

## **Draft Minute Extract Executive – 22 June 2022**

### **EXE Bus Service Improvement Plan - Enhanced Partnership**

**8**

Councillor Bridger invited Councillor Hogg to present the report.

Councillor Hogg summarised the main elements of the report and noted that the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was a once in a generation funding stream that had the potential to be transformational in support of bus services in North Somerset. He added that the plan would also accelerate the council's decarbonisation plans and complement the Active Travel and Liveable Neighbourhood strategies. He noted that £48m of the funding was specific capital funding for North Somerset with an additional £58m was allocated jointly to the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

He added that the sums involved recognised that North Somerset had proportionally more work to carry out on improving bus services than other parts of the country. The capital funding was for bus prioritisation measures to deliver supportive infrastructure whilst the revenue funding would be used to develop eye catching services and provide concessionary support to drive up patronage. The draft Enhanced Partnership was the delivery mechanism for the BSIP and would involve partners entering legally binding commitments to making improvements to bus services. He drew members' attention to some of the outcomes of the funding package as noted in the report including demand responsive transport, more affordable services, and simplified fares.

As a result of the Department for Transport's (DfT) timescales, he informed members that as some of the decisions would need to be taken at pace, a level of delegation as set out in the report was required but he was committed to engaging with other Executive members and the scrutiny process.

The Head of Public Transport Transformation informed members that a recent meeting with the DfT indicated that the department was looking for a higher amount to support the fares reduction package so this was expected to be nearer £20m rather than the £9m initially proposed. This would mean that ambitions to deliver higher frequency services was likely to be curtailed but with the ongoing driver recruitment issue, this was more appropriate.

In commenting on the report members raised a number of key issues including whether parking charges were tied into the funding package; the support for community transport where there was no access to cars; that there should be a clearly articulated expectation in the partnership that operators properly consult with communities on any schedule changes; engagement with the town and parish councils; a focus on getting the basics right including updating bus stop information and ensuring reliability and frequency and making sure bus services were provided where needed

and not just where wanted. They also noted the importance of the reliability of bus services to SEND learners and those who cannot drive.

**Resolved:**

That the Executive:

- (1) Noted the current iteration of the draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme as attached in Appendix 3 of the report and delegates to the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the authority to approve the final Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme on behalf of North Somerset Council
- (2) Agreed that the Executive member for Highways and Transport be delegated 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 2 of the report
- (3) Noted the Department for Transport (DfT) indicative BSIP funding allocations:
  - capital funding award of £47,983,473 allocated to North Somerset Council, and
  - the indicative revenue funding award of £57,505,498 allocated jointly to the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.
- (4) Noted the proposed outline BSIP delivery commissioning plan in Appendix 5 of the report to facilitate timely delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan works programme across North Somerset commencing in autumn 2022.

And further that the Executive **recommended to Council:**

- (5) That Council approves the commissioning plan required to deliver the BSIP and
- (6) Approves the following:
  - An increase to the Capital Programme of £47,983,473 from 2022 in recognition of the outline DfT funding award.
  - Delegation to the Director of Corporate Services/ s151 officer to increase the 2022-23 Revenue Budget by up to £12m to be funded from BSIP grant allocation

**Reasons for the decision:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

As set out in the report and discussed above.