

Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	13 September 2023
Title of Report:	Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2023
Lead Member:	Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport)
Lead Strategic Director:	Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place)
Author:	Rosemary Starr (Sustainable Transport Manager)
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Your Reference:	BSIP G&IOSC 230913
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report seeks feedback from the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft 2023 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

Bus Service Improvement Plans are required by the 2021 National Bus Strategy.

The Council's current Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was originally approved by Cabinet on 12 October 2021 and subsequently submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT). Plymouth was one of 79 authorities to submit a BSIP, but, unfortunately, was unsuccessful in securing a funding allocation for its delivery. Given the demand, only 31 authorities received either some of all of the funding requested for their BSIPs. However, the BSIP remains a bidding document for future rounds of Government funding for transport.

The DfT provided constructive feedback as to why the Plymouth BSIP was not funded in the first round of BSIP funding. This was predominantly around the use of language within the document, which in places lacked positivity and assertiveness, and the targets not being sufficiently ambitious had the funding been awarded. The DfT stressed that the BSIP would remain the bidding document for future rounds of funding and provided constructive comments around improvements that could be made to maximise Plymouth's chances of receiving future funding.

A refresh of the BSIP was therefore approved by Cabinet in February 2023, with approval to publish the updated Plan being delegated to the Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, in association with the Cabinet Member for Transport.

The vision of the 2023 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan is 'to create a thriving bus network where everyone can be connected to important people and places, by services that are frequent, reliable, fast, affordable, safe and clean, which will also help Plymouth to achieve its net zero goals by 2030'.

It directly responds to the objectives of the Government's National Bus Strategy and is underpinned by the following nine passenger priorities, identified by current, lapsed and non-bus users, along with other key stakeholders, in order to deliver bus services that people need, can be proud of and enjoy using.

1. More **frequent** services, more buses in the evenings and at weekends and more services (on major routes) where you can 'turn up and go' without needing to refer to a timetable
2. More **reliable** services, with **faster** journey times (using bus priority measures such as bus lanes and bus gates)
3. **Affordable** fares that are competitive with travelling by car, cheap multi-operator tickets and contactless payment options on every bus
4. More measures to help people feel **safe**, such as CCTV on buses, emergency help points in bus shelters and improved lighting. Also a commitment to make better use of real time passenger information, QR codes and apps to notify passengers about service disruptions and cancellations while they wait at stops
5. **Cleaner** buses and more enjoyable bus stop environments
6. **Simple** and accurate information at bus stops, online and on smart phone apps, which is easy to read and **understand**
7. New and extended **direct** routes to key areas and locations (such as major employers and leisure destinations); a limit of two timetable changes a year (so passengers can get to know routes and timings better); buses that are **connected** with other sustainable transport (such as trains, ferries and e-bikes); and dial-a-ride vehicles that better support communities on the outskirts of Plymouth
8. **Accessible** services, with more bus stop clearways, adequate space for a wheelchair and audio-visual 'next stop' information on buses and a commitment to customer service training to better support elderly and disabled passengers on all services
9. **Modern** buses that tackle climate change and are attractive, spacious, comfortable and suited to the needs of all passengers, with more buses providing child and family-friendly features such as additional space or fold-up seats to accommodate multiple pushchairs

This report sets out the draft 2023 BSIP, for scrutiny, ahead of the BSIP being completed in October to ensure that the Plymouth BISP means we are well placed to secure future Government funding allocations for improving bus services.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Endorses the draft 2023 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan;

Reason: To meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and ensure that Plymouth is well placed to receive future rounds of Government funding for bus services.

2. Endorses the nine passenger priorities set out within the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2023 as the drivers behind the improvements the BSIP seeks to deliver;

Reason: To provide a clear, evidenced, rationale for the improvement of Plymouth's bus services which meets the needs of current and future bus users.

3. Endorses the measures set out within the Bus Service Improvement Plan as key interventions which support the policies of the Plymouth Plan and, on delivery, will help deliver the identified passenger priorities.

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

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. The development of the 2023 BSIP, without presentation to the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This option was rejected in order to ensure that the updated BSIP is scrutinised, whilst in development, 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 directly supports both the Corporate Plan and Plymouth Plan.

Links to the Corporate Plan:-

The development of the BSIP supports the city's mission to '[make] Plymouth a fairer, greener city where everyone does their bit.'

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 **co-operative**. We are, and will continue, to work closely with Plymouth's public transport providers, to deliver a bus network which helps to make Plymouth a great place to grow up and grow old and helps to minimise the cost of living crisis by providing a good value transport option which connects communities with employment, education, health and leisure opportunities.

In the development of this BSIP we are also demonstrating our values of **fairness**, recognising the vital role buses have as tools of inclusion, for many, and **democracy** allowing people to have their say about what they'd like to see with regard to Plymouth's bus services.

Links to the Plymouth Plan:-

Provision of a comprehensive bus network, through the development of the BSIP and associated 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 implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan are minimal. However, the consequences of not having a fit for purpose Bus Service Improvement Plan are potentially significant.

The development of the BSIP is fully funded from the DfT Bus Capacity Grant which is available to support the development of the Enhanced Partnership and associated Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The delivery of the BSIP places no additional financial demands on the Council. This is because it is an aspirational bidding document to Government. However, delivery of the BSIP is subject to securing additional funding. Failure to produce a high quality BSIP will therefore detrimentally affect Plymouth's ability to secure future Government funding for the improvement of bus services.

The development of the BSIP is resourced by Officers within Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, including a dedicated National Bus Strategy Officer funded by the Bus Capacity Grant. Delivery of the BSIP, in full, will require additional resources, as set out within the Plan. This additional resource would be funded through the BSIP and hence does not represent an additional pressure on the Council.

Financial Risks

There are no financial risks associated with the development and publication of the 2023 BSIP. However, there are significant risks associated with not refreshing the BSIP. This is because the Plan is a bidding document to Government and will influence the allocation of future funding.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Cutting emissions from travel is a top priority for the city. Transport accounted for the largest part of our city's CO₂e emissions in 2019 (29%) and transport as a sector is not decarbonising at the necessary pace to make Plymouth carbon neutral by 2030.

Public transport, particularly buses, plays a key role in the net zero transition. The successful delivery of our ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan is therefore a cornerstone of our city's net zero strategy. The delivery of an enhanced bus network offering cheaper fares, enhanced frequencies, improved reliability and greater convenience will encourage modal shift away from the private car, thereby reducing carbon emissions.

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	BSIP Growth and Infrastructure Briefing Report							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment							
C	Draft 2023 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan – October 2023							

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) <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

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Anthony Payne											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 29/08/2023											
Cabinet Member approval: Approved verbally Date approved: 30/08/2023											