

Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel



Date of meeting:	29 October 2024
Title of Report:	Bus Services Improvement Plan 3
Lead Member:	Councillor Mark Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport)
Lead Strategic Director:	Karime Hassan (Interim Strategic Director for Growth)
Author:	Rosemary Starr (Sustainable Transport Manager)
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Your Reference:	BSIP NI&GOSP 241029
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report seeks to update the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Plymouth's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), following the publication of the Council's third BSIP in the summer (Bus Service Improvement Plan – Summer 2024) and ahead of the update of the associated Enhanced Partnership Plan.

The report sets out, for scrutiny:-

- The background to Bus Service Improvement Plans
- Differences between the December 2023 and Summer 2024 BSIPs and the reason for the changes
- BSIP measures delivered over the last 12 months
- Proposed stakeholder engagement to inform future Bus Service Improvement Plans and
- Implications of the refreshed BSIP on the Plymouth Enhanced Partnership Plan

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

The Council's first 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. 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 was judged to lack positivity and assertiveness, and the targets not being sufficiently ambitious, had the funding been awarded. At the time 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.

To support the refinement of the BSIP the Council, on behalf of the Plymouth Enhanced Bus Partnership (the partnership between the Council and local bus operators) hosted a visit from the DfT's Buses Team in June 2023, with the updated, draft, BSIP subsequently being presented to the Growth and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2023, ahead of its finalisation and publication in December last year.

The delivery of the second BSIP has been facilitated by the £1,633,126 revenue grant from the DfT's Bus Service Improvement Plan Phase 2 Fund (formally referred to as BSIP Plus funding) awarded to the Council in August 2023.

The programme includes the delivery of a flagship east-west demonstration corridor supported by complementary ancillary activities and incorporates the majority of the revenue measures set out in the 2023 BSIP allowing their collective effectiveness to generate a sustained growth in bus patronage and an increase in bus passenger satisfaction, to be tested.

Alongside the delivery of the BSIP Phase 2 programme the Council, in response to revised guidance from the DfT on BSIPs, issued in January 2024, prepared and published its third BSIP in Summer 2024.

Unlike the first and second BSIPs, which were aspirational bidding documents, the Council's third BSIP is a delivery plan setting out what the Plymouth Enhanced Bus Partnership will deliver in 2024/25 to encourage, enable and enthuse more people to catch the bus, what the Partnership has done so far and what the aspirations are for the period 2025 to 2034.

The vision of the 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, as per the 2023 Plan, remains '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 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. The measures, ranked according to the outcome of the Summer 2023 Bus Passenger Priority Survey which more than 1,800 people completed, are:-

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. 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

5. **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
6. 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
7. **Simple** and accurate information at bus stops, online and on smart phone apps, which is easy to read and **understand**
8. **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 and
9. **Cleaner** buses and more enjoyable bus stop environments.

Recommendations and Reasons

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

1. Note the changes to the 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan and endorses the subsequent requirement to refresh the Plymouth Enhanced Partnership Plan.

Reason: To meet the specific requirements of the DfT's 'National Bus Strategy: 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plans Guidance to local authorities and bus operators.'

2. Endorse the proposed stakeholder engagement which will inform future Bus Service Improvement Plans.

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

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. Updating the Plymouth Enhanced Partnership Plan, in order to reflect the 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan, without presentation to the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

This option was rejected in order to ensure that the updated BSIP is scrutinised, ahead of it being used as the blueprint for the updated Enhanced Partnership Plan, to ensure that it appropriately reflects the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and continues to meet the needs of Plymouth's residents, visitors and bus operators.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan directly supports both the Corporate Plan and Plymouth Plan.

Links to the Corporate Plan:-

The 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan directly supports the city's mission to '[make] Plymouth a fairer, greener city where everyone does their bit.'

As lead for the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, we are taking **responsibility** for the improvement of Plymouth's bus services. However, the delivery 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.

Links to the Plymouth Plan:-

Provision of a comprehensive bus network, as set out in the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan, 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 delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan we are actively supporting 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 clear journey planning and timetable information.
- 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.

The BSIP also positively supports 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.
- 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

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, and SPT9(9) (delivering transport projects which provide a safe and effective transport system).

The Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 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 (and subsequently Enhanced Partnership Plan) are potentially significant as both Plans are increasingly required as a pre-requisite to access other DfT funding opportunities.

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 the 2024/25 delivery programme is either funded from either existing resources, BSIP Phase 2 funding (which was secured on preparation of the 2024 BSIP) or bus operator investment.

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 2024 BSIP. However, there are significant risks associated with not, now, refreshing the Plymouth Enhanced Partnership Plan (using the Summer 2024 BSIP as a template), because having an Enhanced Partnership is now a core requirement for bus based DfT funding opportunities – such as the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area 2 Fund – and hence will influence the allocation of future funding.

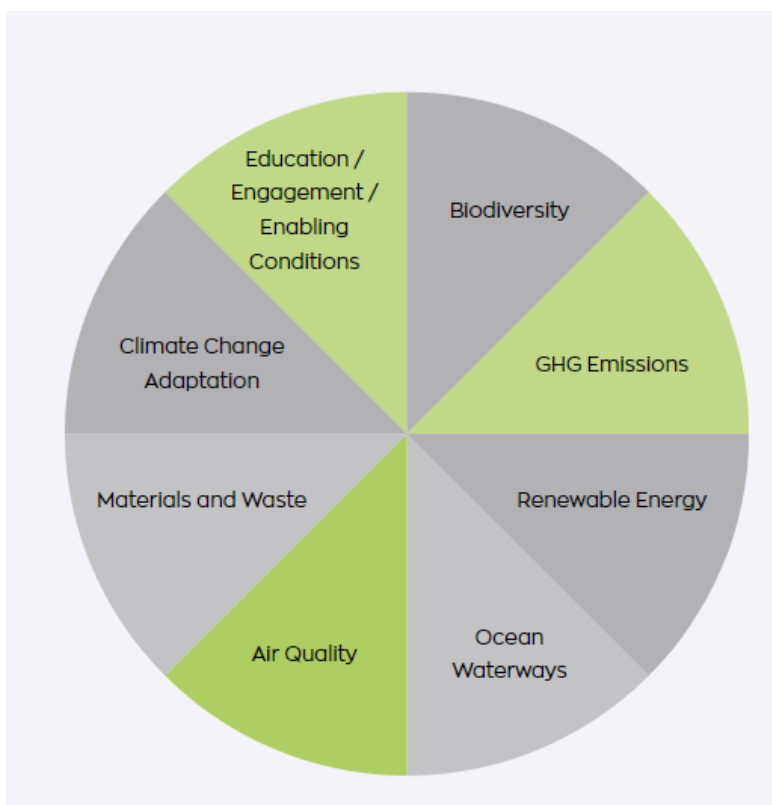
Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

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 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.

The preparation of the 2024 BSIP was necessary in order to allow funding to be drawn down, from the DfT, for the delivery of elements of the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan and hence helps to achieve the anticipated, positive, environmental elements of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

A climate impact assessment was completed to support the Decision to prepare the Council's third BSIP. The outcome of the assessment is shown below. The 2024 Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan was assessed as having a positive climate impact; with the benefits expected to be achieved in the education and engagement, GHG emissions and air quality sectors due to the anticipated change in travel behaviour enabled by an improvement in Plymouth's bus services.



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	241029 BSIP Natural Infrastructure and Growth OSP Briefing Report							
B	Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan – Summer 2024							
C	Equalities Impact Assessment							
D	Climate Impact Assessment							

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

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Paul Barnard											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 03/10/2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Mark Coker, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport – <i>Approved by email</i>											
Date approved: 16/10/2024											