



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 29 April 2024

Report of the Executive Director - Place

Bus Service Improvement Plan Refresh
(Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport)

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or savings which are significant having regard to the budget for the service or function concerned (this is currently defined as £500,000) and it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral areas in the County.

3. Purpose

3.1 To update Cabinet on the new Bus Service Improvement Plan, the guidance published by the Department for Transport and the work undertaken so far to meet the objectives set down in it.

3.2 To seek Cabinet approval for the various additional measures which are recommended for inclusion in the Council's refreshed Bus Service Improvement Plan for the 2025-26 programme onwards and to grant the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Highways Assets and Transport, delegated powers to agree the final

wording of the refreshed Bus Service Improvement Plan which must be submitted to the Department for Transport by 12 June 2024.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 The Council published its first Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021, setting out how the Council aimed to meet the objectives set down in the Government's National Bus Strategy. The development of the BSIP was led by the Enhanced Partnership Board which included the Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport, the Executive Director Place and representatives from six local bus operators including Stagecoach, Trentbarton and Ashbourne Community Transport. The BSIP contained a variety of proposals to encourage greater use of bus services including measures to:

- Improve bus service reliability and journey times.
- Make bus travel more affordable.
- Improve the quality and quantity of information available to passengers about bus services.
- Enhance the frequency and hours of operation of bus services.
- Improve integration between different bus services and between buses and other forms of transport through the development of transport hubs at important locations across Derbyshire.

4.2 In total, the Council asked for £104.9m in funding over five years from 2022-23 to 2026-27. Following months of detailed discussion, the Department for Transport (DfT) confirmed, in November 2022, that the Council would receive £47m in funding over three years from 2022-23 to 2024-25 to implement a number of the specific proposals set out in the BSIP. This was the second highest amount provided to a non-urban Local Transport Authority (LTA) across England.

4.3 In the last 15 months, the BSIP Project Team, working with the Enhanced Partnership Board, has implemented a series of measures across Derbyshire. These have included:

- Enhancements to 21 different commercial bus routes across the County which has resulted in variety of improvements including increased frequencies, services running earlier and later in the day and the extension of routes to new destinations.
- A £1.50 flat fare on any service across Derbyshire for young people aged 11-19 with a b_line card (Derbyshire's Young person card).

- 70 additional electronic Real Time Information (RTI) displays installed at bus stops across the County including those in Clowne, Darley Dale, Hilton and Matlock Bath.
- The introduction of a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service in the north-east of the County with an App based booking system.
- The development of transport hubs at key interchange sites including Bamford, Hayfield and Heanor.
- The introduction of bus priority measures at a number of traffic signal junctions including Alfreton, Ashbourne and Chesterfield to improve journey time and reliability.
- A variety of marketing and communication activities to support the programme and improve the quality of information provided to existing and potential new passengers.
- Agreement to limit the number of occasions during the year when services can be changed to five set dates.
- Introduction of a Bus Passenger Charter setting out what customers can expect from their bus services.

4.4 The impact of these works has been positive with passenger numbers increasing on the enhanced services and high levels of customer satisfaction being reported in the national Transport Focus passenger surveys.

4.5 On 16 January 2024, the DfT issued new guidance to LTAs across England on BSIPs. This guidance advised LTAs that they would need to publish a refreshed and updated version of their BSIP by 12 June 2024. The guidance also makes it clear that publication of the updated BSIP by this date is a condition of any existing or future DfT BSIP funding being made available to the Council in the 2024-25 financial year. A copy of the new guidance is available in the background papers.

4.6 The key themes set out in the guidance for the 2024 BSIP are:

- **Updating the baseline to 2023-24:** This will involve updating the 2021 BSIP's account of the situation in the area to reflect all the developments which have taken place since 2021, including the evolution of the local bus market post-pandemic and its issues and opportunities. This will include highlighting achievements made since 2021 in delivering improvements to bus services.
- **Setting out the improvement programme for 2024-25:** This will reflect the known funding available from various BSIP phases and all the other funding sources used to pay for delivery, including the LTAs own resources.

- **Getting ready for 2025 and beyond:** Refreshing the plan’s proposals and content to set out a high quality and flexible pipeline of prioritised schemes for the four years from 2025-26 to 2028-29, which are attractive to funders, and ready for delivery as opportunities for funding arise.

4.7 The guidance states that the new BSIPs should be comprehensive and authoritative, whilst also being concise and accessible to the public. Details of the format required by the DfT are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1 BSIP Template

Section	2021 BSIP template	2024 BSIP template
1	Overview	Our bus vision
2	Current offer to bus passengers	Current offer to bus passengers
3	Headline targets	Improvement programme to 2024-25
4	Delivery	Ambitions and proposals for 2025-2030
5	Reporting	Targets, performance, monitoring and reporting
6	Overview table	DfT format BSIP Overview Table

- 4.8 The guidance makes clear that the 2024 BSIP will not act as a bidding document for future funding as the amount of DfT money available up until the end of 2024-25 has already been made clear. It should, however, set out what schemes have been delivered by the end of 2023-24 and what is programmed for delivery in 2024-25 within the known funding. It should also set future plans and priorities for 2025-26 and beyond subject to funding being made available by Government.
- 4.9 As Derbyshire will be joining the new East Midlands County Combined Authority (EMCCA) in 2024, alongside Derby City, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Councils, the 2024 BSIP will also need to set out the pathway the four councils will follow to enable a single BSIP covering the whole area to be published in early 2025. This will require consultation with the other constituent members of EMCCA to ensure there is joint approach to future BSIP development.

- 4.10 Due to the level of work required to produce the updated document and the limited Council officer availability, along with officer's existing commitments to implement various BSIP schemes, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport approved the use of external consultants, SCP, who were already under contract to the Council for the current BSIP, to undertake most of the work related to the BSIP refresh. (Cabinet Member decision D965 refers).

Progress to Date

- 4.11 Work to develop the updated BSIP has been ongoing since February 2024, led by SCP and the Enhanced Partnership Board, with contributions from the existing BSIP programme team.
- 4.12 From this process, it has become clear that the six overarching objectives set out in the original BSIP remain relevant. These objectives are that bus travel should be:
1. The first choice mode for existing and new customers for most journeys across Derbyshire.
 2. Available for more journeys and which grows to meet customer needs.
 3. Affordable to use.
 4. Environmentally sustainable.
 5. Welcoming and friendly for existing and new passengers.
 6. A connected network that helps reduce social isolation.
- 4.13 The programme of improvements set out for 2024-25 and the funding to pay for it has already been agreed with the DfT. This will include:
- Completion of the transport hubs programme which includes the reconstruction of the Alfreton and Swadlincote bus stations, as well as work in a number of other locations including Buxton, Castleton, Chesterfield, Clay Cross, Matlock, Long Eaton, Ripley and Shirebrook.
 - Completion of the bus priority traffic signal programme which includes sites in Belper, Buxton, Chesterfield, Glossop, Ilkeston, South Normanton and Swadlincote.
 - Additional bus service enhancements including routes in Amber Valley, Derbyshire Dales, High Peak and North East Derbyshire.
 - Introduction of a new website which will include Real Time Information on the arrival of bus services at stops across the County.
 - Further marketing and ticketing promotions

4.14 The proposed 2025-26 to 2028-29 programme builds on the results of the public and stakeholder consultation which has been undertaken as part of the refresh process setting out a vision of what Derbyshire is looking for in any future EMCCA BSIP. It also seeks to bring forward those elements of the original BSIP programme which did not receive funding in the original £47m settlement but which both stakeholders, the Enhanced Partnership Board and the Council consider are important to encourage and improve bus travel in the County. These proposed measures include:

- Further bus service enhancements.
- Significant improvements to roadside shelters and other bus stop infrastructure, including whole route upgrades with new arrangements to maintain, repair and clean bus stop infrastructure.
- Introduction of more environmentally friendly buses, particularly for small and medium sized operators that run Council supported bus services which have not benefited from the national Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (Zebra) scheme.
- A significant increase in the number of roadside Real Time Information signs at bus stops across Derbyshire.
- Introduction of more community-based services, potentially including Demand Responsive Transport services.
- Expansion of the b_line scheme to extend the age range to include young people from 19 to 22.
- The introduction of new ticketing arrangements to make bus travel more affordable and connected across the whole EMCCA area.

4.15 Due to the tight time scales set by the DfT with the submission of the updated BSIP required by 12 June 2024, work to complete the final version of the document will continue until close to the submission date. Ongoing discussions regarding the content will also continue with the Enhanced Partnership Board. Therefore, it is proposed that the final decision on the wording in the BSIP submitted to the DfT is taken by the Executive Director – Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Highways Assets and Transport.

5 Consultation

5.1 As part of this process, a public and stakeholder consultation exercise was undertaken over four weeks between 19 February 2024 and 18 March 2024 with a questionnaire link on the Council's website. This sought to understand what use people make of bus services now, and what improvements they would like to see introduced in the future. Further consultation has also been undertaken with the BSIP Wider Reference Group which consists of a variety of different stakeholders

including bus passenger groups, the NHS, the Jobcentre, further and higher education institutions, business groups, borough and districts councils, bus companies and the Peak District National Park Authority.

6 Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 **Option 1:** Do nothing and not produce a refresh of the BSIP by 12 June 2024. The DfT has made it clear that the production of the 2024 BSIP refresh is a condition of any future funding being made available in 2024-25. The programme of BSIP schemes to be implemented in 2024-25 is dependent on this funding being available. This option is therefore not recommended.
- 6.2 **Option 2:** Produce the refreshed BSIP by 12 June 2024 but not include a programme for 2025-26 onwards as public transport is anticipated to become the responsibility of EMCCA by that date. Setting out a future year's programme of the schemes, which the Council would look to EMCCA to introduce from 2025-26, will ensure these proposals are taken into consideration during the development of the combined authorities own BSIP which will need to be produced early in 2025. This option is therefore not recommended.
- 6.3 **Option 3:** Produce the refreshed BSIP by 12 June 2024 including a proposed programme for 2025-26 when responsibility for public transport is anticipated to have transferred to EMCCA. This will ensure Derbyshire's priorities are articulated and detailed prior to the development of the new EMCCA collective BSIP. This option is recommended.

7 Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 DfT – National Bus Strategy 2024 Bus Service Improvement Plan guidance.
[bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1244442/bus-service-improvement-plans-guidance-to-local-authorities-and-bus-operators-2024.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications.

10 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the update on the new Bus Service Improvement Plan, the guidance published by the Department for Transport and the work undertaken so far to meet the objectives set down in it.
- b) Approve the various additional measures which are recommended for inclusion in the Council's refreshed BSIP for the 2025-26 programme onwards and grants the Executive Director - Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member - Highways Assets and Transport delegated powers to agree the final wording of the refreshed BSIP which must be submitted to the Department for Transport by 12 June 2024.

11 Reason for Recommendations

- 11.1 Approval of the additional BSIP measures and granting delegated powers allows the Council to submit the refreshed BSIP to the deadline required by the DfT and ensures the release of BSIP Year 3 funding to ensure successful delivery of the BSIP programme.

12 Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 12.1 No.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 The production and publication of the refreshed BSIP is required to release the Year 3 funding from Phase 1 of the BSIP programme and also additional Network North money (Phase 3) which is the subject of a separate Cabinet report.
- 1.2 The funding will be received in the second quarter of Year 3 of the programme although must be spent in the 2024-25 year (2025-26 extension for contracted bus services).

Legal

- 2.1 The refreshed BSIP sign off will include the approval of the Enhanced Partnership Board.
- 2.2 Section 63(1) of the Transport Act 1985 places a duty on the Council to secure the provision of 'such passenger transport services as the Council considers appropriate to meet any public transport requirement within Derbyshire which would not, in its view, be met, apart from any action taken by them for that purpose'.

Human Resources

- 3.1 None.

Information Technology

- 4.1 The BSIP proposals will include provision for a significant expansion in the number of bus stops with Real Time Information displays. These would be progressed through existing contractual agreements. Other innovative technologies will be explored to support the efficiency of bus services including easier ticketing arrangements and increased journey information through use of the County's Traffic Management Systems.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Bus services are particularly important to a range of disadvantaged groups, such as young people, older people, women, and those from economically deprived communities, all of which make a higher proportion of their journeys by bus than the population as a whole.

- 5.2 The measures associated with the BSIP will protect and, where funding allows, enhance the quality of bus services available and will contribute towards the wider levelling up agenda across all communities and ambitions for driving 'good growth'.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 This proposal will help deliver the following Council Plan priorities: Resilient, Healthy and Safe Communities; High Performing, Value for Money and Resident-Focused Services; A Prosperous and Green Derbyshire. Specifically, creation of an Enhanced Partnership will also enable the delivery of Place Directorate priorities around sustainable transport and travel.
- 6.2 The main aim of the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership is to generate additional use of bus services and in turn encourage modal shift away from the private car. If this happens it will have a positive impact on the Council's wider environmental sustainability objectives and support the targets set in the Climate Change Strategy: Achieving Net Zero.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 None.