

CABINET

26 October 2021

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change

Strategic Aim:	All	
Key Decision: Yes	Forward Plan Reference: FP/090721	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr L Stephenson, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change	
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Ward Councillors	Not applicable	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approve the Council's draft Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- 2) Authorises the Chief Executive or Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change to approve any amendments to the BSIP, along with any alterations required in LTP4 to reflect the changes associated with the BSIP.
- 3) Note that the BSIP is an outline document at this stage and does not represent the council's definitive or immutable commitment or statement of intent.
- 4) Note that the BSIP and revised LTP4 are subject to ratification by Council.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the approval of the Council's draft Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP has been produced in line with Government requirements. The report highlights the implications associated with the BSIP, seeks approval to submit the BSIP to the Department for Transport (DfT) and proposes a mechanism for approving future changes to the BSIP and LTP4.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 In March 2021 the Government launched a new National Bus Strategy: 'Bus Back Better'. The Strategy set's out the Government's ambition to build back bus use, above and beyond pre covid levels. It aims to do this by making the bus a practical and attractive alternative to the car – reducing congestion, carbon and pollution whilst supporting those without access to private transport. To achieve this goal, the Government want buses to be more frequent and reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated, and cheaper.

2.2 In response the Government's strategy, there are a number of actions we must take:

Produce a bus service improvement plan (BSIP)

2.3 This is a living document outlining ambitious plans with achievable and measurable targets to improve bus services, agreed by all the members of the future Enhanced Partnership (EP). The BSIP should offer a high level vision and outline the key interventions required to deliver that vision (and the funding requirements needed to support this) and a commitment to producing a bus passenger charter (outlining the standards passengers can expect to see). It must be reviewed annually, or more frequently should there be any significant changes. Targets within it must be reported on regularly.

2.4 Our BSIP, once finalised, will form a sub document of our fourth local transport plan (LTP4) – which will be updated to incorporate the BSIP and remove reference to the Passenger Transport Strategy (which the BSIP will supersede).

Create an enhanced partnership (EP)

2.5 This is a statutory partnership through which RCC as the Local Transport Authority (LTA) will work with bus operators to plan and agree creative solutions to improve bus services and deliver BSIP outcomes in the defined geographical area(s) set out in the EP.

Produce an Enhanced Partnership Plan

2.6 This will outline in more detail, the actions that partners will take to deliver improvements and meet targets. It contains an EP Plan which is a clear vision of the improvements to bus services that the EP is aiming to deliver, mirroring the BSIP alongside one or more EP schemes.

Integrate the BSIP with other strategic documents

2.7 This will include the LTP4, along with other local authority strategy and policy documents. Through these policies buses are to be given priority over other modes of transport. As a result, the following additional existing strategic documents will need to be updated or written with this in mind:

- i. Parking Policy (draft new document)
- ii. Corporate Plan

iii. Highway policies

iv. Local Plan

2.8 It should be noted that the launch of the National ‘Bus Back Strategy’ and the requirement for local transport authorities to produce a BSIP has the following implications:

- i. The deadlines associated with preparing and submitting the BSIP are extremely tight.
- ii. That there is no current commitment from the DfT to fund the improvements within the BSIP.
- iii. The BSIP and targets within it may be amended prior to submission to the DfT.
- iv. The Council is required to enter into a legally binding Enhanced Partnership Plan with bus operators that will be based on the content of the BSIP.
- v. There will be a need to integrate the BSIP into other strategic documents.

3 THE BSIP

3.1 Our draft BSIP is provided in Appendix A. The government produced guidance on BSIPs on 17th May 2021 which stipulated that they need to be drafted in partnership with local bus operators and provided to the DfT by 31st October 2021.

3.2 The two key elements of the BSIP are the targets and the “wish list” of deliverables.

3.3 The targets currently outlined within the draft BSIP are shown in table 1 and are set for the four headline target areas that the DfT require we report on. These are subject to change as the operators are required to support them.

Table 1 - Draft BSIP targets

TARGETS	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2024/25	2029/30
Journey time	No data	No data	64% of services operate journey times of less than 4 minutes/ mile.	70% of services operating journey times of less than 4 minutes/ mile.	80% of services operating journey times of less than 4 minutes/ mile.
Reliability improvements	87% of non-frequent bus services (less than 6 services/ hour) running on time	89% of non-frequent bus services (less than 6 services/ hour) running on time	91%* of non-frequent bus services (less than 6 services/ hour) running on time	95% of non-frequent bus services (less than 6 services/ hour) running on time	98% of non-frequent bus services (less than 6 services/ hour) running on time

Passenger growth	414, 642	389, 621 journeys	104, 142	25% increase on new 2021/22 baseline.	40% increase on new 2021/22 baseline.
Customer satisfaction	2016 data 49.48% of bus users - Overall satisfaction	Not available	Not available	25 percentage point increase on new 2021/22 baseline.	40 percentage point increase on new 2021/22 baseline.

3.4 To help deliver on these targets, the draft BSIP outlines a “wish list” of deliverables which are outlined in table 2. As with the draft document however, there is scope for this list to be amended or added to prior to sending to the DfT. The DfT has stated that authorities should be ambitious with their proposals.

Table 2 - Deliverables outlined in the draft BSIP (in priority order)

1	Countywide Demand Responsive Transport	12	Utility permit scheme
2	Decarbonisation: Electric town centre 'Hopper' services trial	13	Review of taxi and bus laybys
3	Simplifying services	14	Integrated ticketing
4	Annual promotion calendar (including incentivised free or discounted travel campaigns)	15	Customer satisfaction surveys
5	Enhanced frequency of services	16	Audio and visual on board announcements
6	Renumbering of services	17	Bus station and interchange monitoring
7	Electronic ticket machines	18	Promotional materials
8	Simplifying ticketing: Including youth id card.	19	Real time information displays
9	Bus stop audit and improvements	20	Decarbonisation: community transport electric minibus trial
10	On board USB charging and Wi-Fi	21	Creation of travel hubs
11	Behavioural change measures: Modeshift STARS and School Streets ^[1]	22	Walking and cycling audits

^[1] Modeshift STARS is an initiative to help encourage sustainable school travel and facilitate the creation of a living 'school travel plan'. School Streets is an initiative that closes roads around congested schools to through traffic at pick up and drop off times.

3.5 As a result of the restricted timescale the draft BSIP appended to this report is still a work in progress and may change prior to submission to the DfT. Alongside this the DfT may produce funding guidance prior to the 31st October (the DfT originally planned to publish the guidance in summer 2021) which could have an impact on the content of the BSIP.

3.6 The BSIP is a living document and may need to be amended during the formation of the enhanced partnership and on at least an annual basis thereafter. Therefore to streamline the process in light of the tight timescales, approval is sought for the delegated authority outlined in section 9.1, to enable changes to be made to the BSIP post Cabinet without the need to return to Cabinet each time.

4 **TIMESCALES**

4.1 The Government has imposed a tight implementation timetable. The key dates are outlined in table 3, along with progress to date.

Table 3 - Timescales and progress

Deadline	Output	Impact	Progress
June 31st 2021	Statement of intent to be published online – outlining commitment to develop an enhanced partnership.	Only LTAs who have started to develop Enhanced Partnerships and operators co-operating with this process will receive the Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant and Bus Service Operators Grant.	On track. Regular meetings with bus operators in place. RCC published statement of intent to run an enhanced partnership.
31st October 2021	Bus Service Improvement Plan to be published online.	Share of £300million funding for improvements allocated on a discretionary basis to those LAs with ambitious BSIPS.	In progress – timeframe tight. Final amendments to be made by noon on 28 th October 2021.
31st March 2022	EP scheme must be in place. LTAs must start to deliver on their plans.	Funding implications.	Awaiting start.

5 RISKS

- 5.1 There are a number of risks associated with the BSIP:
- 5.2 Funding implications – Future DfT funding is dependent on our BSIP being published online and submitted to the DfT by 31st October 2021. Failure to do so will impact on future grant funding for buses and other transport related grant funding.
- 5.3 Public expectations – At present no funding allocation for Rutland has been confirmed. The DfT have advised LAs that BSIPs must be aspirational, however there is concern that in publishing ambitious plans without committed funding, we are raising public expectations – which depending on the funding criteria, may not be met.
- 5.4 Co-operation - Producing the BSIP, EP and EP Plan require cooperation and support from bus and rail operators. Whilst this is not currently an issue, it is important to note that without support we are unable to take forward the EP and EP Plan.
- 5.5 Timescales - As noted already, the timescale for this work is very short, and must be completed alongside a number of high profile projects and work streams that officers are working on – as such officer capacity is extremely limited.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Formal consultation on the BSIP document is not required, however it has been developed in collaboration with bus operators and taking into account feedback from members of the public.
- 6.2 Early engagement has taken place with members of the public via the Future Rutland Conversation, which gathered initial feedback on bus use. Transport was a common thread through a number of the Future Rutland Conversation themed conversations.
- 6.3 Further public engagement took place through a public survey, seeking feedback on what would encourage greater bus use. This survey was also promoted to local businesses through our economic development team. A series of more detailed surveys will follow over the coming months – providing more feedback on area specific topics.
- 6.4 Meetings are currently taking place monthly between local bus operators and RCC – ensuring the BSIP is developed in collaboration and is both ambitious yet achievable.
- 6.5 Engagement is also under way with members of our bus user panel and bus service user group to identify what existing bus users feel needs to be improved to increase bus use. Feedback has been sought with groups representing those with disabilities – to identify what would help make services more accessible for all.
- 6.6 Discussions are also taking place with surrounding local authorities with regards to cross boundary services. Further engagement will take place with our Local MP and Job Centre Plus and discussions are scheduled with Rail Operating Companies serving Oakham train station.

- 6.7 The next stage of the BSIP which is development of the EP will be subject to statutory consultation as it is a legal document.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1 RCC could choose to not submit a BSIP and instead continue with our existing Passenger Transport Strategy – however the DfT has clearly stated that this will have an impact on our eligibility for future transport funding.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The majority of existing bus services within Rutland are not commercial – meaning they are not financially sustainable and require subsidy by RCC.
- 8.2 Future Government funding for buses (both current and future new funding streams), along with wider transport related funding, will be dependent on producing a BSIP by 31st October 2021 and developing an EP and EP plan within the timescales set by the DfT.
- 8.3 The DfT has not yet published funding guidance therefore it is unclear what funding is available to support the delivery of improvements outlined within the BSIP. However informal discussions indicate that the DfT may require a level of match funding from the EP partners.
- 8.4 To deliver the improvements outlined in the BSIP, an approximate total of £3,387,499 of funding is anticipated to be required. Of this, we would require £2,591,500 from the DfT's new £3bn fund for bus transformation. The remainder would come from other existing sources of DfT funding, along with existing RCC revenue sources.
- 8.5 A summary of the funding requirements can be seen in table 4, whilst appendix E of the BSIP document (appendix A) outlines in more detail the anticipated funding required to deliver the BSIP improvements and shows where match funding could be provided to support any Government funding.
- 8.6 Ongoing costs to deliver the measures in the BSIP post 2025 are currently unknown, as this will largely depend on the initial level of funding received from the DfT and in turn, the extent of the measures we are able to deliver up to that point.
- 8.7 Due to limited existing RCC financial resource, section 4.1 of the BSIP outlines the following caveats:
- 8.8 Upon notification from the DfT of any funding allocations, RCC will identify whether there is sufficient grant funding to deliver all of the improvements outlined within this BSIP, or if funding levels are lower than required (and it would be permissible to do so), identify which elements of the BSIP could be delivered with the funding levels available.
- 8.9 If the DfT require LTAs to provide match funding, RCC will review what is possible, given the funding levels allocated.
- 8.10 The BSIP and any associated funding (and terms and conditions of) are subject to ratification and approval by Council. If sufficient additional funding is not available, RCC will not be bound to accept the funding, nor deliver the improvements outlined within this BSIP.

Table 4 – Breakdown of anticipated costs of delivery up to the end of 2024/25 – including potential funding sources

	DfT - £3bn funding pot (capital)	DfT - £3bn funding pot (revenue)	DfT Integrated Transport Capital Programme	DfT Capacity Fund	BSOG underspend	RCC existing staff budget (revenue)	RCC existing revenue budget
Countywide Demand Responsive Transport		£690,000					£126,000
Decarbonisation: Electric town centre 'Hopper' services trial	£8,000	£18,000					
Annual promotion calendar (including incentivised free or discounted travel campaigns)		£72,000			£75,000	£18,000	
Enhanced frequency of services		£660,000					
Simplifying services		£75,000					£60,000
Promotional materials (add journey planning info)		£25,000					£40,000
Renumbering of services		£3,500					
Simplifying ticketing: Including youth id card.		£30,000				£15,000	
Electronic ticket machines		£70,000					
Bus stop audit and improvements	£45,000		£60,000			£15,000	
Integrated ticketing		£70,000					
Audio and visual on board announcements	£70,000						
Behavioural change measures:		£60,000				£45,000	

	DfT - £3bn funding pot (capital)	DfT - £3bn funding pot (revenue)	DfT Integrated Transport Capital Programme	DfT Capacity Fund	BSOG underspend	RCC existing staff budget (revenue)	RCC existing revenue budget
Utility permit scheme		£14,000				£30,000	
Review of taxi and bus laybys	£75,000		£30,000			£45,000	
Real time information displays	£200,000					£20,000	
Bus station and interchange monitoring						£6,000	
Walking and cycling audits		£90,000	£90,000			£45,000	
Decarbonisation: community transport electric minibus trial	£4,000	£9000					
On board USB charging and Wi-Fi	£36,000						
Creation of travel hubs		£24,999	£30,000			£15,000	
Additional staff resource		£180,000					
Customer satisfaction surveys		£62,001		£30,999			
	£438,000	£2,153,500	£210,000	£30,999	£75,000	£254,000	£226,000

9 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet approval is sought to delegate authority to the Chief Executive or Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change to approve any amendments to the BSIP, along with any alterations required in LTP4 to reflect the changes associated with the BSIP.
- 9.2 The Chairman of the Council has been consulted in accordance with Procedure Rule 208 of the Council's Constitution, and has agreed that the Call-in procedure will not apply to this decision on the grounds of urgency, as any delay caused by the call in process would prejudice the Council's or interests. Due to the need to produce a BSIP by 31 October 2021, which is within the expected Call-in period.
- 9.3 The BSIP will form a sub document of Local Transport Plan 4 - a statutory document that sets out our long-term strategic vision for transport. LTP4 is to be revised to incorporate the BSIP and remove reference to the now out of date Passenger Transport Strategy. Council will have to approve LTP4 in due course as it forms part of the Council's Policy Framework.
- 9.4 The BSIP is an outline document at this stage and does not represent the council's definitive or immutable commitment or statement of intent.
- 9.5 Legal support will be required during the development of the EP and EP Plans (as they are statutory documents) and to address issues relating to 'competition law' and commercially sensitive data exist.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has been completed. No adverse or other significant risks/issues were found. A copy of the DPIA can be obtained from the Transport Strategy Manager – hcaldicott@rutland.gov.uk.

11 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed as a Screening Equality Impact Questionnaire has been completed and no adverse or other significant issues were found that required a full Equality Impact Assessment to be carried out.
- 11.2 Through improvements to be delivered through the BSIP (subject to funding), services will become more accessible and equitable and have a positive impact on those with protected characteristics.

12 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Plan outlines improvements to both buses and waiting areas which would lead to increased safety and perception of safety.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Improvements within the BSIP are likely to improve health and wellbeing in the following ways: Reducing social isolation by ensuring all parts of the county have access to a bus service; improving access to employment opportunities and

services such as shops and healthcare; and improving wellbeing by providing improved access to transport for social activities.

14 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Environmental implications

- 14.1 The BSIP will encourage increased bus use and help encourage a modal shift away from car dependency. Subject to funding we will look to carry out a 1 year trial of electric buses on town centre Hopper services and for VAR's minibus. Both of these will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce air pollution.

Human Resource implications

- 14.2 Existing employees are undertaking work associated with the BSIP and EP. Using DfT Capacity Funding we have also appointed a fixed term Transport Strategy Officer post. However there are a number of work streams resulting from additional DfT grants and requirements that have competing deadlines – putting pressure on existing resource.

Procurement Implications

- 14.3 If funding is allocated, procurement will be required to purchase or finance the provisions outlined in the BSIP – as per appendix E of the document.

15 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 This report has set out the BSIP process alongside a summary of the content of the RCC BSIP and the wider implications for RCC.
- 15.2 Whilst the situation for funding of the BSIP is still unclear it has been stated that future funding from the DfT is dependent on submitting a BSIP by 31st October 2021.
- 15.3 Therefore to minimise the risk of RCC losing out on public transport funding as a result of not publishing a BSIP or not meeting the published deadlines it is recommended that the recommendations in this report are approved.
- 15.4 Following consultation with the Chairman of the Council, it has been agreed that the Call-in procedure will not apply to this decision on the grounds of urgency due to the need to submit a BSIP by 31 October 2021, which is within the expected Call-in period.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

17 APPENDICES

- 17.1 Appendix A – Draft BSIP.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.