

**4 May 2022****Agenda Item:7****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY: PUBLIC TRANSPORT UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:

- Update members on the County Council's Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) project.
- Update members on the announcement of further Government funding to support the bus sector including indicative Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding.
- Update members on progress to date of the Nottinghamshire Enhanced Partnership (EP) Schemes, following Committee approval of the BSIP submission to the Department for Transport in November 2021.
- Recommend the approval of the Enhanced Partnership Schemes for Greater Nottingham and Nottinghamshire in order to enable progress to be made with the planned improvements outlined in the BSIP and EPs in the period to June 2027.
- Recommend that delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director, Place, to further develop the EP Schemes and implement them using the EP variation mechanism in conjunction with the Committee Chairman.

**Information****Background**

2. The Council's current budget for local bus support is £4.1m which supports over 100 bus services across the County. As previously reported to Committee the Council, using the powers from the 1985 Transport Act, has a statutory duty to consider the introduction of bus services, when services are withdrawn or changed, but no obligation to provide them. This level of investment is in the top quartile for County Councils and reflects the importance of local bus services to the residents of Nottinghamshire.
3. The Council consistently scores highly in national surveys for passenger satisfaction as do a number of local bus operators who are consistently in the top ten. The commercial work of local bus operators is complemented by our investment:
  - 4 new bus stations since 2007; with over 3m passengers per annum utilising the facilities
  - 800 Real Time Passenger Information displays installed since 2005 making it one of the most comprehensive networks in the country.

- 3.1 km of bus lanes and bus gates in 14 locations; and the introduction of Automatic Vehicle Location Traffic Light Priority (TLP) in multiple locations across the County. This is one of the largest TLP networks outside London.
  - Maintaining over 5000 bus stops and 1500 shelters; and ongoing investment programme of bus stop improvements to improve accessibility, information and safety.
4. This report outlines how the Council intends to build on current investment levels and high passenger satisfaction ratings to further develop and improve bus services through the introduction of Demand Responsive Transport pilots; in conjunction with the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership plans and opportunities that the BSIP funding offer provides. This report will also update members on bus recovery progress as the sector emerges from the Covid pandemic.

### **Bus Recovery and National Bus Strategy Rural Mobility Fund Update**

5. As reported previously to Committee, Government extended financial support through Bus Recovery Grant (BRG), to the bus sector to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. However, with the emergence of the Omicron variant, bus recovery has slowed with patronage at around 70%-80% and concessionary fare holder use at between 55% and 60% of pre – pandemic levels. In response to this slower recovery the Government has recently announced further Local Transport Fund (LTF) monies for 6 months up to October 2022 to support recovery.
6. The Council is continuing to work with operators to understand what the commercial bus network will look like in October 2022, to inform our future investment in local bus services.
7. The Council bid successfully for National Bus Strategy Rural Mobility Fund monies (£1.5m) in 2020/21 and will be introducing a number of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) pilots this summer in the Ollerton and Mansfield areas and in the Autumn, the Rushcliffe area. These DRT services will not operate to a fixed route or timetable but will operate on a fully flexible on demand basis to any destination within the operating area and further destinations outside the area to connect with traditional fixed route bus services. Customers will be able to book DRT services by phone, on the web or through an app.
8. These new DRT services are still under development and local members will be invited to briefing sessions in due course to outline the plans. The Council will also communicate the pilots to other stakeholders including district/borough councils, parish/town councils and residents via various communication channels. These pilots will help shape future local bus investment choices and priorities including the use of Bus Service Improvement Plan monies discussed later in the paper.

### **Enhanced Partnership**

9. As reported to Committee the Government requires Councils to produce EP plans and Schemes to access any future transport funding and to work in partnership with commercial operators to provide effective transport services.
10. The Nottinghamshire EP Plan and Scheme and the Greater Nottingham EP Plan and Scheme have been developed in line with Department for Transport (DfT) guidance to produce an Enhanced Partnership plan and scheme, that can be changed easily once BSIP funding has been confirmed and priorities agreed between the Councils and bus operators. The Plans and

Schemes are available in Appendix 1 for Greater Nottingham and 2a and 2b for Nottinghamshire.

11. The Enhanced Partnership Scheme is expected by the DfT to include the following three elements:

- Commit the relevant authority or authorities to continue providing existing bus priority measures
- Implement low or no cost improvements including Bus Passenger Charters and high-quality information for all passengers
- Be flexible to incorporate further enhancements through variation as and when funding becomes available.

12. Taking into account the DfT guidance, the EP schemes have been developed and existing bus infrastructure embedded which includes:

- Bus priority: maintaining current bus lanes and enforcement
- Bus stop infrastructure: maintaining bus stops and clearways
- Bus stations: maintaining the operation of the bus stations

13. The schemes also include several other improvements. These include:

- Improvement of Euro Emission standards to improve air quality
- A Passenger Charter to introduce common standards between operators.
- Developing options for integrated and young person ticketing and working, to simplify current ticketing arrangements.
- Progressing the Transforming Cities programme of bus improvements for the Greater Nottingham EP area including bus priority and improvements in real time information.

14. The Council has developed the EP governance frameworks based on government guidance and best practice. Members will be regularly consulted on any changes to take into account their views and an annual report produced.

15. It is also important to note that changes proposed by the Council(s) and bus operators will also be discussed with wider stakeholders, including bus user representatives, district/borough councils, rail operators, tram operating companies, the business community and neighbouring councils with transport responsibilities.

16. Variation mechanisms are included to change the EP schemes once funding has been announced and proposals have been agreed by the Council and the bus operators. It is proposed that this variation mechanism is used to vary and implement the schemes over the life of the EPs.

## **Consultation**

17. A legal requirement of the development of an EP plan and Scheme is that bus operators are given 28 days to object, and this was carried out between 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The Council has not received any objections from operators.

18. As part of the process, the Council has undertaken wider consultation with stakeholders and the public to take into account their views and this was carried out between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022; before seeking approval from the Committee to 'make' the scheme. The consultation with wider stakeholders has provided some useful feedback which will be picked up as we move forward; but did not require any fundamental changes to the scheme.

## **BSIP Announcement**

19. On the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 the Govt announced the indicative BSIP allocations for the Nottinghamshire BSIP and the Greater Nottingham (Robin Hood) BSIP. This is an exciting opportunity to deliver measurable improvements in public transport and supports the Council's intent to contribute towards net zero.

20. The potential funding allocated for each BSIP is as follows:

- Nottinghamshire BSIP: £18,714,046 (of which £12,897,836 capital and £5,816,210 revenue)
- Greater Nottingham BSIP: £11,367,416 (of which £7,860,715 capital and £3,506,700 revenue)

21. This funding if secured has to be spent between 2022/23 and 2024/25.

22. This funding will only be secured upon the successful completion of:

- the completion of a summary table setting out how you intend to use this funding allocation - showing your prioritised interventions, delivery timelines and costs
- By the end of June, to provide: an updated summary table, incorporating any feedback and a draft EP including agreed BSIP measures

23. Between now and the deadline of the end of June officers are working up a set of proposals for Bus Service Improvements to submit to Government align with the new guidance issued on 5<sup>th</sup> April. These measures are likely to be a mixture of:

- transport enabling activities such as bus priority measures and integrated ticketing
- direct support initiatives such as additional demand responsive transport and some service improvements

24. Final determination about specific improvements is likely to be this summer once the discussions with the DfT and Enhanced Partnership members across the two partnerships have concluded.

## **Proposals**

25. It is therefore proposed to make the EP plan and schemes starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 and running until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2027.

26. That delegated approval is given to the Corporate Director to further develop EP Schemes BSIP improvement proposals and implement them using the EP variation mechanism in conjunction with the lead politician.

## **Other Options Considered**

27. Without an Enhanced Partnership in place the Council would not be able to access any future transport and infrastructure funding.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

28. To enable the County Council and bus operators to access future transport and infrastructure funding and to build on the existing transport provision in the County as outlined in para 2 and 3 of this report.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

29. Consideration will be given to our Public Sector Equality Duty in the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership and an Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted where necessary to assess the impact of any changes.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

30. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public-sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Implications for Service Users**

31. The proposals outlined in this report support existing and future bus users to access employment, training, health and leisure opportunities whilst meeting the Council's commitments to tackle Climate Change and improve air quality.

## **Financial Implications**

32. All County Council commitments within the EP scheme will be met from existing budgets. Acceptance of any BSIP funding will be subject to sec 151 officer sign off.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Members endorse the plans for the Demand Responsive pilots as described in paragraphs 7 and 8.
- 2) Members approve the Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes for Greater Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to be "made".
- 3) That delegated approval is given to the Corporate Director to further develop EP Schemes and BSIP improvement proposals and implement them using the EP variation mechanism in conjunction with the lead politician.

**Adrian Smith**  
**Corporate Director, Place**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Gary Wood, Head of Highways and Transport / Pete Mathieson, Team Manager, Development & Partnerships

### **Constitutional Comments (LPW 05/04/2022)**

33. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Transport and Environment Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SES 30/03/2022)**

34. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 32 of the report.

35. All County Council commitments within the EP scheme will be met from existing budgets.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Transport and Environment Committee – National Bus Strategy and Transport update :15<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- Transport and Environment Committee – National Bus Strategy and Transport update: 17<sup>th</sup> November June 2021
- **Useful links:**
- [Bus-Back-Better : national bus strategy for England](#)
- [DfT - Latest Transport documents](#)

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

- All

