

# Bus Service Improvement Plan

## Briefing Report for Publication



### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plymouth City Council are required to prepare a 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in order to secure BSIP Phase 2 funding, for 2024/25, from the Department for Transport. This requirement is set out in the Department for Transport guidance 'National Bus Strategy: 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plans Guidance to local authorities and bus operators' which was published in January 2024.

The BSIP Phase 2 funding allocated to Plymouth City Council for 2024/ 25 is £816,563. This funding was previously referred to as BSIP Plus funding and the fund, and the approved BSIP Plus programme, are the subject of a separate Executive Decision (SPT09 23/24 - Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus Programme (BSIP+), published on 4 October 2023). Should the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan not be updated by 12 June 2024 there is a risk that the £816,563 of BSIP Phase 2 funding will not be paid to Plymouth, thereby preventing the delivery of measures within the Bus Service Improvement Plan, as described in the BSIP Plus Executive Decision.

The current Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan was published in December 2023 following approval to refresh the BSIP, by Cabinet, in February 2023. The 2023 BSIP was informed by engagement with key stakeholders, a public survey and feedback from the Plymouth City Council Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The 2023 Plan was well received by the DfT. It is therefore anticipated that the 2024 BSIP will build on the 2023 Plan with the substantive changes focusing on new information, required in the updated DfT guidance, specifically: -

- (a) what has been delivered/will be completed by the end of 2023/24,
- (b) what is programmed for delivery in 2024/25, and
- (c) the ambitions and priorities for future delivery in 2025 and beyond, subject to future funding opportunities

### 2. BACKGROUND

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

The Council first produced and submitted a Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport in October 2021. The 2021 BSIP was a bidding document to Government but sadly, Plymouth was one of 79 authorities unsuccessful in securing 2021 BSIP funding. However, the BSIP remained a bidding document for future rounds of Government funding for transport and hence a refresh of the BSIP was approved by Cabinet in February 2023. The decision to refresh the BSIP was made so that the Council were well placed to secure future transport funding. The Council's second BSIP was published in December 2023.

Following publication of the 2023 Plymouth BSIP the Department for Transport issued revised Bus Service Improvement Plan guidance (National Bus Strategy: 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plans Guidance to local authorities and bus operators). This guidance necessitates the publication of a 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan. On publication the 2024 BSIP will be the Council's third BSIP.

The 2024 BSIP, in accordance with the updated DfT guidance will set out: -

- (a) what has been delivered/will be completed by the end of 2023/24,
- (b) what is programmed for delivery in 2024/25 with the known funding envelope, and
- (c) the ambitions and priorities for future delivery in 2025 and beyond, subject to future funding opportunities

Unlike the previous Bus Service Improvement Plans the 2024 BSIP will not function as a bidding document for specific DfT funds. Instead the emphasis of the BSIP will be that of a delivery plan.

The 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan must be submitted to the Department for Transport and published on Plymouth City Council's website by 12 June 2024 in order for the Council to draw down what is now referred to as the 2024/25 BSIP Phase 2 funding (this funding was previously referred to by the DfT as BSIP Plus funding).

### 3. 2024 BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN

The updated BSIP guidance recommends that the structure of the 2024 BSIP is as follows: -

Section	2021 DfT BSIP template (now superseded)	2024 DfT BSIP template (new current guidance)
1	Overview	Our bus vision
2	Current offer to bus passengers	Current offer to bus passengers
3	Headline targets	Improvements programme to 2024/25
4	Delivery	Ambitions and proposals for 2025-2030
5	Reporting	Targets, performance monitoring and reporting
6	Overview Table	DfT format BSIP Overview Table

The Plymouth 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan will follow the proposed DfT structure.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan is the vision for delivering a step-change in bus services, as required by the National Bus Strategy. It is delivered by the Plymouth statutory Enhanced Partnership (EP) between Plymouth City Council and Plymouth's bus operators. The Enhanced Partnership includes an Enhanced Partnership Plan which is a clear vision of the improvements to bus services that the EP is aiming to deliver, mirroring the BSIP. Changing the BSIP therefore necessitates an update to the Enhanced Partnership Plan and work to update the Enhanced Partnership Plan will commence once the 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan is published.

### 4. RELEVANCE TO CORPORATE PLANS

The development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan directly supports both the Corporate Plan and Plymouth Plan.

#### 4.1 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 stakeholders to have their say about what they'd like to see with regard to Plymouth's bus services.

#### 4.2 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.

## 5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The following alternative options to preparing a 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan and subsequently updating the Plymouth Enhanced Partnership Plan were considered and rejected:

### *1. Not producing a 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan*

This option has been rejected because it will prevent funding for delivery of measures within the Bus Service Improvement Plan being drawn down in 2024/25; the publication of a 2024 BSIP is a condition of the Department for Transport’s in drawing down funding for its delivery.

### *2. Delaying obtaining approval to update the Enhanced Partnership Plan until after the publication of the 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan*

This option has been rejected because the requirement to update the Enhanced Partnership Plan is already known – the EP Plan mirrors the BSIP and hence substantial changes to the BSIP need to be mirrored in the EP Plan – therefore not obtaining approval to update the Plan at the same time as obtaining approval to update the BSIP will introduce an unnecessary delay into the process.

## 6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

In 2023 Plymouth City Council were allocated £1,633,126 of ring fenced grant from the Department for Transport’s Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) funding, of which £816,563 was received in 2023/24 and a further £816,563 is due to be paid in 2024/25, as set out in Executive Decision SPT09 23/24 - Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus Programme (BSIP+), published on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

The Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) fund has now been renamed as BSIP Phase 2 and the Department for Transport has advised that a condition of receiving the 2024/25 BSIP Phase 2 allocation is the publication of the 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan on Plymouth City Council’s website by 12 June 2024, alongside submission of the BSIP to the DfT. Not producing a 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan therefore risks Plymouth City Council not receiving £816,563 to deliver the measures set out in the Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus programme (Executive Decision SPT09 23/24 - Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus Programme (BSIP+), published on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023).

The delivery of the BSIP places no additional financial demands on the Council. This is because the 2024/25 delivery programme which must be included in the updated BSIP is either funded from existing resources or the BSIP Phase 2 funding which will be secured on preparation of the 2024 BSIP.

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 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.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport:

1. Approves the preparation of the 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan.
2. Delegates the approval, and subsequent publication, of the 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, to the Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, where they do not already have the authority to do so.
3. Delegates the authorisation to prepare, and subsequently approve and publish, the 2025 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, to the Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, where they do not already have the authority to do so.
4. Delegates the authorisation to prepare, approve and publish, any updates to the Plymouth Enhanced Partnership Plan which are required as a result of updating the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, to the Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, where they do not already have the authority to do so.