

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION

DECISION OF: COUNCILLOR STEVE HOGG. THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS



WITH ADVICE FROM: THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND TRANSPORT

DECISION NUMBER: 22/23 DP 352

Subject: Bus Service Improvement Plan Refresh - December 2022

Key Decision: No

Reason: Is not significant in effects upon communities, finance expenditure less than £500k.

Background:

Further to Executive decision of 22 June 2022 which delegated to the Executive member for Highways and Transport authority to determine any matters required by the Council in relation to the agreement of the final DfT funding offer including any changes to the spend profile in appendix, this decision approves the refresh of the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan document following the approval of grant funding award 24 November 2022.

North Somerset Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was submitted to Government in October 2021 as a Joint Plan with West of England Combined Authority (WECA). <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/parking-travel-roads/transport-travel/bus-travel/bus-service-improvement-plan>.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has now confirmed the award of grant funding allocation.

For the West of England this grant totals £105,488,498 (of which £47,983,000 is capital and solely for North Somerset Council, and £57,505,498 is revenue and shared with the West of England combined authority (WECA).

Detailed proposals for how the funding is to be spent were submitted to DfT on 30 June 2022 and an updated Annex 4 was sent to HMT in October 2022.

The proposals will eventually form part of The Enhanced Partnership (EP), is intended to be 'made' in following consultations currently underway. A draft was previously submitted to DfT This is a statutory document and forms the mechanism by which local transport authorities and bus operators engage with each other. Consultation on the West of England Enhanced Partnership commenced on 29 November 2022.

The capital allocation prioritises investment in bus priority with the DfT requiring that North Somerset identify elements of the capital programme to accelerate or deliver earlier.

This settlement is a phenomenal achievement for North Somerset and has the potential to transform public transport and deliver the most significant change to the public transport system in the area for a generation.

Delivering North Somerset's BSIP aspirations is absolutely crucial to underpin the council's ambitions to deliver a significant impact on transport decarbonisation, reallocation of roadspace, improving public and sustainable transport and making a leap forward in the pursuit of carbon neutrality. For these reasons, BSIP is a significant council and regional leadership priority for the coming years.

The West of England BSIP will be reviewed jointly by officers of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council in October annually, updated and reported to the West of England Planning, Housing & Transport Board (comprising the Mayor of the West of England and relevant Members of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council).

Updated versions of the BSIP will be published on the websites of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

Decision:

To approve the BSIP refresh following the BSIP grant allocation on 29 November 2022.

Reasons:

The DfT require regular updating of the BSIP, including following funding allocations to ensure the BSIP remains up to date.

This refresh is a technical update and does not change any principles of the previously adopted BSIP.

The refresh ensures the adopted West of England BSIP and its Bus Service Improvement Grant are technically aligned.

The Executive Committee decision of 22 June 2022 delegated to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport to determine any matters required by the Council in relation to the agreement of the final DfT funding offer including any changes to the spend profile in appendix. This decision approves the refresh of the West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan document following the approval of grant funding award 24 November 2022.

Options Considered:

Regular update of the Bus Service Improvement Plan is a Government requirement of all Transport Authorities contained in Bus Back Better (2021) the national bus strategy for England:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf .

Failure to submit and publish and updated BSIP would prejudice BSIP funding from central Government and DfT.

Options have been considered for each Delivery Plan contained within the BSIP. There are ten Delivery Plans:

- A. Intensive services
- B. Bus priority
- C. Fares
- D. Integrated Ticketing
- E. Integrated services
- F. Single integrated system
- G. Modern buses
- H. Passenger voice
- I. Non-intensive services
- J. Longer term

Financial Implications:

Failure to submit and publish and updated BSIP would prejudice draw down of BSIP funding. This BSIP refresh ensures the BSIP targets and actions are aligned with the recently awarded grant settlement funding.

Legal Powers and Implications:

No adverse legal implications. Adoption of an updated BSIP ensures we are delivering on our corporate priorities and meeting national policy requirements.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications:

The proposals are envisaged to have a positive environmental and climate change implication as securing the funding and delivering the BSIP and EP will improve public transport and therefore contribute to the council's transport decarbonisation aspirations.

Consultation:

Appendix 3 contains the responses to stakeholder engagement undertaken. 55 stakeholders responded to our invitation to give their views on the merits and demerits of bus services locally and the performance of the LTAs and local bus operators. These were made up of:

- 30 Parish Councils, Councillors, and political party groups.
- 10 Transport Users Groups.
- 7 Community Transport Operators.
- 5 Others (Hospital, university, and shopping mall).
- 3 Members of Parliament.

Priorities identified are summarised in Table 19 on page 119 and these have been considered in the development of the BSIP.

Risk Management:

Failure to update and publish an updated BSIP in line with Government requirements.

Equality Implications:

It is a fundamental requirement on Local Transport Authorities to explicitly consider inclusivity and to review the impact of roadside infrastructure on passenger safety, security and accessibility as part of their Bus Service Improvement Plans.

Our BSIP strategic corridors, and the wide reach of the bus network, are designed to strengthen connectivity, particularly to deprived and rural communities. The West of England

includes communities amongst the most deprived in England. Better services to these places, and to residents without access to cars, will bring wider access to job and education opportunities. Investment in buses will also lead to improved air quality by encouraging modal transfer and a reduction in private car use. Across the West of England, the impact of these issues, such as severance, health impacts and road dangers, is much greater on poorer communities and this BSIP sets out to address these issues.

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? No

Corporate Implications:

The in delivering against corporate priorities in a cost effective and timely manner. Delivering the BSIP is absolutely crucial to underpin the council's ambitions to deliver a significant impact on transport decarbonisation, reallocation of road space to active and sustainable modes, improving public and sustainable transport and making a leap forward in the pursuit of carbon neutrality. For these reasons, BSIP is a significant council and regional leadership priority for the coming years. Delivery of the BSIP grant and aspirations will have wide-ranging corporate implications, commensurate with a £105M grant of this nature.

The West of England BSIP will be aligned with the Joint Local Transport Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Investment Programme, Active Travel Strategy and Action Plans and Local Plan by specific cross- references in future revisions to those documents.

This BSIP serves as the 18-month review of the West of England Bus Strategy – to which the Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) were committed.

This joint Bus Service Improvement Plan will be published on the websites of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

Appendix 1: West of England Bus Service Delivery Plan. Due to accessibility issues this document cannot be made available on our website at the time of publishing. For an emailed copy please contact bella.fortune@n-somerset.gov.uk

Background paper:

NSC's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was approved in October 2021 in a Joint Plan with West of England Combined Authority (WECA). <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/parking-travel-roads/transport-travel/bus-travel/bus-service-improvement-plan>.

Signatories:

Decision Maker(s):

Signed:  Executive Member for Highways and Transport

Date: 13 December 2022

With advice from

Signed: 
Transport

Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and

Date: 13 December 2022