

CABINET

3 FEBRUARY 2022

NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY

- **BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**
- **WORCESTERSHIRE ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP (PLAN AND SCHEME)**
- **WORCESTERSHIRE ZERO EMISSION BUS REGIONAL AREA**

Relevant Cabinet Member

Councillor A T Amos

Relevant Chief Officer

Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure
Assistant Director for Highways and Transport Operations

Local Member(s)

All County Councillors involved at the relevant stage.

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways & Transport recommends that Cabinet:

- (a) Acknowledges the work to date on the Worcestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and how this influences Worcestershire's Enhanced Partnership and Schemes;**
- (b) Approves in principle the draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes, which has been prepared in accordance with guidance from Central Government;**
- (c) Authorises the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, to implement the Plan noting that the Enhanced Partnership Schemes are contingent on Department for Transport funding (to be announced) and results of the 28-day legal requirement consultation, and formulate operational schemes and policies with an appropriate implementation schedule having regard to the Plan;**
- (d) Authorises the commencement of a full review by the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure of the Council's Passenger Transport network, which will incorporate all aspects of the public Transport network; and**

(e) Notes that the Council has made a submission to the Department for Transport relating to the implementation of a Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA).

Background

2. The main purpose of Worcestershire's passenger transport network is to provide an efficient, resilient and integrated system which provides access for everyone to a wide range of services and facilities which are essential for a good quality of life. These include employment, education, healthcare, retail and leisure.
3. Our priorities will include home to work and home to school journeys. A healthy commercial network is critical in delivering this. The main providers of passenger transport services in Worcestershire are commercial organisations that operate local bus services on a profit-making basis, as envisaged when the local bus service market outside London was de-regulated in 1985.
4. It is important for Worcestershire's residents that the public transport network is attractive, efficient and reliable. Well run networks can meet the needs of local people by providing a transport network which reduces congestion and provides access to a wide range of employment and wider life-enhancing opportunities.
5. The Enhanced Partnership is a statutory requirement with bus operators and will enable Worcestershire County Council to work in co-operation with commercial operators to help deliver an efficient, reliable bus network which meets the needs of Worcestershire's residents, improving customer satisfaction and encouraging increased use of local transport services.
6. Following new powers introduced by the Bus Services Act 2017 (which was replaced by the 2000 Act), Worcestershire County Council considers that an Enhanced Partnership will offer benefits to the travelling public and wider community which could not be achieved within the current arrangements. These benefits are fully outlined within the Bus Service Improvement Plan and include such things as frequency enhancements, infrastructure improvements, and a Passenger Charter. The Enhanced Partnership's principles will be those outlined in the Worcestershire's Bus Service Improvement Plan and summarised in the diagram below.

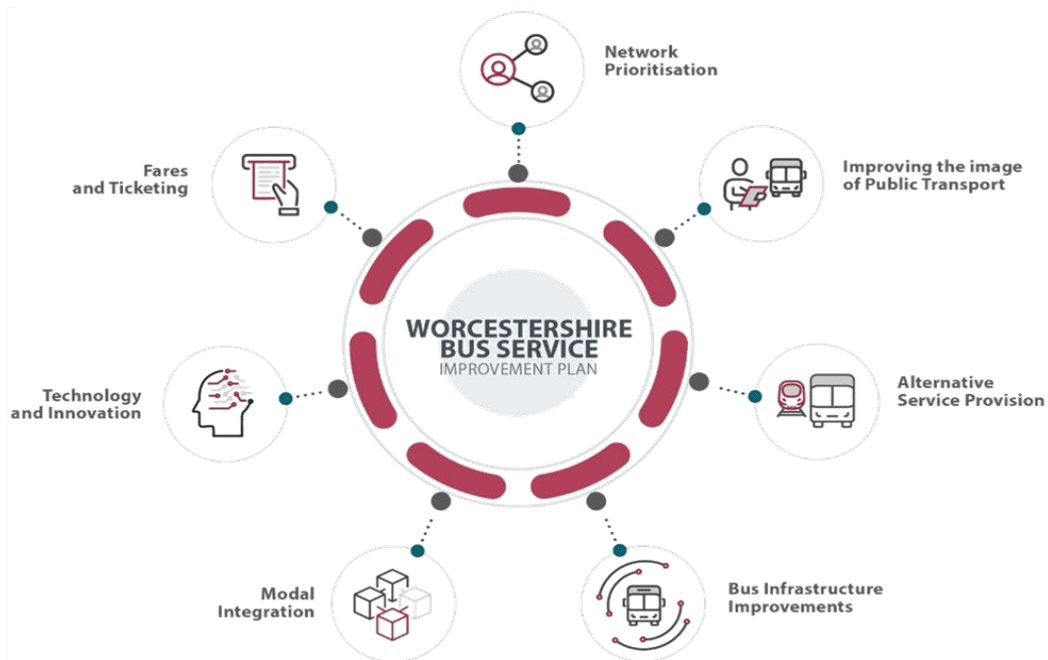


Diagram to illustrate the Bus Service Improvement Plan Principles

7. Worcestershire's Bus Service Improvement Plan is based on seven core principles. Working in partnership with stakeholders, we will be able to meet the key national objectives: frequent buses, low fares and priorities. This will complement our recently published Worcestershire Passenger Transport Strategy.

8. To deliver the core principles, there will be a transformational programme of measures as outlined in the Bus Service Improvement Plan and including increasing the number of Demand Responsive Transport Services, taking ownership of bus shelters and creating a Worcestershire strategic bus network. Together, these will deliver services that our residents, visitors and businesses require and expect.

9. The creation of a Worcestershire Enhanced Partnership will include legal elements that will enhance quality standards and enable access to funding for investment in public transport-related projects and activities, which would not otherwise be available. The Department for Transport has stated that no funding will be allocated to Local Authorities who do not enter into an Enhanced Partnership or Franchise arrangement for the next ten years. This includes both future funding and could impact on other key strategies.

10. The Worcestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan, together with the Worcestershire Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, will make a substantial contribution to the implementation of Worcestershire Passenger Transport and Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) policies. These will bring benefits to passengers using local bus services in Worcestershire by improving the quality and efficiency of the public transport network and support the efficient use of the road network and the delivery of sustainable growth. In addition, it will limit the impacts of additional traffic congestion and air pollution.

11. Critical to Worcestershire's BSIP ambitions is the decarbonising of current fleets within the County. Worcestershire has been successful in being shortlisted for the final

stages of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) which will be subject to a future Cabinet report once this bidding process has concluded.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

12. Legal implications
 - a) Enhanced Partnership arrangements will be affected/curtailed should the funding bid be unsuccessful
 - b) The creation of a Worcestershire Enhanced Partnership will include legal elements that will enhance quality standards and form access to funding for investment in public transport-related projects and activities which would not otherwise be available
13. Financial implications
 - a) The DfT will clarify funding allocations for BSIP in February 2022. The funding will be for three years and delivered through the Enhanced Partnership. The key outcomes are to enhance bus services, and increase availability, whilst ensuring the network, associated services and infrastructure are commercially viable and sustainable.
 - b) The net budget for Passenger Transport related activities is c£10 million for 2021/22 and there are no financial implications arising directly from the implementation of the recommendations within this report.
14. HR Implications
 - a) The impact on staffing will be considered throughout this process. There is the requirement to act in the capacity of Traffic Commissioner as part of the Enhanced Partnership scheme.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

15. The Joint Impact Assessment (JIA) screening has been carried out and does not identify any potential considerations requiring further assessment during implementation.

Supporting Information

Available electronically:

- Appendix 1 Bus Service Improvement Plan
- Appendix 2: Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for Economy & Infrastructure) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.