

Agenda Item IMD3

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: 2022/03

TITLE	Consultation Response to Bracknell Forest Borough Council's Enhanced Partnership Agreement
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Pauline Jorgensen
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	24 March 2022 FF11 at 18:30
WARD	None specific;
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Steve Moore

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

The National Bus Strategy advised every Local Transport Authority in England, outside of London, to create an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Agreement with local bus operators as a basis for improving bus services. An EP is a legal agreement which has several statutory processes to go through, including a statutory consultation, before it can be legally made.

The purpose of this report is to gain approval for Wokingham Borough Council's response to Bracknell Borough Council's Enhanced Partnership Agreement for local bus services.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport approve the Council's response to Bracknell Borough Council's Enhanced Partnership Agreement for local bus services, as set out in Annex A of the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) is a statutory consultee for Bracknell Forest Borough Council (BFBC) in the process of making an Enhanced Partnership.

BFBC published their Enhanced Partnership Agreement for Statutory Consultation on 28th January 2022 for a four-week period, until 25th February 2022. The response attached as Annex A has been submitted on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council, subject to Individual Executive Member Approval.

Background

WBC is supportive of the shared objectives of ensuring efficiency, value, and confidence in the local bus network and welcome the opportunity to work with BFBC to provide a local bus network which meets the needs of residents of both our boroughs.

The key objectives of BFBC's EP Plan are to:

- Maintain and develop the bus network and its use.
- Focus on the main commercial services as the ones with greatest potential to grow, thus improving viability and enabling investment and improvement
- Ensure appropriate supported services meet identified needs not served by commercial services.
- Create more of a single network view.
- Improve the efficiency of bus operations.
- Improve all aspects of passenger experience – information; fares; bus stops; service levels; journey times.

BFBC Enhanced Partnership Scheme covers the whole of Bracknell Forest Borough and looks to address the EP Plan's objectives through eleven separate elements each containing a series of measures, facilities, and provisions. In summary these are:

- Network balancing – identifying services on key routes for service enhancement
- Targeted free/discounted travel
- Inter-operable tickets
- Real Time Information
- Bus Information Portal
- Addressing Pinch points
- Traffic Signal Priority
- Bus Stop Improvements
- Demand Responsive Transport – with a joint feasibility study and potential trial with Wokingham BC and Winsor & Maidenhead BC
- Bus Rapid Transit – working up options for the Bracknell/ Wokingham corridor
- Passenger Charter – to be published by 31 March 2022

WBC is supportive of the elements identified within BFBC's EP Agreement and welcomes the opportunity for joint working, where there is an alignment with WBC's EP Agreement and subject to funding.

The delivery mechanism and governance for the EP Plan is set out in the EP Scheme. BFBC's EP Scheme is to be governed by the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership, which consists of local bus operators in Bracknell Forest Borough and BFBC's own officers.

WBC would suggest that further consideration is given to more formal engagement with neighboring authorities through the governance structure of the EP. WBC sees formal engagement on matters such as fares and ticketing as fundamental to achieving our shared objective of providing better value, and attractive local bus travel to all residents across both boroughs.

Implementation of additional measures is through the EP Scheme variation mechanism. Generally, this will be through unanimous support by the Bus Partnership, otherwise through the statutory operator objection mechanism which will be reduced to 14 days. WBC is supportive of the use of the EP Scheme variation mechanism to ensure effective and timely delivery of partnership working.

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)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	n/a	n/a	n/a

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
Cross-Council implications would be considered through Wokingham Borough Council's Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

Public Sector Equality Duty
An equalities assessment is not required as this IEMD relates to a legal agreement which Bracknell Forest Borough Council will be making and implementing within Bracknell Forest Borough. Any joint schemes which affect Wokingham Borough would be subject to Wokingham Borough Council's Enhanced Partnership Agreement and therefore subject to the related equalities assessment.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	Any comments to be updated at meeting
Monitoring Officer	Any comments to be updated at meeting
Leader of the Council	Any comments to be updated at meeting

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
Bracknell Forest Borough Council's Draft Enhanced Partnership Agreement

Contact Rebecca Brooks	Service Place
Telephone No Tel: 0118 908 8302	Email rebecca.brooks@wokingham.gov.uk