



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Growth and Development
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Environment & Operations
<b>DATE:</b>	Thursday, 8 February 2024

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Environment & Operations
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	Y

**SUBJECT: Bus Service Improvement Plan**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2021 our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was approved securing circa £3.7million of funding for capital and revenue improvements to bus service provision across the Borough.

As part of the Government's commitment to its National Bus Strategy, additional BSIP funding has been secured in a further 2 rounds of awards: –

BSIP+ - £370,171 allocation for both 2023/24 and 2024/25

Phase 3 BSIP - £880,000 for 2024/25.

Both of these allocations are revenue funding and therefore have to be spent on bus service improvements rather than capital projects. All schemes and initiatives have 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 are ongoing with bus operators through the Enhanced Partnership regarding the delivery of these service improvements.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Executive Board:

- Approves the spending of £370,171 grant funds awarded to the Council under BSIP+ in 2023/24 and 2024/25 on the improvements set out below; and,
- Approves the spending of £880,000 grant funds awarded to the Council under Phase 3 BSIP (Network North) in 2024/25 on the improvements set out below; and,
- Approves that, subject to compliance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, any future amendments to the BSIP programme of works are delegated to the Strategic Director of Environment and Operations in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development.

### 3. BACKGROUND

The Government published 'Bus Back Better', a National Bus Strategy (NBS) which sets out a bold ambition for what they want to achieve for public transport. Two requirements of the strategy are for the Council and its operators and to enter into a statutory 'Enhanced Partnership' to continue to receive funding; and deliver the improvements included within the published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

A submission to express our interest to do so was made to the Department for Transport (DfT) in April 2022 and Executive Board approved of our intention to enter into an Enhanced Partnership at the July Executive Board meeting.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan was approved by Executive Member for Growth and Development on 22nd October 2021 and is published on our website. In April 2022 DfT confirmed that we have been successful in our BSIP bid and we were awarded £3,722,320 of revenue and capital funding to improve bus services across the Borough. The programme of works is detailed below for information.

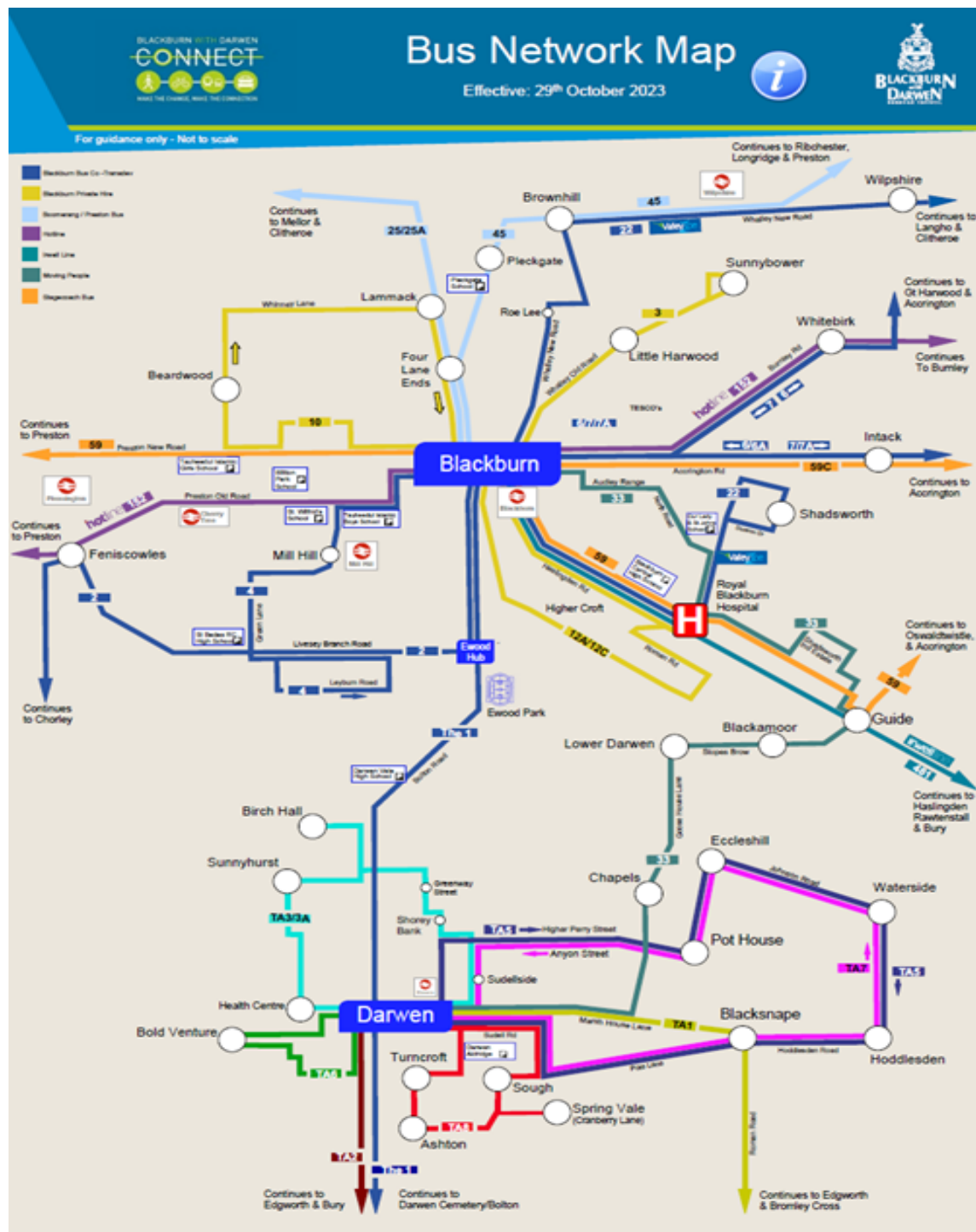
Scheme Type	Location
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Towns Moor Gyratory
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Accorington Road / Audley Range
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Bolton Road / Aqueduct Road
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Larkhill / Barbara Castle Way
Traffic Signal Upgrades	King Street / Montague Street
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Lower Audley Street / Bennington Street
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Yew Tree Drive / Lamack Road
Traffic Signal Upgrades	Audley Range / Queens Park Road
Traffic Signal Upgrades	St Pauls / Montague Street
Bus Stop Upgrades	New bus stops & upgrades supporting local bus network enhancements
Bus Priority Infrastructure	Johnston Street Bus Gate between Higson Street and Montague Street
Bus Priority Infrastructure	Shadsworth Road/Old Bank Lane
Fare Support	Boroughwide - £1 after 7pm initiative
Ticketing Reform	Boroughwide - Tap On-Tap Off Ticketing
Bus Service Support - service frequencies	Routes 2, 4, 22, 12A/C, 981, 33, 15
Totals	

With regard to the bus service support revenue funding, this has been spent on the following bus service improvements –

- Service 33 – Darwen to Hospital extended from 3 times a day to 6 times a day. This service also now extends to Blackburn and takes in Shadsworth and Audley Range.
- Service 22 – Blackburn to Clitheroe extended to run until 11.30pm (we pay for the service up to the Borough boundary)

- Service 2 – Blackburn to Chorley extended to 10.30pm plus 3 additional services.
- Service 4 – Blackburn, Mill Hill, Leyburn Road, re-introduced Sunday service. And extended by 3 journeys in the evening.

These service improvements cost circa £240,000 per annum to deliver. The current bus network map is detailed below -



#### 4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

##### ADDITIONAL FUNDING

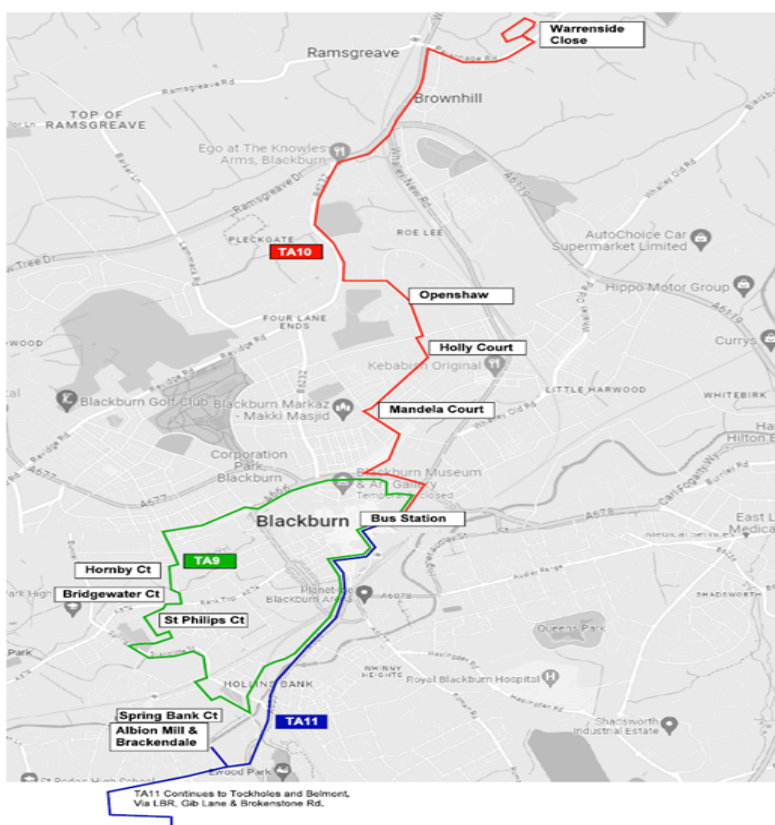
For 2023/24 and 2024/25 we have received, through BSIP+ an additional £370,171 per year for bus service improvements.

For 2024/25 we have also received, through Phase 3 BSIP (Network North) £880,000.

All of the additional funding from BSIP + and Phase 3 BSIP is for bus service improvements and is therefore revenue funding. DfT have confirmed that this funding can be used to fund service improvements up to and including 2025/26.

## PROPOSALS

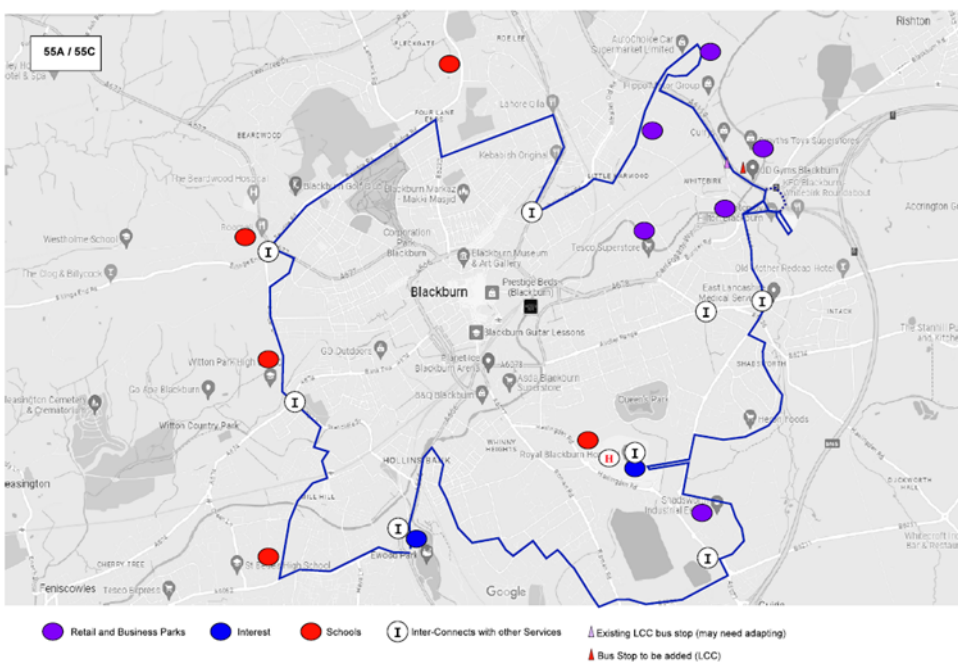
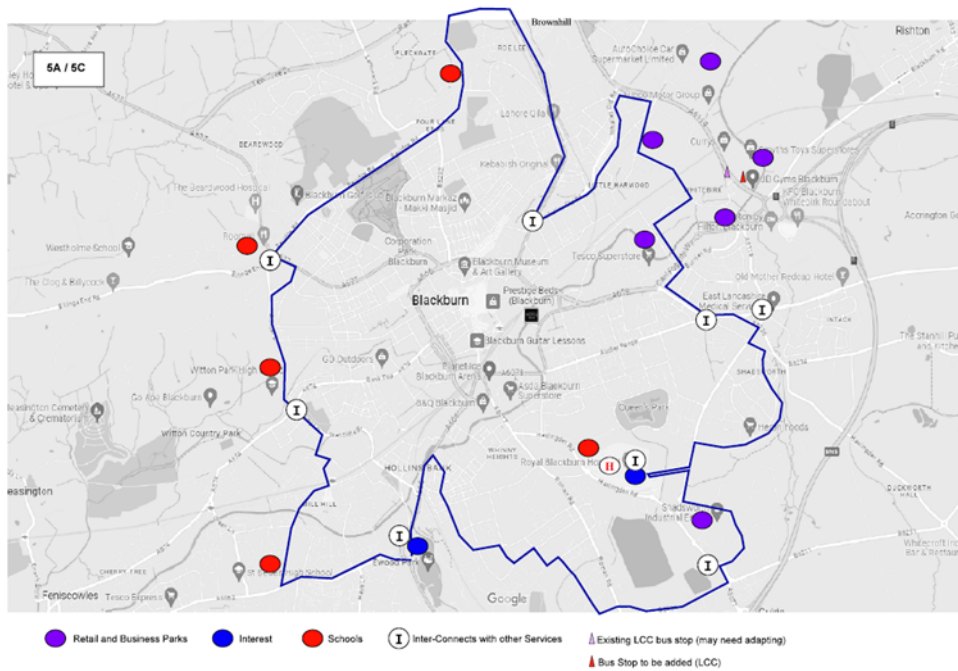
1. Bus service improvements that have been provided from the initial 3 year BSIP allocations need to be funded beyond 2024/25 and therefore £240,000 of the additional funding we have now received needs to be set aside to fund these service improvements in 2025/26.
2. Further service improvements – in 2015/16 services linking sheltered accommodation with Blackburn town centre were removed due to funding being restricted for bus services. Many complaints have been received from residents living in sheltered accommodation about the lack of a bus service provision into Blackburn where they can use their bus pass, (Bus passes can not be used on dial-a-ride services) It is therefore proposed to re-introduce a service linking –
  - Warrenside Close, Openshaw, Holly Court, Mandela Court and Blackburn Bus Station;
  - Hornby Court, Bridgewater Court, St Phillips Court and Blackburn Bus Station;
  - Blackburn Bus Station with Spring Bank Court, Albion Mill & Brackendale, Tockholes & Belmont.



This proposal is currently being worked up in partnership with Travel Assist. It is estimated to cost £50,000 per annum and will operate Monday to Friday.

3. The current bus services that service the Blackburn area are all radial services meaning that journeys across the area require passengers to change at Blackburn Bus Station. It is therefore proposed to reintroduce an orbital service linking into the current network and the

retail/business park at Whitebirk, the Hospital, Ewood Park and high schools, St Bede's, Pleckgate, Witton Park and Tauheedul Girls High School.



This proposal is currently being worked up in partnership with Operators and is estimated to cost in the region of £500k per annum. The service will run Monday to Friday 5.00am to 9.45am and 2.00pm to 7.00pm plus an evening provision; Saturday 6.15am – 7.00pm; and Sunday 7.30am to 4.45pm.

Assuming that both of these proposals are operational for 2024/25 the combined cost will be £550,000 per annum. The cost for 2025/26 will be £550,000 plus £240,000 for the existing service improvements which equates to £790,000. The overall additional cost of funding improvements for 2024/25 and 2025/26 is £1,340,000. In 2026/27 and 2027/28 there is sufficient funding to provide the service improvements that have been established under the original BSIP funding. There will be no funding available to extend the orbital route or the route linking the sheltered accommodation with Blackburn Town centre.

It is however, our understanding that funding for bus service improvements will continue over the coming years and therefore it is anticipated that funding will become available in future years to continue to provide the orbital route and the sheltered accommodation link to Blackburn.

In the view of the Council's public transport team and the bus operators, there is no unmet demand for bus services in and around Darwen. We have discussed this with the DfT, and we have jointly agreed to commission a study into bus service demand in and around Darwen. We will work with the DfT and their consultants, Arup to develop a specification for this piece of work prior to it being tendered and commissioned.

All schemes/initiatives on the BSIP programme have to be approved by the DfT and we are therefore working in partnership with them on the development of this programme, which means that it may be subject to change. It is also reliant on us working closely with bus operators.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None identified – this funding will be used to enhance our bus network across the Borough, reflecting national bus policy and our Enhanced Partnership. All schemes/initiatives proposed directly accord with the Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The overall additional funding available up to 2025/26 is £1.620m of which £1.340m will be used on the services referred to in this report. The balance of funding - £180k – will be used to fund the study into bus service demand in and around Darwen along with any provision should that be considered necessary once the study is concluded.

At this stage, there is no confirmation of funding for these additional services beyond 2025/26 and in the absence of that, provision of these services would be at risk given no capacity for the Council to fund them.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council has a statutory duty under Sections 108 and 109 of the Transport Act 2000 ("the Act") (as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008) as local transport authority to ensure that the Council has up to date policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within their area. Each local transport authority must prepare a document to be known as the local transport plan ("LTP") containing its policies for the purposes above and its proposals for the implementation of those policies. All schemes within the programme will be designed and implemented in accordance with relevant highway, transport, traffic and equality legislation; and will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's constitution, procurement law and; where relevant, any grant conditions.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Resources needed to undertake the work associated with the development and delivery of this programme of works will be provided by the Council's Highways team and supported by the DfT and delivered through the Enhanced Partnership with bus operators.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

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. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

All schemes/initiatives will be the subject of detailed consultations with bus services operators through the Enhanced Partnership, together with other, stakeholders, emergency services and the wider community.

## 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 on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Carmel Foster-Devine</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	5 January 2024
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Executive Board Decision – Blackburn with Darwen Enhanced Bus Partnership 10 June 2022.  Executive Board Decision – Local Transport Plan 23/24 Programme 9 March 2023.
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