

# Agenda Item 55.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	The Executive on Thursday, 28 October 2021
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Pauline Jorgensen

## **PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)**

The Executive are being asked to agree to the publication of the BSIP document by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

The BSIP document is a non-statutory document, however its publication is a national requirement by the National Bus Strategy (March 2021).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive agrees to Wokingham Borough Council publishing the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) document by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

All local transport authorities are expected to publish a Local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021. The BSIP is a non-statutory document, written based on a nationally issued template, includes ambitious and aspirational policies, as well as locally set targets against nationally identified indicators. The BSIP will be reviewed annually and reported on every 6 months.

The BSIP is an opportunity to set out the Council's high-level ambition for future bus services which meet local needs. The BSIP does not include detailed schemes or consider improvements to specific services, this will be contained in a subsequent Enhanced Partnership agreement. The Enhanced Partnership agreement will need to be agreed with bus local transport operators by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

Local transport authorities who publish a BSIP will be able to bid on future funding opportunities which form part of the £3 billion transitional fund for bus services. Local transport authorities may also receive a funding allocation based on how ambitious their BSIP is.

This item is being treated as an urgent item because a failure to publish a BSIP by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 will result in the loss of Bus Service Recovery Funding and potentially any future BSOG funding. Bus Service Recovery funding and BSOG funding is worth more than £500,000, with the exact amount to be determined by the level of on-board revenue taken by the bus operator during the Covid funding period.

## BACKGROUND

The structure and content of the BSIP is based on a the nationally issued templated. The content of the BSIP is briefly outlined below with further details found in the attached BSIP document.

Section Heading	Contents
Overview	<p>Our vision and ambition for bus services:</p> <p><b>Vision:</b> “for a bus network which provides our residents and visitors a choice in the way that they travel, reduces congestion on our roads, improves local air quality, and enables carbon neutrality by 2030.”</p> <p><b>Ambitions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to enable local bus services to recover to pre-pandemic levels and then to facilitate the continued growth in bus passenger numbers</li> <li>- to grow our bus service provision to ensure the right level of service in the right place</li> <li>- a bus network which supports the continued economic growth of Wokingham Borough and the wider Thames Valley region</li> <li>- to improve accessibility to transport services and the local bus network for communities in more rural and low-density areas</li> <li>- to have a greener bus network which harnesses the greatest opportunities to reduce carbon emissions and provides residents with greener travel choices.</li> </ul>
Current bus offer to passengers	<p>Analysis of existing local bus services compared to the BSIP outcomes which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequency</li> <li>- Reliability and Speed of Local Bus Journeys</li> <li>- Fares and Ticketing</li> <li>- Comprehensiveness of the network</li> <li>- Ease of understanding the network</li> <li>- Integration with other transport</li> <li>- Bus Emissions and Green Vehicles</li> <li>- Customer Satisfaction</li> <li>- Innovation</li> </ul>
Details of Spend	<p>Wokingham Borough Council is currently spending the following in relation to bus service provision each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £810,400* towards supporting bus services</li> <li>- £920,400* on concessionary fares</li> <li>- £103,000 towards community transport and volunteer services</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £ 16,6200* on Real Time Information (RTI)</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the following S106 is spent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £380,000* supported bus services</li> </ul> <p>(*based on 19/20 pre-covid spend and does not include BSOG or any COVID support funding which the Council will loss if the BSIP is not published)</p>
Targets	<p>The nationally set indicators which have locally set ambitious targets are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Average Journey Time</li> <li>- Punctuality (reliability)</li> <li>- Passenger Growth</li> <li>- Customer Satisfaction</li> </ul> <p>The targets are not binding. Our progress against targets may affect future year funding allocations.</p>
Delivery	<p>Contains ambitious policies which the Council would want to implement, subject to funding, to achieve the ambitious local targets.</p> <p>Policies in the BSIP are split into two categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Area or corridor specific policies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reading- Wokingham – Bracknell Corridor</li> <li>- Reading – Shinfield – Arborfield – Wokingham</li> <li>- Reading-Three Mile Cross – Spencers Wood</li> <li>- Reading – Twyford – Wargrave – Henley</li> <li>- Earley /Lower Earley/ Maiden Erlegh</li> <li>- Woodley &amp; North Earley</li> <li>- Wokingham and Surrounding areas</li> <li>- Rural and lower density areas</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Theme based policies:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fares</li> <li>- Ticketing</li> <li>- Integrated with other transport (including Park and Ride)</li> <li>- Decarbonisation</li> <li>- Network Identify, Passenger Information, Promotion and Publicity</li> <li>- Modern Buses and Innovation</li> <li>- Passenger Charter</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p>Our delivery against policies within the BSIP are not binding within the BSIP. Only those actions which are detailed in the Enhanced Partnership agreement are binding.</p>

Reporting	Provides details on the arrangements for reporting on each of the targets every six months and an annual review.
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## Consultation

The timescale as defined by the DfT are extremely challenging and have preclude any significant consultation with residents. Key stakeholders such as bus operator, community and volunteer transport operators, rail operators, Town and Parish Councils and some community groups have been consulted.

A member working group has been set-up and meets on fortnightly basis. The working group has been informed of progress on the BSIP and spoken with local bus operators.

## Next Steps

1. To publish the BSIP on the MyJourney website by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021
2. To negotiate with local transport providers on detailed measures and facilities which will form part of the schemes to in the Enhanced Partnership.
3. Agree a passenger charter with local transport operators as to the level and quality of services our residents can expect.
4. To follow the statutory consultation process to make a legally binding Enhanced Partnership
5. To bring back an Executive report on the Enhanced Partnership Scheme prior to the Enhanced Partnership being made.

## BUSINESS CASE

If we do not publish a BSIP, then we will lose between more than £500,000 (full year affect) in 2021/22. This amount is formed of the annual BSOG revenue funding and the potential loss of COVID Bus Service Recovery funding, which can vary depending on the level of on-board revenue taken by the bus operator on any given service as a result of COVID.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	£150,000 is allocated from DfT.	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	TBC		

Following Financial Year (Year 3)	TBC		
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<b>Other Financial Information</b>
The recommendation will cost £0 if it is agreed and will avoid a revenue loss of more than £500,000 which is related to Covid Bus Service Recovery Funding and BSOG income that the Council receives in 2021/22 financial year.

<b>Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation</b>
Consultation on the BSIP has been undertaken based on the advice provided by the Department for Transport.

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Not applicable at this stage – but will be addressed before any binding agreement is reached.

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
The BSIP includes ambitious policies which will help the Council reach carbon neutrality by 2030, for example by implementing electric buses.

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Local Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) <i>(Due to the size of this document it is not included in the agenda but can be found as a background paper on the agenda page on the website.)</i>

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