

Title of meeting: Cabinet Meeting

Date of meeting: 11 February 2025

Subject: Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership - Forward Plan

Report by: Felicity Tidbury, Assistant Director, Transport

Report Author: Paul Walker, Head of Passenger Transport

Wards affected: All

Key decision: Yes

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the progress of the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership and to seek approval for the Forward Plan.
- 1.2 To accept additional Department of Transport (DfT) funding for the 2025/2026 financial year comprising of £2,218,898 Capital, £2,487,250 revenue (including £63,000 capacity and capability funding) plus Local Authority Bus Service Operators Grant: £84,784.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 **Notes the progress of the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership and Scheme;**
- 2.2 **Approves the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Forward Plan;**
- 2.3 **Accepts additional DfT Funding for the 2025/2026 financial year as set out in paragraph 5.2;**
- 2.4 **Delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Transport to make minor amendments to the plan in consultation with the Enhanced Partnership Board and Cabinet Member for Transport.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In March 2021, the Government announced a new National Bus Strategy. As part of this, and to receive future transport funding, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs), such as Portsmouth, had to publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and form an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with bus operators to deliver the desired and stated improvements. The EP places responsibilities on both the LTA and the bus operators. The BSIP is the delivery programme for the EP.
- 3.2 In April 2022, Portsmouth City Council was notified of an indicative award of funding to deliver measures outlined in our BSIP. Although not the full amount bid for, it was one of the highest allocations in the country. The initial allocation was for £48.3 million over 3 years (April 2022 - March 2025) split between £33.8 million for capital measures and £14.5 million for revenue interventions.
- 3.3 Cabinet approved the Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership and Scheme (EP) on 21 June 2022. Formal confirmation of the BSIP award was agreed by the Department for Transport on 8 August 2022. Following a statutory consultation period, the EP was formally 'made' (implemented) on 8 December 2022 following approval by the Cabinet Member for Transport.
- 3.4 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 around creating a city with easy travel and creating a green city.
- 3.5 The Portsmouth EP as well as other external funding received by Portsmouth City Council including the Zero Emission Buses Regional Area Grant (ZEBRA) and Transforming Cities Funding all support and help to transform bus travel, which is a key objective of the Portsmouth Local Transport Plan 4¹. These all aim to increase the number of people using the bus to above pre pandemic levels, by creating faster and more reliable bus routes and making bus tickets more affordable.
- 3.6 On 12 January 2023, the first Enhanced Partnership Board meeting was held, and subsequently two meetings per year take place as per the constitution. The Chair is the Cabinet Member for Transport. The Board includes the Managing Directors of city bus operators First Solent and Stagecoach South with representatives from neighbouring LTAs. This reflects the key role of cross boundary services and the importance of access for residents in the wider travel to work area being able to access the city as an economic hub for leisure, employment and education.

¹ [Local Transport Plan 4 \(LTP4\) - Portsmouth City Council](#)



- 3.7 Meetings are held twice a year of the Programme Board which involves the bus operators in delivery and the Stakeholder Board which involves wider interest groups and other transport and infrastructure providers.
- 3.8 The success of the BSIP award was due to the close involvement of the Cabinet and Council Members, a process of co-design with local bus operators based on many years of effective partnership working and the engagement with over 1,100 residents and over 30 businesses so that the bid reflected local needs and priorities.
- 3.9 In early 2024, the DfT mandated LTAs to refresh and update their BSIPs, in particular the key themes for the 2024 BSIPs were:-
- a. Updating the baseline to 2023/24: updating the 2021 BSIP's account of the current situation to reflect all developments since 2021, including evolution of the local bus market post-pandemic and its issues and opportunities;
 - b. Setting out the improvement programme in financial year 2024/25;
 - c. Getting ready for 2025 and beyond: refreshing the plan's ambition and content to set out a high quality and flexible pipeline of prioritised proposals for the four years 2025/26 to 2028/29, as well as the BSIP's overall 10 year plus vision.
- 3.10 The 2024 BSIP was submitted in the summer and sets out the overall plan beyond the current funding period.

4. Bus Service Improvement Plan Delivery to Date

- 4.1 The report to Cabinet on 9th January 2024 outlined the first full year of BSIP funding. This included new early morning journeys on the busiest routes from 4.30am to improve access to employment on First Solent routes 1,2,3,7,8 as well as Stagecoach routes 21 and 23 from January 2023. Ticketing initiatives for 16-19, group, evening and 90-minute hopper tickets were also introduced giving an increased range of value options - the latter three being inter-operable between the city's operators. In addition, Tap on Tap off ticketing (TOTO) was introduced on First Solent bus routes in Portsmouth in November 2023. Passengers in September 2023 and 2024 also enjoyed free travel on Saturdays and Sundays as part of the free fare weekends programme as well as small business Saturday to drive trial use, especially amongst lapsed and non-bus users.
- 4.2 Work during 2024 has include fitting Quick Response (QR) codes to Stagecoach buses to interact with TOTO machines on First to enable multi-operator acceptance. Both operators have equipped their fleets with new next stop Audio Visual Next Stop announcements which show next stop, future stops and information on rail departures to improve multi-modal connectivity - work will continue in 2025 to add ferry, hover and bike rental & e-scooter information.



- 4.3 During the early part of 2024 the capital highway programme elements of delivery were re-profiled following the Heatmapping project undertaken in late 2023. This project used over 7 million data sets to highlight where delays on the network occurred post covid to sense check and re-align the programme. Initial design and consultation on these proposals are underway and the schemes are scheduled to be complete by March 2026 to help improve overall bus journey reliability and reduce journey times. The schemes and programme are included in the overall programme in Appendix A.
- 4.4 Work has been on-going to programme and deliver a variety of bus stop improvements including a 70-point check of each of the 572 bus stops in the city. This will lead to improvements at stop, new bus stop flags and better roadside information during 2025. In addition, during the early winter of 2024 Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) was rolled out to a further 274 stops giving 90% coverage of the city.
- 4.5 The initial early morning and late evening services were reviewed with operators at the end of 2023. Of those new journeys 13% were deemed to be commercial from January 2024 and no longer funded by BSIP. This enabled further new journeys to be funded (including Sunday evening 700 journeys) as well as existing non-commercial early and late journeys. The limit of demand for early services at this time may have been reached with only 4% of journeys deemed commercial for 2025 following an open-book exercise with operators.
- 4.6 As the previous year services operated on key routes on Christmas Day and Boxing Day 2024, with the first Christmas Day service on route 18 and service 7 extended along the whole route.
- 4.7 During 2024, the BSIP-funded timetable improvements have seen improved frequencies on routes 1,3, 7, 8, 13,14 & 18 with improvements including improved evening and weekend timetables. In addition, 24-hour services were introduced on the 2 and 23 through the enhanced services project meaning many residents are within a reasonable distance of an all-night service. The improvements have been co-designed with the local bus operators to run with reducing funding until March 2026 and will continue on a commercial basis until at least December 2026 by which time passenger usage should have increased sufficiently to make many of the journeys commercially sustainable on a long-term basis.
- 4.8 Subject to final confirmation with operators, from the end of March 2025 service 18 will be extended from Palmerston Road to Clarence Pier and see a frequency uplift Monday to Saturday daytime from 30 to 20 minutes. From the same time a new service 26 will start to operate hourly Monday-Saturday between Havant, Farlington, Anchorage Park, Burrfields Road and the City Centre although there will be changes to commercial service 21 alongside this to improve viability. As with the initial round of Enhanced Services, the operator will be funded until

March 2026 but has agreed to operate this commercially until at least until December 26.

- 4.9 Other programme highlights over the year include increasing the number of bus lanes surfaced red and the easy access fund targeting ticketing products at subsidised prices to seldom heard from groups. Targeted Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) enforcement has taken place both at the roadside as well as CEOs travelling on buses to deal with contravention hot-spots in partnership with operators. Tow away and bus lane enforcement cameras have also been expanded over the year.
- 4.10 Alongside these initiatives there has been considerable marketing effort to promote the new services, tickets, highway schemes and other parts to the programme as well as developing a refreshed and consistent "Portsmouth Buses" branding which will be appearing at all stops in 2025 regardless of operator .
- 4.11 The additional funding for 2025/2026 has led to additional highway elements of bus priority added to the programme, including to support park and ride peak time reliability improvements & further real time improvements as well as the revenue programme of service support and ticketing. This is also shown in Appendix A.
- 4.12 Portsmouth introduced a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in November 2021 and has 5 Air Quality Management Areas. PCC were successful in bidding for the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) in March 2022. Whilst this is not part of the BSIP programme, it is complementary and part of the National Bus Strategy, which has delivered 62 electric buses to Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport between April and July 2024 stimulating plans for an all-electric bus depot in Portsmouth.
- 4.13 The Council has funded a number of other pro-public transport measures to complement the BSIP programme. The has included the re-tendering and rebranding of the Park & Ride from September 2024 which is complementary to the Portsmouth Buses Branding with newer re-branded buses coming into operation in early January 2025.
- 4.14 The programme has started to show benefits in overall bus passengers with a comparison between local transport authorities by the Department for Transport for the year to March 2023 showing Portsmouth as the city with the best recovery to pre-Covid levels although we are still slightly short of pre-covid travel overall (11,039,011 year to March 2024 compared to 12,034,835 year to March 2020) but well on target to meet 100% of pre-covid passengers by March 2025.
- 4.15 Passenger satisfaction is very good, with an independent Transport Focus Survey showing overall satisfaction at 84% (compared to all England of 80%),



punctuality at 78% (70%) length of time waiting for a bus at 75% (68%). In addition, Stagecoach in Portsmouth has been named as the best in England for customer satisfaction with the same survey giving a passenger satisfaction score of 91%.

- 4.16 The work of the partnership has been recognised nationally by an invite to present at a Transport Focus event in the House of Commons, noted as best practice by the Confederation of Passenger Transport as well as hosting the DfT BSIP team to look initiatives taking place in the city. The work of the partnership has also been recognised by winning the Gold Award for Partnership & Highly Commended for increased passenger growth at the UK Bus Awards in November 2024 showing the high regard of the programme amongst peers and the industry.

5. Additional Funding & Next Steps

- 5.1 The initial horizon date for BSIP funding was March 2025 although this has been extended to March 2026 for the Enhanced Services and Capital Delivery elements of the Programme. Remaining revenue elements of the 2023-2026 allocation are largely expected to be spent by March 2025 and we are working with operator partners, DfT and others to ensure successful delivery of the overall revenue programme beyond this date.
- 5.2 In November 2024 the DfT confirmed an additional allocation for BSIP for the 2025/2026 financial year. Unlike the initial, competition based BSIP, the DfT are moving from competition to formula allocations – funding is based on a methodology of population, tendered bus mileage and deprivation. The total amount that Portsmouth will receive is £4,792,932 which is made up of:
- a) BSIP Capital Funding: £2,218,898;
 - b) BSIP Revenue Funding: £2,426,250;
 - c) BSIP Capacity and Capability: £63,000;
 - d) Local Authority Bus Service Operators Grant: £84,784.
- 5.3 The detailed BSIP developments will be provided as an appendix to the EP and approved by the EP Partnership Board.

6. Reasons for recommendations

- 6.1 The Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership and Scheme are living documents, and the proposed changes reflect residents' priorities and continuous engagement with partners and the Department for Transport. All funding is within the existing BSIP programme and objectives.
- 6.2 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.

- 6.3 The Portsmouth EP as well as other external funding received by Portsmouth City Council including the Zero Emission Buses Regional Area Grant (ZEBRA) and Transforming Cities Funding all support and help to transform bus travel, which is a key objective of the Portsmouth Local Transport Plan 4².

7. Integrated impact assessment

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is included as appendix B of this report.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The proposed changes to the Enhanced Partnership Scheme as set out in this report fall within section 3.7.1 of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme:

'3.7.1. Once the Scheme is made, it will be reviewed by the PB every six months following publication of data on progress towards targets, as required by the BSIP – this will ensure any necessary action is taken to deliver the targets set out in the BSIP. Portsmouth City Council will initiate each review.'

- 8.2 In accordance with section 138E of the Transport Act 2000 and section 3.8 of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations where this section is quoted are subject to bespoke voting mechanism set out in the terms of reference of the Programme Board and Enhanced Partnership Board and the final approval by Portsmouth City Council (other than the variations to the Obligations of Bus Operators (Section 4 of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme)). Therefore, any such changes must follow the governance procedures of the Enhanced Partnership and subsequently the governance procedures of Portsmouth City Council.
- 8.3 If the changes proposed in this report are approved, then the Council will also need to follow other statutory requirements, including but not limited to public procurement rules (including the Council's internal contract procedure rules), subsidy control rules and competition rules. Legal and Procurement advice should be sought before implementing such changes to ensure that the Council always complies with the applicable laws and regulations. The Council will also need to ensure that it has entered into appropriate contract documentation in relation to the spending of the additional funding.

² [Local Transport Plan 4 \(LTP4\) - Portsmouth City Council](#)

9. Director of Finance's comments

- 9.1 The Bus Service Improvement Plan was approved as item 47 of the Transport Portfolio Capital Programme by Full Council on 28th February 2023.
- 9.2 The financial implications of the recommendations outlined in this report have been approved by the Department of Transport via a Project Adjustment Request (PAR2).
- 9.3 Total BSIP grant funding remains at £48.3m, however the split between Capital and Revenue funding has been revised to £14.5m revenue (RDEL) and £33.8m capital (CDEL). An extension has been granted to allow expenditure in the 2025/26 financial year from the DfT for the Capital and Enhanced Services Programme. The new funding highlighted at paragraph 5.2 will be added to this allocation.
- 9.4 Current programme spend until November 2024 was £3.6m (remaining £9.4m) for revenue and capital expenditure is at £2.5m (remaining 32.8m). The relatively low capital spend reflects the ramping up of delivery in early 2025 in terms of on-highway works and does not reflect out-turns from delivery of RTPIT for example in December 2024 and January 2025.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Appendix A - Bus Service Improvement Plan updated programme

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 Service Improvement Plan 7 March 2023	Bus Service Improvement Plan 7 March 2023
Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme 21 June 2022	Portsmouth Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme 21 June 2023
National Bus Strategy Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024	National Bus Strategy

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

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Signed by: