

Title of meeting: Cabinet Meeting

Date of meeting: 22 March 2022

Subject: National Bus Strategy - Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme

Report by: Tristan Samuels - Director of Regeneration

Report Author: Peter Shelley - Transport Development Manager

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 a Draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme 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 Draft Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, for submission to the Department for Transport by 29 April 2022;**
- 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 Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme that may be required to take account of future funding changes and policy announcements;**
- 2.3 Notes that the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme will be monitored through the Enhanced Partnership Board.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The National Bus Strategy (NBS) was published on 15 March 2021 and sets out a new approach for the provision of bus transport in England outside of London.**

Whilst there are no changes to primary legislation, it does include changes to regulations under the Bus Services Act 2017.

3.2 The Levelling Up White Paper published on 2 February 2022 stated that "The UK Government will fund ambitious plans for bus improvement, enhancing services and reducing fares". Portsmouth was one of just five authorities named though it was said not to be an exhaustive list. A link to the Levelling Up White Paper may be found here: [Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom)

3.3 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

3.4 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 through a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which sets out the detail.

3.5 The DfT guidance which sets out participation, frequency of meetings, function and purpose of the EP can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002507/national-bus-strategy.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 The establishment of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) 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 EP. The submission of the EP plan and EP scheme by 29 April 2022 is the next stage required and sets out the initial ambitions and detail of our proposals for bus services and establishes the governance and meeting arrangements for the EP.
- 4.3 The EP is intended to be a living document which is regularly monitored to ensure that targets are met and updated to reflect developing local priorities.
- 4.4 The EP plan is a high level overview of our ambitions for bus services in Portsmouth and reflects our published BSIP. The EP Scheme sets out the detail as to how these ambitions will be achieved. These are dependent upon Government funding which is yet to be announced.
- 4.5 The EP scheme sets out requirements that local bus services must abide by and actions to be taken by the LTA to deliver 'on the ground' the policies and objectives set out in the EP plan.
- 4.6 The emergence of the Omicron Covid-19 variant and a national shortage of bus drivers have set back the return of passengers to local buses so on 11 January 2022, DfT revised its guidance and timescales to LTAs. Instead of a final EP, a draft EP is now required and the process of operator objection and statutory consultation can be delayed until Government funding is announced. The overall budget is now £1.4 billion which includes funding for zero emission buses such as the current Portsmouth bid with Hampshire County Council.
- 4.7 Until funding awards are announced, no additional measures can be implemented and LTAs are required to submit EPs which:
- Commit the relevant authority to continue providing existing bus priority measures
 - Implement low or no cost improvements including a Bus Passenger Charter and high-quality information for all passengers
 - Are flexible to incorporate further enhancements through variation if funding becomes available.
- 4.8 The proposed Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme for Portsmouth are at Appendix A.

5. **Bus Service Improvement Plans**

- 5.1 The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out the longer-term ambition for the EP. Cabinet agreed a detailed Bus Service Improvement Plan for Portsmouth on 26 October. The Cabinet Report can be found here: <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s34925/BSIP%20Cabinet%20Report%20FINAL%2026Oct21.pdf>
- 5.2 Portsmouth City Council worked collaboratively with our bus operator partners to develop a BSIP for Portsmouth. The BSIP was 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.
- 5.3 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 Board.
- 5.4 The Portsmouth BSIP followed national guidance and was 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 90-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 Board to ensure standards and redress.

5.5 Lower fares were identified as the top priority in the consultation with residents and, subject to Government funding, targeted fares reductions will be prioritised for early introduction from summer 2022. New tickets will be available for use on both First and Stagecoach buses in the city by extending the existing Solent Go ticket range. Discounts will be introduced for young people up to age 19, a 90-minute hopper ticket for any passenger valid on any bus in the city in that time period, family tickets, cheaper tickets for evening travel and discounts for jobseekers and hard to reach groups will be offered together with 'Free Fare Sundays' and 'Small Business Saturdays' to promote bus use for all and support the city economy.

5.6 Implementation of the measures and delivery of the targets is very largely dependent upon the timely receipt of the funding requested from Government

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 29 April 2022 - Draft Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme are to be submitted, and EP commences. This follows the 28-day operator objection period and engagement with statutory consultees.

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.
- 7.4 Portsmouth City Council will also be undertaking targeted focus groups. These will go into greater depth following the consultation results and the findings will be reported into the Enhanced Partnership Board.

8. Reasons for recommendations

- 8.1 This is the third stage of the process set out in the National Bus Strategy to deliver improvements to the bus network for Portsmouth residents, and so will create benefits for the overall transport system, including reductions in pollution and help deliver zero carbon, make more efficient use of the finite road space available and support improvements across a range of health, community and economic goals.
- 8.2 The Portsmouth EP 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, the EP offers the opportunity to provide a real alternative to the private car.
- 8.3 The Portsmouth EP supports Portsmouth City Council's Imagine Portsmouth, which sets out a new city vision for Portsmouth's future by 2040. The Portsmouth EP will respond to the outcomes of the Imagine Portsmouth work, particularly about creating a city with easy travel and creating a green city. The EP also supports the draft Portsmouth Transport Strategy as our Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), and its vision.
- 8.4 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 EP.
- 8.5 The BSIP will be reviewed quarterly through the Enhanced Partnership Board. This will be 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.

9. Integrated impact assessment

9.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) was undertaken as part of the development of the BSIP which sets out the strategic aims for the EP and is attached in Appendix B 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 EP is the final step 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 An Enhanced Partnership will be a legal agreement between the Council and bus operators and appropriate legal advice has been taken. 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 The Improvement Strategy along with the Enhanced Partnership agreement with local bus operators will be the tool to unlock additional funding from Department of Transport to fund interventions to deliver improvements to bus services across the City.

11.3 Once the source of funding is confirmed then the interventions mentioned in the report can be fully costed to ensure they are affordable and will not impact on the Council's budgets.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme

Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment

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) |
| Enhanced Partnerships: guidance to local authorities and bus operators | Enhanced Partnership Guidance DfT |

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

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Signed by: