

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 2 December 2024

PRESENT – Councillors, Councillor Ashley Whalley (Chair), K Fielding, Khan, Khan Z, Mahmood, Marrow and Patel S.

OFFICERS – Carmel Foster-Devine (Head of Highways), Heather Farmer (Network Manager), Paul Fletcher (Programme Manager), Simon Ross (Head of Finance), Tayyab Mulla (Governance Officer)

RESOLUTIONS

1 **Welcome and Apologies**

The chair had welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Sajid Ali, Stephanie Brookfield, Shaukat Hussain.

2 **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

It was agreed that the Food Waste Collection report would be presented at the next Executive Board.

RESOLVED - The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

No Declaration of Interests were submitted

4 **Bus Service Improvement Plan**

The Committee received a presentation by Carmel Foster-Devine, Head of Highways, regarding the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding following the department securing £3.7 million of funding for capital and revenue improvements to bus service provision across the borough.

Members were advised that as part of the Government's commitment to its National Bus Strategy, additional Bus Service Improvement Plan funding has been secured in a further 2 rounds of awards: –

BSIP+ - £470,171 allocation for both 2023/24 and 2024/25

Phase 3 BSIP - £880,000 for 2024/25.

Both of these allocations were revenue funding and therefore were required to be spent on bus service improvements rather than capital projects.

All schemes and initiatives were required to be approved by the Department of Transport (DfT) and are monitored quarterly by them. Proposals have been drafted in partnership with the DfT and conversations were ongoing with bus

operators through the Enhanced Partnership regarding the delivery of these service improvements.

Bus Lanes and Co-Ordinated Signals

Members were advised that to improve journey time reliability bus priority was being introduced on traffic signals at the following locations;

- Accrington Road / Audley Range
- Bolton Road / Aqueduct Road
- A666 Larkhill / Barbara Castle Way
- King Street / Montague Street
- Lower Audley / Bennington Street
- Yew Tree Drive / Lammack Road
- Audley Range / Queens Park
- Shadsworth / Old Bank Lane
- Townsmoor Gyratory

In addition to this Local Bus Priority loop detection was being used to detect buses approaching the signals. The bus would be given priority by the controller either by extending the green or shortening the previous stage to give green quicker.

To ensure the correct vehicle was being given priority, a special detection loop was used for the buses that can tell the difference between normal vehicles and buses based on their detection profile.

It was noted that all sites would also be upgraded to operate under MOVA control. Upgrading the signals would provide bus priority by default as the signals would operate more efficiently for all road users, especially under MOVA control.

Connectivity and Timetabling

Members were informed that BSIP funding was allocated in two forms, capital for infrastructure improvements and resource for improvements to bus services. The following improvements have been made to bus services -

- Reintroduced the Sunday service on the Service 4 Mill Hill route.
- Increased frequency and coverage of the Service 33 Darwen to Royal Blackburn Hospital by extending through to Blackburn, incorporating previously unserved Audley Range and Shadsworth Industrial Estate.
- To be introduced 16th December 2024 three Blackburn local services, reinstating areas of Blackburn that previously lost services including;
 - M10 - Warrenside Close, Openshaw and Troy Street area.
 - M9 - Griffin estate

- M11 – Albion Mill and Brackendale, onto Tockholes and Belmont, taking in the new developments on Bog Height Road.
 - Incorporated in all these areas are a number of sheltered housing properties, with vulnerable residents that would otherwise struggle accessing public transport.
- Cross boundary services had also been introduced in partnership with LCC;
- Service 2 to Chorley increased from 60 to 30 minutes frequency.
 - Service 22 to Clitheroe increased evening journeys with three additional journeys.
 - Service 152 to Burnley increased operational hours to 11:00pm on all weekdays, rather than just Friday and Saturday.

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Ticketing and Patronage

Members were advised that the BSIP Programme was a joint initiative with Lancashire County Council, therefore all patronage figures were for the Lancashire area as a whole, rather than just BwD.

It was noted that 21 million bus journeys were carried out in Lancashire in first half of 2024/25. This was a 10% increase compared to first half of 2023/24. The effect this had on BSIP was that contracted services saw 3.1% increase Q1 to Q2 2024/25.

Furthermore, it was highlighted that Transdev were operating the £1 fare after 7pm following Covid 19 pandemic to increase bus patronage. LCC adopted this on their services under BSIP, which included cross boundary services into Blackburn. 2.6million £1 evening tickets were sold from January 2023 – October 2024

In relation to Multi Operating Ticketing a Tap on Tap off ticketing system was currently being trialled in Blackpool and the Fylde with a view to rolling out Lancashire wide system. However, due to technical issues full Lancashire wide launch has been delayed. There was no current date for BwD or the wider Lancashire area introducing this initiative.

Members of the Committee asked a number of questions and made comments on areas highlighted in the presentation, with Carmel Foster-Devine providing responses. Carmel had informed members that the Council were not falling behind on the Bus Services Improvement Plan in comparison to LCC. In addition to this members were advised that additional bus routes may be reviewed to be upgraded as part of different programs that had been scheduled.

Members were advised by Heather Farmer, Network Manager that all boroughs had explored the option for Private Hire Vehicles to use the bus lane, however had come to the conclusion that it would not be feasible for Private Hire Vehicles to use the bus lane due to number of Private Hire Vehicles within the borough.

The council had also received a Capability Funding of £60,000 which would be used to carry out study's for Bus Service Improvement within the Borough.

This study would explore the gaps that were available as well as taking into account residents views.

In order to address any issues with bus companies, the department had an enhanced partnership with the companies on a regular basis to discuss any issues or improvements required.

It had also been highlighted to members that residents would be notified of the changes being made via the council website, leaflets or posters within local businesses. Upon discussion members had agreed this would reach a lot of residents, however had suggest if some targeted PR could be carried out and released on social media, following the positive feedback from previous videos from the Highways and Street Lighting team.

In addition to this Carmel had advised the committee the importance of carrying of study's to ensure the corrects area's where resident travelling via public transport the most were being targeted. It was noted that to achieve the best outcome for sustainability the council were required to secure multi year settlements. However, committee had come to an agreement that for future Bus Service Improvements, residents views would be a key factor as part of the study's that would be carried out to achieve the best outcome.

RSOLVED – The report was noted

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5 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED - It was agreed the next meeting would be on 3rd March 2025

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed