

Executive Member Decision



REPORT OF: Executive Member for Growth and Development

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Place

DATE: Friday, 22 October 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Growth and Regeneration

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

SUBJECT:

Approval of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approval is sought of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The Government published 'Bus Back Better', a National Bus Strategy (NBS) sets out a bold ambition for what they want to achieve for the bus. Aspirations of the NBS include:

- More frequent buses
- Faster and reliable
- Cheaper
- More comprehensive
- Easier to understand and use
- Greener
- Accessible and inclusive by design
- Innovative and safe mode of transport
- Links to other policies and plans
- Support for LTA's to increase resource to skill up for the future

Two requirements of the strategy are for the Council and its operators and to enter into a statutory 'Enhanced Partnership' (approval of our intent to do this was published in June 2021) and deliver the improvements included within a published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

The BSIP has been developed in collaboration with Lancashire County Council and once approved the document will be published and issued to the Department for Transport by 31st October 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

3. BACKGROUND

Created in collaboration with Lancashire County Council and our bus service providers, Transdev, Moving People, Travel Assist and Blackburn Private Hire the attached BSIP is the first step into delivering on the National Bus Strategy and will be key to delivering on bus priority and improvement measures that will, over time, make public transport the mode of choice in Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen.

Although the Covid-19 crisis has led to many challenges for public transport we now have to look to the future and what we can do locally to "Bus Back Better" and deliver our bus service in new ways and in partnership with all our operators. Our first aim is to grow the market back to pre-pandemic levels of patronage and deliver a more sustainable network, which will lead to further investment.

This plan will deliver a multi-million pound investment in Lancashire's public transport system. We will deliver a strong Inter Urban Bus Network, using Superbus principles, which will provide bus priority measures to help speed up services. We will improve the customers waiting environment, because this is often the first point of contact with the network, and ensure it is accessible for all. Information will be improved and we will move towards providing more real time information across the county.

As well as the Inter Urban Network we intend to improve many other local bus services including evening and Sunday service enhancements and increased frequencies where appropriate. We will build on the tendered network that serves many of our rural towns and villages and we will support the investment in low and zero emission vehicles with operators.

To ensure buses become easier and more attractive to use we will develop multi operator and other ticketing initiatives, provide more comprehensive information and ensure it is available in multiple formats and provide data than can be developed in new ways to help users.

We will investigate new ways of delivering bus services that meet local demands and markets not already served. Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is just one option to consider for those hard to reach areas. We will continue to support our Community Transport services for those less able to access bus services and we will also link with Active Travel for those who wish to walk and cycle as part of their overall journey.

The key theme running through our plan will be people. We must ensure that the services being provided meet local needs therefore we will continue to engage with user groups, and we will establish a Lancashire Passengers Charter.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan will be updated annually to enable us to remain flexible to changes and demands but with the right investment to deliver these changes we will go towards making Lancashire the best place to live, work, visit and prosper.

More detail of what we want to achieve can be seen in the Plan

Our BSIP ask is for £17.9M of investment, over the next 5 years to deliver improvements within the Borough.

Next steps include developing the BSIP into an Enhanced Partnership Plan which will concentrate purely on improvements required in the Borough and will be subject to public consultation and Executive Board approval.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

If the end of October deadline is not met or the Council does not engage with the requirements of this strategy then we will not receive funding from April 2022, when the new funding commences

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The 'Enhanced Partnership' and subsequent Bus Service Improvement Plans will align with the joint Authority (BwD, LCC and Blackpool) Local Transport Plan and any successor documents

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Bus Back Better committed £3Bn investment into public transport with all present funding streams ceasing post April 2022. New funding will be based on the requirements of the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership. Presently funding is received via several different funding streams and in 21/22 we received:

- Bus Service Operators Grant - £65K
- Covid19 Bus Service Support Grant - £19K
- Capacity Funding (to assist with the development of BSIP and Enhanced Partnership) - £159K

It is intended that the BSIP / Enhanced Partnership funding replace all these funding streams into one.

All costs for the Enhanced Partnership and implementation of the improvement plan will be covered by Department for Transport (DfT) funding, with no new or additional budget pressure to the Councils budgets. Infrastructure and projects costs will be bid for and funded from capital grants provided by DfT.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The 'Enhanced Partnership' will require a legal agreement between the Council and all service providers. This agreement and our notice of the intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan will be undertaken in compliance with section 138F of the Transport Act 2000

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Capacity funding received to date from engaging in this process will fund our existing staffs and consultants required to develop and consult on the Enhanced Partnership Plan and to enter into an Enhanced Partnership with our service providers

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Development of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and agreement to have an 'Enhanced Partnership' agreement in place is undertaken in collaboration with all service providers, community transport bodies and other relevant organisations, including neighbouring authorities

The Enhanced Partnership Plan will include a Passenger Charter which will be tied in to ambitions and targets, creating a passenger-centric view and public and stakeholder consultation will be required. Agreement of the Enhanced Partnership Plan will be subject to Executive Board Approval in the new year

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published.

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DATE:	
BACKGROUND PAPER:	