

CABINET

15 February 2022

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport

Strategic Aim:	All		
Key Decision: Yes	Forward Plan Reference: FP/171221		
Exempt Information	Appendix A of this report contains exempt information and is not for publication in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Further details can be seen in paragraph 2.4 below		
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr I Razzell, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport		
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Ward Councillors	All		

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the draft Rutland Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and Enhanced Partnership (EP) for submission to Council for approval.
2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport to approve any amendments to the EP Plan and EP Scheme prior to Council and recommends Council to undertake the same delegation.
3. Note that the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme once 'made' will be legally binding.
4. Note that the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme are subject to statutory consultation prior to being 'made'.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the approval of the draft Rutland Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. These legally binding documents have been produced in line with Government requirements and with legal support.
- 1.2 The report highlights the implications associated with the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, seeks approval to formally 'make' the EP Plan and EP Scheme and submit them to the Department for Transport (DfT), and proposes a mechanism for approving future changes to the EP Plan and Scheme.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 In March 2021 the Department for Transport launched a new national bus strategy: 'Bus Back Better'. The ambition of the strategy is to build back bus use, above and beyond pre covid levels.
- 2.2 Resulting from Bus Back Better, local transport authorities have a requirement to:
 - Produce a bus service improvement plan (BSIP) – a living document outlining ambitious plans with achievable and measurable targets to improve bus services, agreed by the members of the future Enhanced Partnership. BSIPs 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). Rutland's BSIP was published in October 2021.
 - Create an enhanced bus partnership (EP) supported by an Enhanced Partnership Plan and associated Scheme. The Plan mirrors the content of the BSIP but is a legal document. The associated Scheme provides more detail on the actions that partners will take to deliver improvements and meet targets. The Scheme is also a legally binding document.
 - Integrate the BSIP with other strategic documents, including LTP4.
- 2.3 Future bus (and wider transport) funding is dependent on LA's having an EP in place.
- 2.4 The draft EP Plan and EP Scheme are exempt documents as they cannot be published until after a 28-day Operator objection period, which is currently underway at the time of report writing.

3 TIMESCALES AND CURRENT STATUS

- 3.1 The DfT originally required Enhanced Partnerships to be made by 31st March 2022.
- 3.2 On 10th January 2022, the DfT issued a letter announcing a change meaning they only require draft EP documents to be produced by the end of April 2022.
- 3.3 Despite the change in deadline, it is proposed to continue as planned with the next stages leading to the 'making' of the EP Plan and EP Scheme.
- 3.4 The DfT expect to provide details of indicative funding by February 2022. As funding is currently unknown, only those measures that can be delivered with little or no funding have been included in the current draft EP Scheme document.

- 3.5 The draft Rutland EP Plan and Scheme have been produced and we are now following the key steps to ‘making’ the legal documents. Table 1 shows the key steps in creating an EP Plan and Scheme. The timescales shown are approximate and may need to be amended if Operator objections are received.

Table 1 - Key steps in creating an EP Plan and Scheme

Stage	Progress
Draft the EP Plan and Scheme with support from operators	Complete
Seek legal advice on documents	Complete
Initiate the 28-day objection period for Operators	In progress – started on Friday 7 th January
Consultation period	Outstanding (scheduled for February subject to any objections being received)
Formally ‘make’ the Plan and Scheme document	Outstanding (originally scheduled by 31 st March subject to any objections being received)

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The EP Plan and EP Scheme are subject to formal consultation, which must include the following statutory consultees:

- All operators of local bus services that would be affected by any of the proposals,
- Organisations that represent local passengers
- Other local authorities that would be affected by the proposals
- The traffic commissioners
- The chief officer of police for each area to which the plan relates
- Transport Focus
- The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)
- Such other persons as the authority thinks fit.

- 4.2 Consultation is currently scheduled to start in February; however, this is subject to vary and will depend on the outcome of the Operator 28-day objection period.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 RCC could choose to not ‘make’ an EP Plan and EP Scheme – however the DfT has clearly stated that this will have an impact on our eligibility for future transport funding.

- 5.2 RCC could also delay elements of the process such as consultation or the ‘making’ of the documents until a funding announcement has been made by the DfT. If we were to take this approach and funding isn’t received, then the documents would need to be amended to include revised dates. Revised dates would re trigger the objection period causing delays. This option would involve more staff resource in the event of a ‘no funding’ scenario.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Most existing bus services within Rutland are not commercial – meaning they are not financially sustainable and require subsidy by RCC.
- 6.2 Future Government funding for buses (both current and future new funding streams), along with wider transport related funding, will be dependent on LTAs having a BSIP and developing an EP Plan and EP Scheme within the timescales set by the DfT.
- 6.3 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 and EP Plan. However informal discussions indicate that the DfT may require a level of match funding from the EP partners.
- 6.4 To deliver all the improvements outlined in the BSIP and EP Plan, 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.
- 6.5 As funding is currently unknown, only those measures that can be delivered with little or no funding have been included in the current draft EP Scheme document. This funding would come from existing RCC revenue budgets.
- 6.6 A summary of the funding requirements can be seen in table 2, whilst appendix E of the BSIP document (appendix B) outlines in more detail the anticipated funding required to deliver the full BSIP and EP Plan.
- 6.7 Ongoing costs to deliver the measures in the BSIP and EP Plan 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 BSIP and EP Plan we are able to deliver up to that point.
- 6.8 Upon notification of any funding allocations, RCC will identify whether there is sufficient grant funding to deliver any further improvements outlined within this BSIP and EP Plan.
- 6.9 If the DfT require LTAs to provide match funding, RCC will review what is possible, given the funding levels allocated.
- 6.10 The BSIP and any associated funding (and terms and conditions of) are subject to ratification and approval by Council.
- 6.11 If sufficient additional funding is not available to deliver further improvements above those outlined within the draft Scheme, RCC will not be bound to accept the funding, nor deliver any additional improvements.

Table 2 - Breakdown of anticipated costs of delivery up to the end of 2024/25 – including potential funding sources. Costs in bold represent requirement of current draft Scheme.

	DfT - £3bn funding pot (capital)	DfT - £3bn funding pot (revenue)	DfT Integrated Transport Capital Programme	DfT capacity	BSOG underspend	RCC existing staff budget (revenue)	RCC existing revenue budget
Countywide Demand Responsive Transport		690000					126000 (part of – up to circa £20,000)
Decarbonisation: Electric town centre 'Hopper' services trial	8000	18000					
Annual promotion calendar (including incentivised free or discounted travel campaigns)		72000			75000	18000	
Enhanced frequency of services		660000					
Simplifying services		75000					60000
Promotional materials (add journey planning info)		25000					40000
Renumbering of services		3500					
Simplifying ticketing: Including youth id card.		30000				15000	
Electronic ticket machines		70000					
Bus stop audit and improvements	45000		60000			15000	
Integrated ticketing		70000					

Table 2 - Breakdown of anticipated costs of delivery up to the end of 2024/25 – including potential funding sources. Costs in bold represent requirement of current draft Scheme.

	DfT - £3bn funding pot (capital)	DfT - £3bn funding pot (revenue)	DfT Integrated Transport Capital Programme	DfT capacity	BSOG underspend	RCC existing staff budget (revenue)	RCC existing revenue budget
Audio and visual on-board announcements	70000						
Behavioural change measures:		60000				45000	
Utility permit scheme (reduced delays 79.32%)		14000				30000	
Review of taxi and bus laybys	75000		30000			45000	
Real time information displays	200000					20000	
Bus station and interchange monitoring						6000	
Walking and cycling audits		90000	90000			45000	
Decarbonisation: community transport electric minibus trial	4000	9000					
On board USB charging and Wi-Fi	36000						
Creation of travel hubs (85.76%) 59.69		24999	30000			15000	
Additional staff resource		180000					

Table 2 - Breakdown of anticipated costs of delivery up to the end of 2024/25 – including potential funding sources. Costs in bold represent requirement of current draft Scheme.

	DfT - £3bn funding pot (capital)	DfT - £3bn funding pot (revenue)	DfT Integrated Transport Capital Programme	DfT capacity	BSOG underspend	RCC existing staff budget (revenue)	RCC existing revenue budget
Customer satisfaction surveys		62001		30999			
	£438,000	£2,153,500	£210,000	£30,999	£75,000	£254,000	£226,000

7 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Approval is sought to delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport to approve any amendments to the EP Plan and EP Scheme.
- 7.2 Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Council must adopt any plan which requires submission to a Minister of the Crown or Government office
- 7.3 The EP Plan and EP Scheme support the BSIP, which 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.
- 7.4 The EP Plan and EP Scheme once 'made' will be legally binding.
- 7.5 Legal support has been sought during the creation of the EP Plan and EP Scheme to ensure legal compliance and to address any potential issues relating to 'competition law' and commercially sensitive data.

8 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has been completed for the BSIP, which the EP Plan mirrors. 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

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed as a Screening Equality Impact Questionnaire has been completed for the BSIP (which the EP Plan mirrors) and no adverse or other significant issues were found that required a full Equality Impact Assessment to be carried out.
- 9.2 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.

10 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Both the EP Plan and EP Scheme outline improvements to both buses and waiting areas which would lead to increased safety and perception of safety.

11 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Improvements within the EP Plan and EP Scheme 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.

12 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Environmental implications
- 12.2 Elements outlined in the EP Scheme will encourage increased bus use and help with a modal shift away from car dependency. If additional funding is received and the Scheme amended later, we may be able 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
- 12.3 Human Resource implications
- 12.4 Deliverables outlined within the existing Scheme document will be implemented by existing staff.
- 12.5 Should the Scheme be amended in the future to incorporate additional facilities or measures, additional staffing resource would likely be required. The Rutland BSIP sought a funding requirement for this.
- 12.6 Procurement Implications
- 12.7 If funding is allocated at a later date, the Scheme will need to be amended and procurement will be required to purchase or finance the necessary provisions.
- 13 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**
- 13.1 Although funding allocations are currently unknown, and despite the DfT's announcement regarding a deadline extension, it is felt the most resource efficient solution would be to carry on with the process as planned and authorise delegated approval powers to Cabinet approval is sought to delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport.
- 13.2 Should RCC receive funding after the EP Plan and Scheme are made then a bespoke variation mechanism contained within the documents will enable us to update the Scheme to incorporate other deliverables, with these being signed off internally through delegated powers assigned to the Strategic Director for Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Highways and Transport
- 14 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 14.1 Report No. 133/2021 – Bus Service Improvement Plan
- 15 APPENDICES**
- 15.1 Appendix A – Draft Rutland Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (Exempt)
- 15.2 Appendix B – Rutland Bus Service Improvement Plan

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