bus%20Strategy%20enhanced%20partnership%20for%20Portsmouth.pdf>

4.2 This establishment of an Enhanced Partnership is 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) would have risked current and future Government funding awards.

5. Bus Service Improvement Plans

- 5.1 Portsmouth City Council has worked collaboratively with our bus operator partners to develop a Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP has been informed by a city wide survey with over 1,100 responses from residents, 32 responses from business and a series of in depth interviews with user groups, key stakeholders including health and social care and local businesses, so that the BSIP reflects local priorities for the bus. The survey report is summarised in section 7 of this report, and included at appendix A.
- 5.2 The BSIP sets out how the LTA and operators will use their EP to deliver 'an ambitious vision for travel by bus'. It covers all routes included within the LTA area and focuses 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 through the Enhanced Partnership Executive Board.
- 5.3 Each BSIP will influence the share of the £3bn each LTA receives and the BSIP is effectively a bidding document.
- 5.4 The Portsmouth BSIP follows national guidance and is informed by residents' priorities:
- Reduce average journey time by bus by 10% compared to average journey time by car by March 2025 (20% on SEHRT designated routes).
 - Improve punctuality with 95% of buses running on time - from 85%.
 - Increase bus use by 6% a year to March 2023, 8% a year to March 2024 and 10% a year to March 2025 with later targets to be agreed in 2025.
 - Set a customer satisfaction target of 95% by March 2025 with 58% being very satisfied, an increase of 10%.
 - Increase evening frequencies on core routes to every 20 minutes with last journeys at 2300 and at 0100 on Friday and Saturday evenings. Earlier journeys from 0430 on core routes with services running on Christmas Day for workers and those visiting family at home or in hospital.
 - Introduce Tap on Tap Off bank card payment on all buses like that on London Underground so that passengers only pay for the journeys they make but get their fares capped at daily and weekly limits with a best price guarantee.
 - Extend the established all operator Solent Go ticket range to include evening tickets, family tickets and 60 minute hopper tickets valid on both First and Stagecoach buses. Use Solent Go to develop discounts for young persons, jobseekers and hard to reach groups.
 - Identify where priority measures are needed, including bus lanes, traffic signal priority and increased enforcement, 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
- Improve information at every bus stop with network and fares information, a programme for RTI at more stops provide a better waiting environment and safe walking routes to the busiest bus stops.
- We are undertaking a demand and gap analysis to consider how a coherent and integrated network should serve key travel generators.
- Establish a Bus Passenger Charter to set standards, contact details and provide redress when things go wrong.
- Set up an Enhanced Partnership Executive Board to ensure standards and redress.

6. Timescales

- 6.1 Local authorities and bus operators are required to meet a tight timescale if the funding is to be secured.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3 April 2022 - delivery of Enhanced Partnerships commences.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1 Portsmouth City Council has conducted its own research into the views of members of the public and businesses regarding the bus network within Portsmouth, specifically:
- To understand the strengths and weaknesses of local bus travel
 - Identify the key areas to prioritise in the long and short-term
 - To measure satisfaction levels of bus users
- 7.2 As a result of the BSIP consultation survey, Portsmouth City Council found that:
- Both users and non-users identified areas for improvement.
 - Users are far more satisfied than non-users (37% compared to 7%) who are more likely to give a neutral rating of 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied'; and
 - Respondents with a disability (who are using the bus more frequently) are more satisfied than those with no disability.

- 7.3 Key reasons for being satisfied with bus services include frequency and route coverage; cost of travel is cited by 21% of respondents for being unsatisfied. More commentary is provided at Section 6-12 of appendix 1.
- 7.4 Portsmouth City Council will also be undertaking targeted focus groups, following the BSIP consultation. These will go into greater depth following the consultation results and the findings will be reported into the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Executive Board.

8. Reasons for recommendations

- 8.1 If improvements and efficiencies are made to the bus network, this will create improvements to the overall transport system, including reductions in 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.
- 8.2 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 Portsmouth BSIP highlights that fares, services frequencies, evening and Sunday timetables and delays to services must be addressed.
- 8.3 The aspirations of the National Bus Strategy, for which the Bus service Improvement Plan forms the detailed local implementation plan, closely mirrors the aims of the South East Hampshire Rapid Transit scheme and the established partnership that Portsmouth City Council has with neighbouring authorities and local bus operators.
- 8.4 The Portsmouth BSIP provides an opportunity to work closely with local bus operators and the local community to access Government funding to improve local bus services. Building on the Council's past successes and making a significant uplift in the attractiveness of bus services and their ability to reach new users, this BSIP has the opportunity to provide a real alternative to the private car.
- 8.5 The Portsmouth BSIP supports Portsmouth City Council's Imagine Portsmouth, which sets out a new city vision for Portsmouth's future by 2040. The Portsmouth BSIP would respond to the outcomes of the Imagine Portsmouth work, particularly about creating a city with easy travel and creating a green city. The BSIP also supports the draft Portsmouth Transport Strategy as our Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), and its vision.
- 8.5 As set out in the National Bus Strategy guidance, it is a requirement for LTAs to report and publish progress against the BSIP targets every six-months. In order

to do this, a robust governance structure has been developed for the Portsmouth BSIP.

- 8.6 The BSIP will be reviewed quarterly through the National Bus Strategy Executive Board. This is a joint board comprising PCC and the main bus operators in the city Stagecoach South and First Solent. The role of the board will be to monitor the performance indicators against targets and prioritise the work to deliver against the Portsmouth BSIP objectives. Section 5 of the BSIP document (appendix 2) sets out the governance of the National Bus Strategy for Portsmouth.

9. Integrated impact assessment

- 9.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been undertaken as part of the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and is attached in appendix 3 of this report.

- 9.2 Within the IIA, this strategy impacts positively on the following sections:

Section A - Communities and Safety

A1 - Crime

A3 - Health

A4 - Income deprivation and poverty

A5 - Equality and diversity

Section B - Environment and climate change

B1 - Carbon emissions

B5 - Air Quality

B6 - Transport

Section C - Regeneration of our city

C1 - Culture and heritage

C2 - Employment and opportunities

C3 - Economy

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The preparation of the BSIP is one of the first steps towards establishing an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme under the Transport Act 2000.
- 10.2 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.

- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 At the Cabinet meeting on 22 June 2021, Portsmouth City Council decided to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership. As a result, a 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, has been published.
- 10.5 Enhanced partnerships will be legal agreements between the Council and bus operators and appropriate legal advice shall be sought in advance. In addition, enhanced partnerships will be subject to subsidy control and also competition law rules.
- 11. Director of Finance's comments**
- 11.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of approving the recommendations within the report.
- 11.2 In order for the Council to unlock additional funding, along with its Enhanced Partnership agreement with local bus operators a Bus Service Improvement Strategy needs to be agreed and published.
- 11.3 The Council have put together a list of interventions to deliver this strategy and have estimated the value of what this could cost over the next 3 years. The bid is in the region of £120m with a mixture of Capital and Revenue expenditure.
- 11.4 By submitting the bid the Council are not committing any of its own money in match funding, but as the schemes become more mature the Council may provide match funding both in the principle and from third parties, this will be worked up over the coming months.
- 11.5 As mentioned in the main body of the report there are a number of interventions that could come from this new plan but as yet they have not been fully costed and the current expression of interest assumes that all of the funding will come from the DfT.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Portsmouth BSIP online public consultation report
[Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan Consultation 2021 \(BSIP\) - Your City, Your Say survey research](#)
Appendix 2: Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan
Appendix 3: Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendices to Appendix 2, Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan

Appendix A - Portsmouth BSIP Baseline Evidence Base
Appendix B – Portsmouth Bus Services map (September 2021)
Appendix C – Solent Regional Transport Model data
Appendix D - Portsmouth Park & Ride route map
[maps ~ Park and Ride Portsmouth ~ the easy way into Portsmouth by car](#)
Appendix E – Portsmouth BSIP online public consultation report
[Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan Consultation 2021 \(BSIP\) - Your City, Your Say survey research](#)
Appendix F – Portsmouth Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 4) 2021-2038
<https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Local-Transport-Plan-2021.pdf>
Appendix G – Portsmouth Transport Strategy Implementation Plan 2022/23-24/25
<https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/74.602-Local-Transport-Plan-4-Implementation-plan.pdf>
Appendix H – Portsmouth Bus Service Improvement Plan intervention list
Appendix I – Portsmouth National Bus Strategy Governance Structure
Appendix J – Terms of Reference for the Portsmouth National Bus Strategy Programme Board
Appendix K – Terms of Reference for the Portsmouth National Bus Strategy Executive Board
Appendix L - Reporting tool template
Appendix M - Programme report template
Appendix N – DfT BSIP Outline Funding Form
Appendix O - Bus operator letters of support

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Signed by: Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration

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

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Signed by: