

Date of meeting:	12 October 2021
Title of Report:	Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021
Lead Member:	Councillor Jonathan Drear (Cabinet Member for Transport)
Lead Strategic Director:	Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
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Your Reference:	BSIP Cabinet
Key Decision:	Yes
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

### **Purpose of Report**

On 15 March 2021 the Government published the National Bus Strategy for England 'Bus Back Better'<sup>1</sup>. The Strategy sets out an ambitious vision to dramatically improve bus services across England (outside London) to first reverse the long term decline in the number of journeys made by bus and second encourage passengers back to the bus, post the Covid-19 pandemic. It is intended that the Strategy will deliver cheaper, more frequent and more reliable bus services for passengers.

The Strategy requires the establishment of a formal partnership arrangement, led by the City Council, as the Local Transport Authority (LTA), for all local bus services operated within the city boundary. All LTAs outside London are required to enter into a formal partnership arrangement with local bus operators. Entering into a formal partnership is necessary in order for LTAs and bus operators alike to be eligible for any future Government funding. The partnership arrangement could either be a franchise or an Enhanced Partnership<sup>2</sup>.

The City Council approved the development of an Enhanced Partnership with the city's bus operators, and published a Notice of Intent<sup>3</sup> on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

The National Bus Strategy also requires the City Council, as LTA, to lead the preparation of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) by the end of October 2021. The BSIP must set out what the Partnership will deliver in order to make buses easier, cheaper and more convenient to use. The final stage in the process is the publication of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. This must be achieved by 31 March 2022.

Achievement of these deadlines is essential in order to have access to £3bn of discretionary funding for the delivery of the National Bus Strategy.

This report provides a summary of Plymouth's Bus Service Improvement Plan.

### **Recommendations and Reasons**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:-

1. Notes the timescales for completion of the BSIP and the requirement to subsequently publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme.

**Reason:** *To reflect the requirements set out in the National Bus Strategy for England 'Bus Back Better' and to ensure funding is secured for the Plymouth bus network in the future.*

2. Endorses the ambitions of the BSIP and the aspiration to make Plymouth's buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper.

**Reason:** *To meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and to set out clear aspirations for the future Plymouth bus network.*

3. Endorses the thematic proposals of the BSIP as a comprehensive suite of measures which support the policies of the Plymouth Plan and the needs of Plymouth's current and future bus users.

**Reason:** *To meet the specific requirements of the 'National Bus Strategy: Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans using and Enhanced Partnership' guidance.*

4. Endorses the emerging priorities of the BSIP

**Reason:** *To meet the specific requirements of the 'National Bus Strategy: Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans using and Enhanced Partnership' guidance and guide the finalisation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.*

5. Delegates approval of the final BSIP to Cabinet Member for Transport

**Reason:** *To allow the finalisation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan by the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2021, as required by the Department for Transport in order to ensure funding is secured for the Plymouth bus network in the future.*

### **Alternative options considered and rejected**

**Option:** The development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), without presentation to the Cabinet, with approval by Executive Decision.

This option was rejected in order to ensure that the draft Plan is scrutinised, whilst in development, by the Cabinet, to ensure that it responds to the ambitions of the National Bus Strategy and meets the needs of Plymouth's residents, visitors and bus operators.

### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan**

The provision of a comprehensive public transport network supports both Plymouth's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and its sustainable growth, by providing residents with sustainable transport options to access employment, education, healthcare, leisure and retail opportunities.

### **Links to the Corporate Plan:-**

The development of the BSIP supports the city's mission to 'build back better' and make Plymouth a great place to live, work and visit.

As lead for the development of the BSIP we are taking **responsibility** for the improvement of Plymouth's bus services. However, the development of the BSIP is **collaborative**. We are, and will continue, to work closely with Plymouth's public transport providers, to deliver our common ambition of making buses easier, cheaper and more convenient to use.

In the development of this BSIP we are also demonstrating our values of **fairness**, being open and honest about what is required for the BSIP and its development, and **democracy** allowing people to have their say about what is important to them and where they are empowered to make change happen.

### **Our Priorities**

**Unlocking the city's potential** – Plymouth already has a comprehensive bus network. However, delivery of the objectives of the National Bus Strategy, through an Enhanced Partnership, provides an opportunity, in partnership with our operators, to make buses more affordable and more convenient for customers whilst still ensuring they can access the employment, education, medical and leisure facilities they need. This will support the recovery of both the city and public transport and allow both to build back better.

**Caring for people and communities** - Buses provide valuable links to shops, healthcare, employment, education and leisure for those citizens who do not have access to the private car or other modes of transport. Improving the current bus network across the city, in accordance with the National Bus Strategy, will ensure that residents have affordable transport options, reducing the risk of isolation, resulting in improved independence and wellbeing.

### **Links to the Plymouth Plan:-**

Provision of a comprehensive bus network, through the development of the BSIP and subsequent Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, supports the delivery of the strategy set out within the Plymouth Plan and in particular policies HEA6 (Delivering a safe, accessible, sustainable and health enabling transport system) and GRO4 (Using transport investment to drive growth, and commitment to facilitate the use of sustainable transport modes).

The Plymouth Plan seeks to help deliver a transport system that enables and encourages sustainable and active travel choices, provides good accessibility for the city's population to jobs and services, and supports a healthy environment. Through the BSIP we will actively support the Plymouth Plan policy commitments to:-

- HEA6(5) [Deliver] a public transport system that everyone can use, including working with the bus companies to provide easier ticketing, clear journey planning and timetable information, and accessible boarding and alighting across the city.
- HEA6 (6) [Work] with public transport providers to ensure that each neighbourhood is well connected to the city's High Quality Public Transport Network offering good accessibility to key destinations.
- HEA6(9) [Work] with our partners, including the charitable sector, to provide community transport to enable people who cannot use conventional public transport to access health, leisure, shopping and social opportunities within the city and surrounding area.
- HEA6 (10) [Work] with regional partners, agencies and public transport operators to deliver an integrated transport system across all modes covering key locations within and adjoining the Plymouth Travel to Work Area.

The BSIP will also positively support the delivery of the commitments within the Plan to help deliver targeted integrated transport measures to help support the sustainable growth of Plymouth, in accordance with the vision, objectives and policies of the Plymouth and South West Devon [Joint Local Plan](#). Specifically:-

- GRO4 (1) Continuing to support the High Quality Public Transport Network and improve public and sustainable transport services through, where appropriate, subsidies and new infrastructure.
- GRO4 (2) Maintaining, improving and expanding the network of Park & Ride facilities and services, addressing the needs of both Derriford and the City Centre including a new facility at Deep Lane, exploring suitable locations for new facilities and considering the reallocation of space at existing sites.
- GRO4 (3) Continuing to support and develop new and existing local passenger ferry services, by working with stakeholders.
- GRO4 (7) Continuing to support and where feasible expand Community Transport schemes.
- GRO4 (13) Use of smarter choices and travel planning to provide and promote travel choice, through the planning process and
- GRO4 (15) Developing and delivering targeted infrastructure interventions, consistent with the long term vision and objectives for transport set out in the [Joint Local Plan](#).

The BSIP also supports the following policies of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan:- SPT9 (5)5, where it states that the local Planning and Highway Authorities with key stakeholders will deliver: “realistic sustainable transport choices and increasing the integration of transport modes so that people have genuine alternative ways to travel.,” SPT9 (6), which seeks to get the most out of our existing network and encourage behavioural change, SPT9(9) (delivering transport projects which provide a safe and effective transport system) and SPT (10) ‘taking local control of our transport future, embracing localism, generating independent resources to transform transport investment, and embracing changes in travel technology.’

The BSIP is a delivery plan of the Plymouth Plan.

### **Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

The Government has currently made £224,418 available to the Council, through the Bus Capacity Fund, to support the development of the Enhanced Partnership and associated Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Delivery of an Enhanced Partnership will require funding. The Enhanced Partnership must start by the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and the Department for Transport have advised that funding is likely to be available in two tranches; with one tranche being allocated on a formulae basis to Local Transport Authorities and the second tranche, for larger schemes, being competitively awarded.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan is a bidding document. The proposals set out in the Plan must be ambitious. They must demonstrate delivery of the objectives of the National Bus Strategy and a vision for delivering a step-change in bus services through an Enhanced Partnership.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan must also be accompanied by a presentation of funding requirements, including alternative sources of funding available to support delivery of BSIPs such as operator or Local Transport Authority contributions. However, there are no financial commitments on the part of the Government, Council or public transport operators associated with the submission of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the Department for Transport explicitly state that they ‘do not expect BSIPs to provide detailed, definitive costings.’ Furthermore, the National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plans guidance produced by the Department for Transport states that ‘BSIPs will enable the Government to understand the appetite for transformational investments which support the bus sector in the funding period and over the long term (i.e. beyond 2025).’

The indicative ‘ask’ from the Department for Transport for the delivery of the proposals within the draft Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan is circa £118M for the period 2022/23 – 2029/30.

### Financial Risks

The financial implications on existing Council budgets is still to be confirmed. However, the forecast match funding by the Council and third parties (such as developer contributions) is circa £28M, with contributions from the *Productive Plymouth* Transforming Cities Fund 22/23 programme, S106 developer contributions and the Councils core budgets for the provision of non-commercial bus services and the maintenance of bus stop infrastructure. It is not expected that there will be any calls on the Council's revenue budget over and above what is already in the base budget. The potential contribution from Plymouth's bus operators is currently being determined.

Failure to deliver an Enhanced Partnership has the potential for significant, adverse implications, on existing Council budgets if Government funding is unavailable for bus service development and support in the future.

### Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

The aims and objectives of the National Bus Strategy have clear synergies with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and approved 2021 Climate Emergency Action Plan. Through delivery of an enhanced bus network offering cheaper fares, enhanced frequencies, improved reliability and greater convenience this will encourage modal shift away from the private car, thereby reducing carbon emissions. The development of the 2021 and subsequent Bus Service Improvement Plans will enable the City Council to respond to the government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

### Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

No other implications

### Appendices

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
		<i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Bus Service Improvement Plan Briefing Note							
B	Equality Impact Assessment – Formation of an Enhanced Partnership under Section 9 of the Bus Services Act 2017							
C	DRAFT Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, 2021							

### Background papers:

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bus users – focus group report 22/07/2021							
Lapsed bus users – focus group report 26/07/2021							
Non bus users – focus group report 24/07/2021							

**Sign off:**

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Paul Barnard, Service Director for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 04/10/2021											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Jonathan Drean, Cabinet Member for Transport – approved by email Date approved: 06/10/2021											